

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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129th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2019

Legislative Document

No. 559

H.P. 403

House of Representatives, February 5, 2019

An Act To Restore Regular Mapping of Eelgrass Beds in the State

Reference to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative McCREIGHT of Harpswell.
Cosponsored by Senator CARSON of Cumberland and
Representatives: ACKLEY of Monmouth, DODGE of Belfast, HUTCHINS of Penobscot,
TUCKER of Brunswick, TUELL of East Machias, ZEIGLER of Montville, Senator: VITELLI
of Sagadahoc.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 38 MRSA §1805** is enacted to read:

3 **§1805. Eelgrass mapping**

4 In accordance with the requirements of this section and in consultation with the
5 Department of Marine Resources, the department shall establish and administer an
6 eelgrass mapping program. For the purposes of this section, "eelgrass" means the
7 flowering marine plant species *Zostera marina* that is primarily found in shallow,
8 protected intertidal and subtidal locations in the State.

9 **1. Mapping procedures.** The department shall in accordance with the schedule in
10 subsection 2 facilitate the production and update of eelgrass distribution maps for eelgrass
11 beds within the State. The data collected and the maps produced in accordance with this
12 section must, to the maximum extent practicable, be compatible with the State's
13 geographic information system.

14 **2. Mapping schedule.** The mapping of eelgrass beds required under this section
15 must be conducted in accordance with the following schedule.

16 A. No later than November 1, 2020, mapping must be completed for that portion of
17 the coast from Kittery to Cape Elizabeth and must be updated every 5 years
18 thereafter.

19 B. No later than November 1, 2021, mapping must be completed for that portion of
20 the coast from Cape Elizabeth to Small Point and must be updated every 5 years
21 thereafter.

22 C. No later than November 1, 2022, mapping must be completed for that portion of
23 the coast from Small Point to St. George and must be updated every 5 years
24 thereafter.

25 D. No later than November 1, 2023, mapping must be completed for that portion of
26 the coast from St. George to the Schoodic Peninsula and must be updated every 5
27 years thereafter.

28 E. No later than November 1, 2024, mapping must be completed for that portion of
29 the coast from the Schoodic Peninsula to Eastport and must be updated every 5 years
30 thereafter.

31 **3. Availability of data and maps.** The department shall make available on its
32 publicly accessible website the data collected and maps produced and updated under this
33 section.

34 **4. Report.** On or before January 1, 2021, and biennially thereafter, the department
35 shall submit to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over
36 environmental and natural resources matters a report summarizing the data collected and
37 maps produced under this section and including an analysis, if available, of the changes to
38 the eelgrass beds within the State that are demonstrated by the data collected and maps
39 produced under this section.

1

SUMMARY

2 This bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection, in consultation with the
3 Department of Marine Resources, to establish and administer a program to regularly
4 produce and update maps regarding the distribution of eelgrass beds in the State. Data
5 collected and maps produced under this program must be made available on the
6 Department of Environmental Protection's publicly accessible website. The Department
7 of Environmental Protection is directed to submit to the joint standing committee of the
8 Legislature having jurisdiction over environmental and natural resources matters on or
9 before January 1, 2021, and biennially thereafter, a report on the data collected and maps
10 produced under this program.