

§1805. Eelgrass and salt marsh vegetation mapping

In accordance with the requirements of this section and in consultation with the Department of Marine Resources, the department shall establish and administer an eelgrass and salt marsh vegetation mapping program. For the purposes of this section, "eelgrass" means the flowering marine plant species *Zostera marina* that is primarily found in shallow, protected intertidal and subtidal locations in the State. For the purposes of this section, "salt marsh vegetation" means salt-tolerant vegetation that contains a mixture of graminoids and forbs and sometimes includes cordgrasses. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

1. Mapping procedures. The department shall in accordance with the schedule in subsection 3 facilitate the production and update of eelgrass and salt marsh vegetation distribution maps for eelgrass beds and salt marsh vegetation within the State. The data collected and the maps produced and updated in accordance with this section must, to the maximum extent practicable, be compatible with the State's geographic information system. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

2. Eelgrass and Salt Marsh Vegetation Mapping Fund. The Eelgrass and Salt Marsh Vegetation Mapping Fund is created within the department as a nonlapsing dedicated fund to support the establishment and administration of the eelgrass and salt marsh vegetation mapping program required under this section. The fund may accept revenue from grants, bequests, gifts or contributions from any source, public or private. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

3. Mapping schedule. The mapping of eelgrass beds and salt marsh vegetation required under this section must be conducted in accordance with the following schedule, as department resources allow.

A. No later than November 1, 2023, mapping must be completed for that portion of the coast from Phippsburg to St. George and must be updated every 5 years thereafter. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

B. No later than November 1, 2024, mapping must be completed for that portion of the coast from St. George to Brooklin and must be updated every 5 years thereafter. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

C. No later than November 1, 2025, mapping must be completed for that portion of the coast from Brooklin to Jonesport and must be updated every 5 years thereafter. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

D. No later than November 1, 2026, mapping must be completed for that portion of the coast from Jonesport to Calais and must be updated every 5 years thereafter. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

E. No later than November 1, 2027, mapping must be completed for that portion of the coast from Eliot to Phippsburg and must be updated every 5 years thereafter. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]
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4. Availability of data and maps. The department shall make available on its publicly accessible website the data collected and maps produced and updated under this section. [PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW).]

5. Report. On or before March 1, 2024, and biennially thereafter, the department shall submit to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over environmental and natural resources matters a report summarizing the data collected and maps produced and updated under this section and including an analysis, if available, of the changes to the eelgrass beds and salt marsh vegetation within the State that are demonstrated by the data collected and maps produced under this section.

[RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §55 (COR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2021, c. 424, §1 (NEW). RR 2021, c. 1, Pt. A, §55 (COR).

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