

Little River Focus Area

Georgetown

Description:

This focus area includes the Little River, Sagadahoc Bay, and the area around Reid State Park. The Upper Sagadahoc Bay and Little River Marshes encompass nearly 700 acres in an intertwined series of salt marshes that apparently receive tidal flow from three directions: Robinhood Cove, Sagadahoc Bay, and the Little River. There is little to no evidence of past ditching in much of the marsh, making it one of the largest un-ditched marshes in Mid-Coast Maine.

The upper part of the Sagadahoc Bay marsh is a **spartina saltmarsh**, but plant species indicative of slightly less saline, or brackish, conditions include creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), wire rush (*Juncus arcticus* var. *balticus*), seaside crowfoot (*Ranunculus cymbalaria*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), and narrow-leaved cattail (*Typha angustifolia*). There are numerous natural pools or pannes with ditch-grass (*Ruppia maritima*). Southward toward Sagadahoc Bay, the natural ditches become larger and are lined with dense saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*). On the eastern side of Indian Point Road, toward Little River salt marsh, the high quality salt hay salt marsh continues, with patches of spike grass (*Distichlis spicata*) mixed in with the salt hay.



Indian Point Road bisects this large series of marshes. For the most part, the surrounding uplands are sparsely developed forests of mixed pine and oak. There are a few scattered residences near the water.

At nearly 700 acres, Reid State Park supports a variety of intact natural communities, including uncommon **pitch pine woodlands** (about 20 acres in four separate patches) and **dune grasslands**. **Piping plovers** (*Charadrius melodus*) and **least terns** (*Sterna antillarum*) nest annually on the beach, and **roseate terns** (*Sterna dougallii*) use the area for feeding.

Rare Species/Natural Communities Summary Table for the Little River Focus Area:

Common Name	Latin Name	State Status	S-Rank	G-Rank
Exemplary Natural Communities				
Dune Grassland		n/a	S2	not ranked
Pitch Pine Woodland		n/a	S3	not ranked
Red Spruce – Mixed Conifer Woodland		n/a	S4	not ranked
Spartina Saltmarsh		n/a	S3	not ranked
Rare Plants				
Clammy azalea	<i>Rhododendron viscosum</i>	E	S1	G5
Saltmarsh false-foxglove	<i>Agalinis maritima</i>	SC	S3	G5
Sea-beach sedge	<i>Carex silicea</i>	SC	S3	G5
Small salt-marsh aster	<i>Symphotrichum subulatum</i>	E	S1	G5
Sweet pepper-bush	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	SC	S2	G5
Rare Animals				
Harlequin duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	T	S2S3N	G4
Least tern	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	E	S1B	G4
Piping plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	E	S2B	G3
Roseate tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	E	S2B	G4

Other Resources Mapped by MDIFW:

Other MDIFW resources mapped in this focus area include Deer Wintering Areas, Shorebird Feeding Areas, Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitats, and extensive areas of Coastal Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat. An area offshore has been identified as a wintering area for Harlequin ducks (*Histrionicus histrionicus*).

Protection Status:

Over 1,100 acres have been permanently protected within this focus area – much of it at Reid State Park (700 ac) and the Josephine Newman Sanctuary (146 acres). In addition, recent efforts have been successful at protecting nearly 300 acres of tidal wetlands and buffers along the Little River.

The Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition, a consortium of groups including the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Lower Kennebec Land Trust, Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and MDIFW, is actively pursuing land protection in the area.

Conservation Considerations:

- Wetlands and wetland buffers, particularly those along the Little River/Sagadahoc Bay complex, should continue to be a priority in this focus area. Although some of the shoreline within this area has been developed, most of it is low-density residential, and some large undeveloped parcels remain. Nonetheless, residential development continues in the area, and further shoreline development may reduce buffers needed for wildlife, fragment wildlife habitat, influence water quality, and serve as a pathway for invasive species.

- Invasive species, such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*), have expanded rapidly in salt and brackish marshes in other parts of New England. While invasive plants do not seem to be a major threat currently, their distribution and abundance should be monitored.