

An aerial photograph of a town in Casco, Maine. A paved road curves through the center of the town, flanked by green trees and various buildings. On the left, there are several large red barns and a tennis court. On the right, there are white houses, some with solar panels on their roofs. In the background, a large blue lake is visible, surrounded by green hills under a clear blue sky.

Town of Casco Water Quality Committee Draft Plan Overview 13 January 2026

Water Quality Committee

Overview

- Committee and their Assignments
- Water Quality Stake Holders
- Purpose of the Water Quality Plan
- Major Recommendations
- Casco Lakes and their Status
- Review of the Objective and Goals of all six chapters of the plan
- Final steps to completion
- Recommended Select Board Actions

Casco Water Quality Committee

- Tom McCarthy Chairman
- Sarah Monarch Vice Chairman
- Levi Thornton Secretary & Boat Inspection Lead
- Pam Edwards Land Use Ordinances Lead
- Diane Cormier Watershed Stewardship Lead
- Jim Arsham Testing & Inspections Lead
- Eileen Tidd Shoreline Documentation Lead
- Maggie Daigle Education and Outreach Lead
- Tom and Sarah Funding Lead

Each of the Chapters had 3 members assigned to support the drafting and revisions

Casco Water Quality Stakeholders

- Casco Residents
- Casco Property Owners
- Local Businesses
- Lake Associations
- Road Associations
- Casco Selectboard
- Casco Planning Board
- Casco Code Enforcement staff
- Casco Open Space Commission
- Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Portland Water District
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Purpose

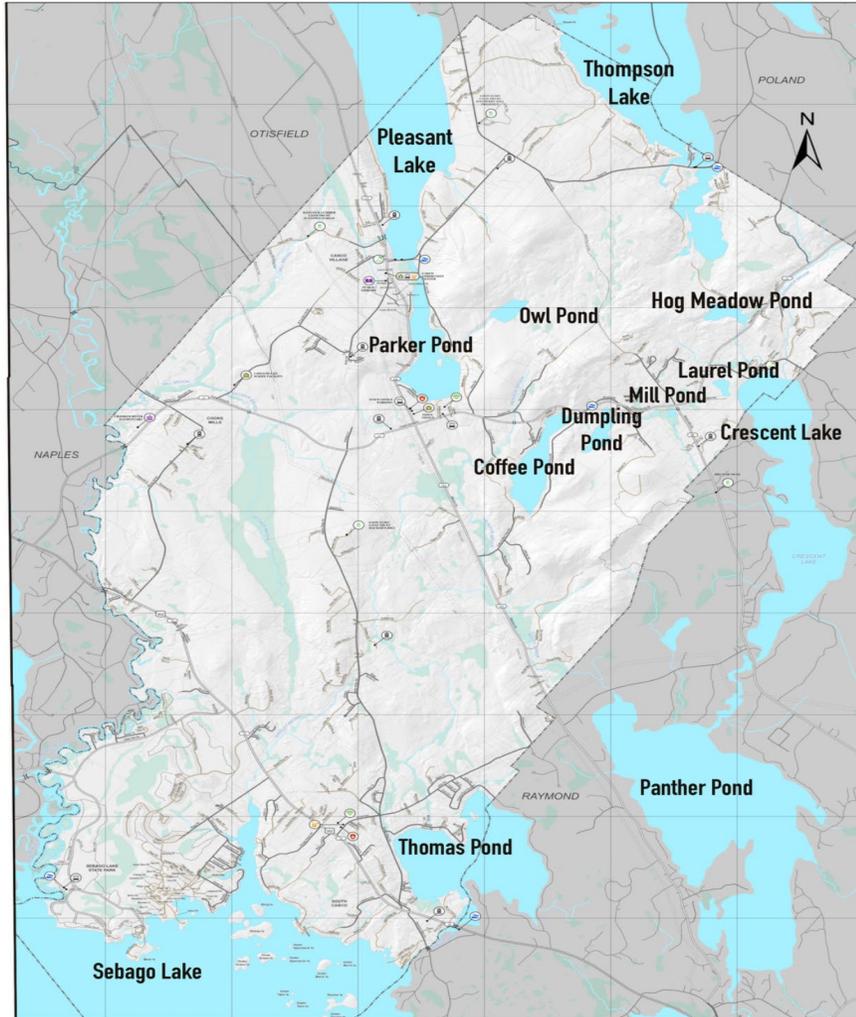
- **The purpose of the plan is to maintain and improve the water quality of all bodies of water in Casco.**
- The plan will serve as a road map for the establishment of a Clean Water Commission for the town of Casco Maine.
- The Commission will serve as support to the CEO, Planning Board, and Select Board by providing reviews, research, assessments and recommendations for actions on shoreland zone permits or projects in Casco that may impact the water quality.
- The Commission's initial focus will be implementation of the recommendations in the plan and to establish the methodologies that the commission will use in meeting the goals of maintaining and / or improving the water quality of our water resources.
- In addition, The Commission will work closely with our neighboring towns where we share water resources

Major Recommendations

- Establish a permanent Water Quality Commission tasked with executing the Water Quality Plan.
- Town Staff notify the Commission of any permits within shoreland zones, to solicit input back to the decision makers on the Selectboard, Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC), Planning Board, and the CEO by reviewing and providing recommendations for all plans, projects, and permits that have the potential to impact Casco Water Quality.
- Form a Water Quality Ordinance Task Force to coordinate this work and integrate it into other ordinance update plans.
- Task the Water Quality Commission with managing the water quality budget line item to be allocated to lake associations.

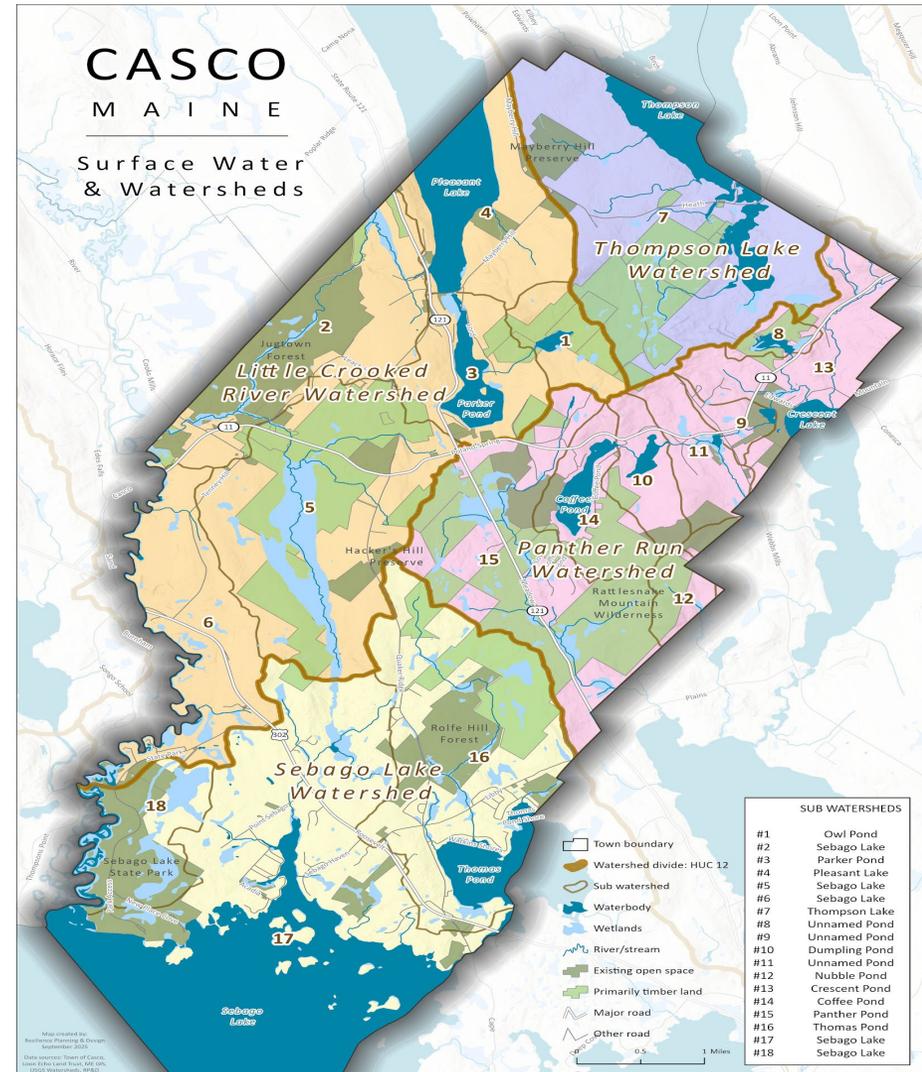
Casco Lakes and Their Status

Town of Casco Lakes & Ponds



- Coffee Pond
- Crescent lake
- Dumpling Pond
- Hog Meadow Pond
- Laurel Pond
- Mill Pond
- Owl Pond
- Panther Pond
- Parker Pond
- Pleasant Lake
- Sebago Lake
- Thomas Pond
- Thompson Lake

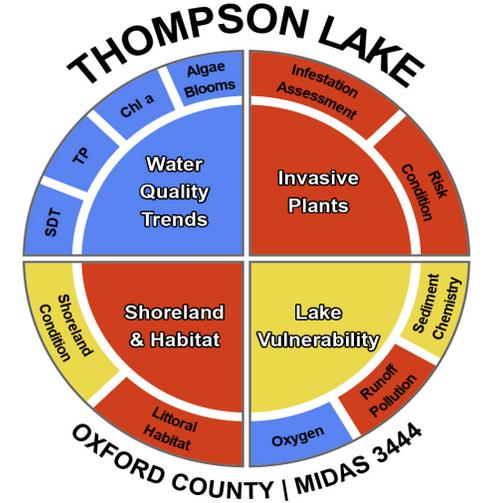
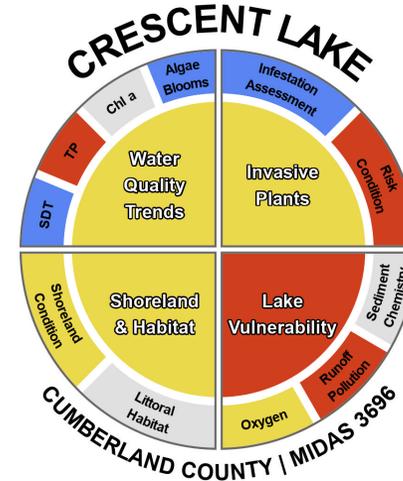
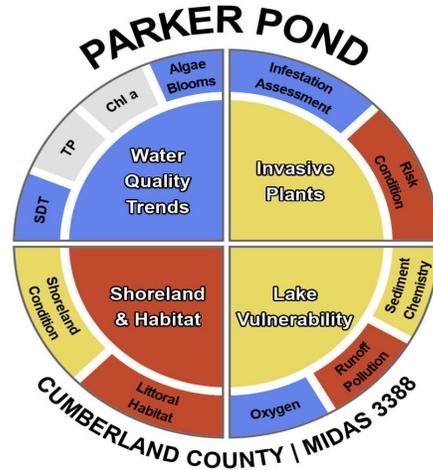
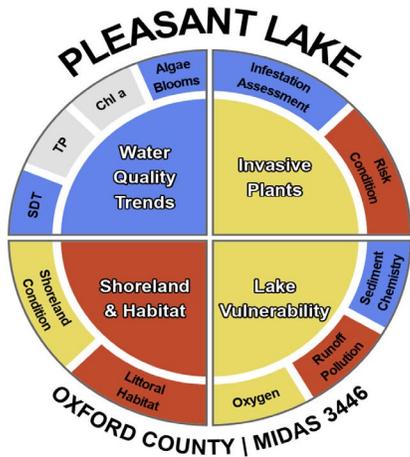
Casco Lakes



SUB WATERSHEDS	
#1	Owl Pond
#2	Sebago Lake
#3	Parker Pond
#4	Pleasant Lake
#5	Sebago Lake
#6	Sebago Lake
#7	Thompson Lake
#8	Unnamed Pond
#9	Unnamed Pond
#10	Dumpling Pond
#11	Unnamed Pond
#12	Nubble Pond
#13	Crescent Pond
#14	Coffee Pond
#15	Panther Pond
#16	Thomas Pond
#17	Sebago Lake
#18	Sebago Lake

Casco Watersheds

Lakes Current Water Quality Assessments

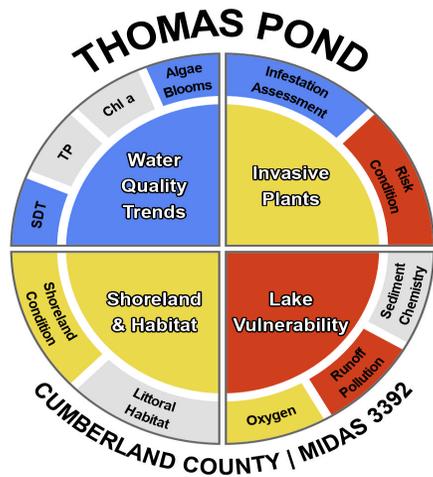


Condition Assessments: Good Fair Poor/At Risk Unknown

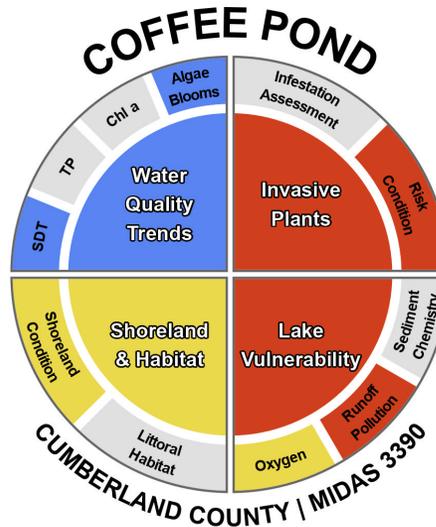
Condition Assessments: Good Fair Poor/At Risk Unknown

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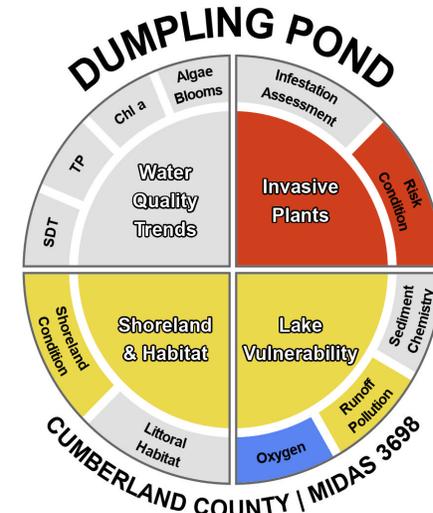
Condition Assessments: Good Fair Poor/At Risk



Condition Assessments: Good Fair Poor/At Risk Unknown



Condition Assessments: Good Fair Poor/At Risk Unknown



Condition Assessments: Good Fair Poor/At Risk Unknown

Land Use Ordinances

- **Objective**

- Casco's lakes and streams face pressures from shoreline development, stormwater runoff, septic systems, and land clearing. While land use ordinances exist to help manage these impacts, their enforcement and adequacy are not always clear. Proactively reviewing, updating, and enforcing ordinances is essential to ensure long-term water quality protection across all of Casco's watersheds.

- **Goals**

- The goals for this section of the Plan are twofold:
- Ensure that our existing ordinances are being used, followed and enforced to the greatest extent practical.
- Adopt additional ordinance provisions to further protect water quality when appropriate

Watershed Stewardship

- **Objective**

- Watershed stewardship refers to protecting, maintaining, and improving the health and function of the town's watersheds. A watershed is an area of land that channels rainfall, snowmelt, and runoff into a common body of water such as a river, lake, or pond. All land areas are within a watershed. Watershed management is critical for environmental quality, drinking water, recreation, wildlife habitat, and sustainable development. Casco's lakes, ponds, and rivers are one of the town's most valuable natural assets.

- **Goals**

- Preserving or improving the water quality of our lakes and ponds
- Identifying, preventing, and reducing nonpoint source pollution (NPS)
- NPS occurs when rain, snowmelt, or irrigation runoff picks up pollutants from roads, streams, agricultural, and lawns, and carries them out into water bodies and groundwater. It is diffuse and comes from multiple sources. Common pollutants include excess fertilizers, pesticides, oil, grease, sediment, animal waste, and bacteria.
- Identifying, preventing, and reducing point source pollution
- Point source pollution comes from a single, identifiable source, such as a malfunctioning septic system or a company dumping. Septic systems release bacteria, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other contaminants that can leak into our bodies of water. These can fuel the growth of aquatic plants and algae, leading to a degradation in water quality.
- Implementing best management practices (BMPs) such as erosion control, vegetated buffers, and improved road drainage to reduce runoff.
- Adapting watershed management to address changing rainfall patterns, warmer temperatures, and more frequent extreme weather events.
- Identifying and involving key stakeholders, promoting cooperation, and providing public education.

Testing & Inspections

- **Objective**

- It is fundamental that testing and watchful monitoring of water resources be done on a regular basis. Doing so is the only way to see the effects of the actions taken in other parts of the Plan. Most of the work for testing is done by volunteers, but phosphorus samples need to be tested at a laboratory for a fee.

- **Goals**

- To test water quality consistently across all Casco lakes and ponds in order to identify and mitigate those issues that arise from degraded water quality.
- To eliminate or mitigate the impact of aquatic invasive species.
- Develop and maintain water quality data at the town level in addition to the Lake Stewards of Maine data

Shoreline Condition Documentation

- **Objective**

- The objective of shoreline documentation is to create a consistent, long-term visual record of Casco's lakes and ponds. This record supports water quality protection, adherence to Maine's Shoreland Zoning regulations, and informed decision-making. Regular photographic documentation enables the Town, the Planning Board, the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), and lake associations to monitor shoreline conditions, evaluate the impacts of development, and identify erosion or vegetation changes that could affect water quality.

- **Goals**

- Compliance – Ensure adherence to Article 9 of Casco's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, requiring pre- and post-construction photographs for all permitted shoreland activities.
- Monitoring – Maintain updated visual data to track shoreline changes, vegetation health, and erosion patterns over time.
- Planning – Provide accurate and accessible imagery to support shoreline management strategies, permitting decisions, and grant applications.
- Public Engagement – Encourage collaboration with lake associations and volunteers to build community stewardship and shared responsibility for water resource protection.

Education & Outreach

- **Objective**

- The purpose of the Education and Outreach Program is to inform and engage Casco residents, visitors, seasonal renters, area businesses and all lake users about protecting the town's water bodies from invasive species, water pollution, and watershed mismanagement.

- **Goals**

- Build partnerships with lake associations, environmental groups, businesses, and schools
- Raise awareness of threats to water quality and lake health
- Promote stewardship among residents and recreational users
- Prevent the spread of invasive species through behavior change
- Encourage compliance with ordinances and best use practices

Funding & Grant Opportunities

- **Objective**

- Lake Associations carry the primary burden of maintaining the water quality of their respective water bodies. There are a number of grants available that lake associations could be using to help them fund water quality activities. As such, CWQC will support the associations in procuring funding.
- All lakes in Casco will receive town funding to conduct testing, monitoring, and reporting, provided that results are shared to the Casco Water Quality Committee (CWQC) and Lake Stewards of Maine. For lakes without formal associations, volunteers affiliated with the CWQC will conduct the necessary water quality testing.
- The town has been allocating approximately \$16,000 each year to support lake water quality projects. Moving forward, the water quality committee will work with lake associations to set an annual budget dedicated to water quality testing and reporting. The annual budget will be allocated to each lake association based on an objective framework.
- The committee will also research outside funding opportunities to provide and encourage lake associations to apply for grant opportunities to support additional programs such as watershed studies and erosion control projects.

- **Goals**

- Fund lake associations in an objective fashion from the Town budget
- Create and maintain a list of grant opportunities relevant to water quality
- Provide resources to lake associations for them to supplement their budgets from other sources.

Final Steps to Completion of the Water Quality Plan

- Obtain Stakeholder inputs to the draft (30 January 2026)
- Incorporate inputs into the plan (27 February 2026)
- Provide final Plan to the Select Board for Approval (27 March 2026)

Recommended Select Board Actions

- Establish the Casco Water Quality Commission
 - Current members of the Casco Water Quality Ad Hoc Committee will be the initial members of the commission
- Review the Casco Water Quality Plan and Provide Feedback to the Water Quality Committee not later than 30 January 2026
- Appropriate Town Staff review the plan and provide inputs not later than 30 January

Questions / Comments

Casco Water Quality Plan

CPIC recommendation to the Selectboard to establish an ad hoc committee to draft a Water Quality Plan

As its first major undertaking, the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC) decided to formulate recommendations regarding lake water quality, and to present those recommendations to the Selectboard. As you know, protecting our water resources was one of the top three priorities identified during the recent town's comprehensive planning process.

Our primary source of information came from people directly involved in local lake protection activities. The CPIC hosted a panel discussion in September with representatives from Thompson Lake Environmental Association, Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond Association, Crescent Lake Watershed Association, Thomas Pond Improvement Association, Raymond Waterways Protective Association, Portland Water District, and Lakes Environmental Association. Panel members provided the CPIC with excellent information regarding steps that the Town can take to help protect its water resources. Other regional and state organizations were invited but were unable to attend.

The CPIC's first recommendation to the Selectboard in this regard is to form an ad hoc committee to create an overall water quality plan for Casco. The following list includes the primary focus areas that should be included in the plan.

Areas of Focus

- **Prevention**

Land Use Ordinances: This should be one of our first lines of defense. Both the Planning Board and the Code Enforcement Officer should be well-versed in the protections provided by our current land use ordinances, and enforce them as necessary.

Watershed Stewardship: Assist lake associations and individuals in conducting watershed surveys and implementing lake protection projects to document and control erosion and polluted runoff.

- **Water Quality Testing, Tracking & Data Management**

Phosphorus, dissolved oxygen, clarity, and pH should be measured and recorded at least once per season and in at least one location per waterbody. These measurements are typically taken by a member of the related lake association. The data that is generated from these activities need to be documented and kept in a format that can be easily accessed by the public via the internet.

- **Inspection**

Courtesy boat inspectors (CBI) look for invasive aquatic plants and educate boat owners about cleaning their boats and identifying potentially invasive species. Other organizations provide CBI training.

Documenting Shoreline Conditions: A record of what shorelines look like can be captured via photographs and video recordings from the water or via aerial inspection. These can serve as documentation of a location's former condition if enforcement action is needed. Aerial photography provided crucial evidence in a recent enforcement case on Sebago Lake.

- **Education and Outreach**

Develop outreach and education programs to promote public awareness of invasive aquatic species, water quality and watershed issues.

- **Funding**

Research grants available from federal, state, regional and local sources, and make recommendations to the Selectboard regarding town funding of water quality efforts.

Casco Water Quality Committee (CWQC) Background

- The Casco (Ad-Hoc) Water Quality Committee was established on 18 March 2025 by the Casco Select Board to create an overall Water Quality Plan with the following Focus areas:
 - Prevention:
 - Land use Ordinances
 - Watershed Stewardship
 - Water Quality Testing, Tracking and Data Management
 - Inspections:
 - Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI)
 - Documenting Shoreline Conditions
 - Education and Outreach
 - Funding
- The Select Board accepted to appointment the following members:
 - Jim Arsham, Diane Cormier, Maggie Daigle, Pam Edwards, Tom McCarthy, Sarah Monarch, Levi Thornton , & Eileen Tidd
- The CWQC held it's first meeting 2 April 2025