

An aerial photograph showing a narrow strip of land with a paved road, a sandy beach, and a small inlet of water. The surrounding area is densely forested with green trees. The water is a deep blue color.

*Protecting our natural resources.
Strengthening our community.
Planning for our future.*

A photograph of a rocky coastline with waves crashing against the shore. In the background, there is a line of trees and some buildings on a hill.

TOWN OF ROQUE BLUFFS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2026

A resilient coastal community with a strong sense of place.

TOWN OF ROQUE BLUFFS, MAINE

2026 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A guide for stewardship, resilience, and thoughtful growth

Prepared by the Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Committee
with planning support from



Adopted: _____

Acknowledgments

The Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan is the result of a two-year collaboration among residents, municipal officials, committee members, and regional planning partners. More than 30 year-round and seasonal residents contributed their time, local knowledge, hopes, and ideas to help define who Roque Bluffs is today and what the community can become over the next decade.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee gratefully recognizes Patricia Tilton of Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC), who guided the planning process with patience, steadiness, and care. Her leadership, together with the financial and planning resources provided by SCEC, made this work possible.

The Committee also thanks Devendra Thapalia, a Maine Service Fellow, for preparing maps and assembling records, and Tanya Rucosky of SCEC for her earlier work with the Town through the Community Resilience Partnership. That work helped identify community values, environmental resources and needs, and potential funding opportunities.

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The Town extends its appreciation to everyone who attended meetings, completed the community survey, participated in the visioning session, reviewed drafts, and helped shape this Plan.

OFFICIAL ACTION

Adoption and Certification

The Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with Maine's Growth Management Act, 30-A M.R.S. §§ 4312–4350, and the Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule, 07-105 CMR Chapter 208. Following public review and a duly noticed public hearing, the Plan was presented to the voters of the Town of Roque Bluffs for adoption.

Adoption Record

Public hearing date: _____

Date of Town adoption: _____

Method of adoption: _____

Article or warrant number: _____

Certification

We certify that this Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the legislative body of the Town of Roque Bluffs on the date stated above.

_____ Signature, Select Board Member	_____ Date
_____ Signature, Select Board Member	_____ Date
_____ Signature, Select Board Member	_____ Date
_____ Signature, Town Clerk	_____ Date

NAVIGATION

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ABOUT THE PLAN

Introduction

The Town of Roque Bluffs adopted its previous Comprehensive Plan in 2001. Since then, the Town's population, housing stock, land use patterns, and regulatory environment have continued to evolve, while the data and analysis underlying the 2001 Plan have become increasingly outdated. This update provides the Town with current information and an up-to-date policy foundation for local decision-making.

A draft update was prepared in 2019 but was not adopted. That draft was reviewed as background material during this process, but it is not the basis for this Plan. The 2001 Comprehensive Plan remains the Town's adopted plan of record until this update is adopted.

This Plan was prepared by the Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Committee with support from Sunrise County Economic Council. It describes current conditions, identifies local and regional issues, and establishes findings, policies, and implementation strategies to guide the Town over the coming planning period.

A Plan Scaled to Roque Bluffs

Roque Bluffs is a small, rural coastal community with no public water or sewer service, no three-phase electric service, and limited municipal administrative capacity. The recommendations in this Plan are scaled accordingly. They rely on volunteer municipal leadership, grant funding, and regional cooperation rather than assuming new staff, programs, or infrastructure that the Town is not positioned to support.

Planning Framework

The Plan addresses the topic areas required by Maine's Growth Management Act and Chapter 208. Each topical chapter presents key findings, current conditions and analysis, climate considerations where relevant, and policies and implementation strategies. The Community Vision, developed through the public participation process, provides the foundation for the Plan's recommendations.

PLANNING PROCESS

Public Participation

Roque Bluffs prepared this Comprehensive Plan through a process designed to provide meaningful opportunities for community input. The Comprehensive Plan Committee included year-round and seasonal residents, as well as members of the Planning Board and Select Board, bringing a range of experience and perspectives to the work.

Open Committee Process

Committee meetings were posted on the Town's website and were open to the public throughout the planning process. Residents participated in discussions, reviewed information, and helped shape the direction of the Plan.

Community Survey

An Every Door Direct Mail flyer was delivered to all taxpayers listed in the Town's commitment book. The flyer provided both a QR code and a web address for the online community survey. Paper copies were also available at the Town Office. The survey received 39 responses between April and September 2025 and addressed natural resources and climate, public facilities and services, housing and population, recreation and community life, land use, and the local economy.

Community Visioning Session

The Committee held a community visioning session on October 4, 2025. Participants discussed priorities and concerns related to water quality, coliform contamination, road and pedestrian safety, wildfire preparedness, residential growth, natural-resource protection, community connections, and local governance.

How Public Input Was Used

Survey findings, visioning-session input, committee discussions, and public comments informed the Community Vision and the findings, policies, and strategies throughout this Plan. Appendix A documents the visioning process, and Appendix B summarizes the community survey results.

Public Review and Hearing

After completion of the draft Plan, the Town will provide an opportunity for public review and hold a duly noticed public hearing before the Plan is presented for adoption. The final version should be updated with the hearing date and a brief summary of any resulting revisions.

LOOKING AHEAD

Community Vision

Roque Bluffs will remain a quiet, rural coastal community whose natural beauty, working waterfront, historic character, and close community connections are protected for future generations.

The Town will welcome year-round and seasonal residents who value Roque Bluffs' distinctive character and contribute to community life. It will seek practical ways to support families, older residents, and people wishing to age in place while maintaining a scale of growth consistent with local services, infrastructure, and environmental conditions.

A Local Economy That Fits the Community

The local economy will continue to be connected to fishing, shellfish harvesting, agriculture, forestry, construction, property services, recreation, and seasonal activity. Roque Bluffs will support home occupations, remote work, small trades, arts and crafts, and other low-impact businesses that fit its rural, residential, and coastal setting. Large-scale commercial or industrial development requiring substantial new infrastructure is not envisioned. Reliable broadband and cellular service will be pursued in ways that respect scenic resources, neighboring properties, and the Town's dark night skies.

Stewardship of Land and Water

Roque Bluffs will protect its coastal waters, drinking-water resources, wetlands, forests, blueberry lands, wildlife habitat, scenic views, open spaces, historic buildings, and archaeological resources. The Town will maintain access to the shore for commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, boating, recreation, and emergency response, with continued improvements to the municipal boat ramp and parking area as funding and permitting allow.

Land use decisions will protect sensitive coastal and inland resources and retain large areas of undeveloped and working land. New development will be expected to locate where private wells, septic systems, roads, and emergency access can be safely provided.

Safe, Practical Infrastructure

Transportation investments will focus on maintaining safe and reliable roads, culverts, drainage systems, and emergency routes rather than expanding the road network to encourage substantial growth. Particular attention will be given to storm-damaged or vulnerable access routes, pedestrian and traffic safety in the village area, and safe access to Roque Bluffs State Park and the municipal waterfront. Improvements will be practical, financially responsible, and appropriate to the Town's rural setting.

Resilience and Cooperation

Roque Bluffs will prepare for coastal storms, heavier rainfall, erosion, wildfire, changing groundwater conditions, and other climate impacts by protecting natural buffers, improving emergency communication and evacuation planning, and considering future risks when maintaining roads, public facilities, shore access, and other infrastructure. Municipal investments will be prioritized according to demonstrated needs and the Town's financial and administrative capacity.

As a small community that depends on nearby service centers and shared services, Roque Bluffs will continue to cooperate with neighboring municipalities, MaineDOT, the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, state agencies, regional organizations, emergency-service providers, and conservation partners. Through careful planning, responsible stewardship, community participation, and regional cooperation, Roque Bluffs will remain a safe, welcoming, and resilient coastal community without losing the qualities that make it a special place to live, work, and visit.

PLAN GUIDE

How to Use This Plan

This Comprehensive Plan serves several related purposes. It documents current conditions, establishes a shared vision, guides municipal decisions, supports grant applications and capital planning, and provides the policy basis for land use regulation. It is not, by itself, a zoning ordinance or a commitment to undertake every listed strategy.

Reading the Chapters

Key findings: summarize the most important conditions, trends, and planning implications.

Analysis: explains the data, local context, and issues considered by the Committee.

Policies: state the Town's intended direction.

Strategies: identify practical actions, responsible parties, time frames, and potential partners.

Climate considerations: identify relevant hazards, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for resilience.

Implementation and Review

The Select Board, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee or successor implementation group, and other municipal officials should use the Plan when preparing annual work programs, evaluating ordinances, considering capital investments, and pursuing outside funding. Progress should be reviewed periodically, and the Plan should be updated as conditions, priorities, and state requirements change.

Chapter Guide

1. Historic and Archaeological Resources
2. Population and Demographics
3. Economy
4. Housing
5. Public Facilities and Services
6. Transportation
7. Water Resources
8. Natural Resources
9. Marine Resources
10. Recreation
11. Agriculture and Forest Resources
12. Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan

13. Existing Land Use

14. Future Land Use

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to:

1. Describe Roque Bluffs' historic, archaeological, and cultural resources;
2. Identify known and potentially significant buildings, sites, landscapes, and settlement patterns;
3. Assess threats to those resources, including development, erosion, severe storms, and sea level rise;
4. Evaluate existing protection measures; and
5. Establish practical policies and strategies for documentation, review, preservation, and public awareness.

State Goal

To preserve the State's historic and archaeological resources.

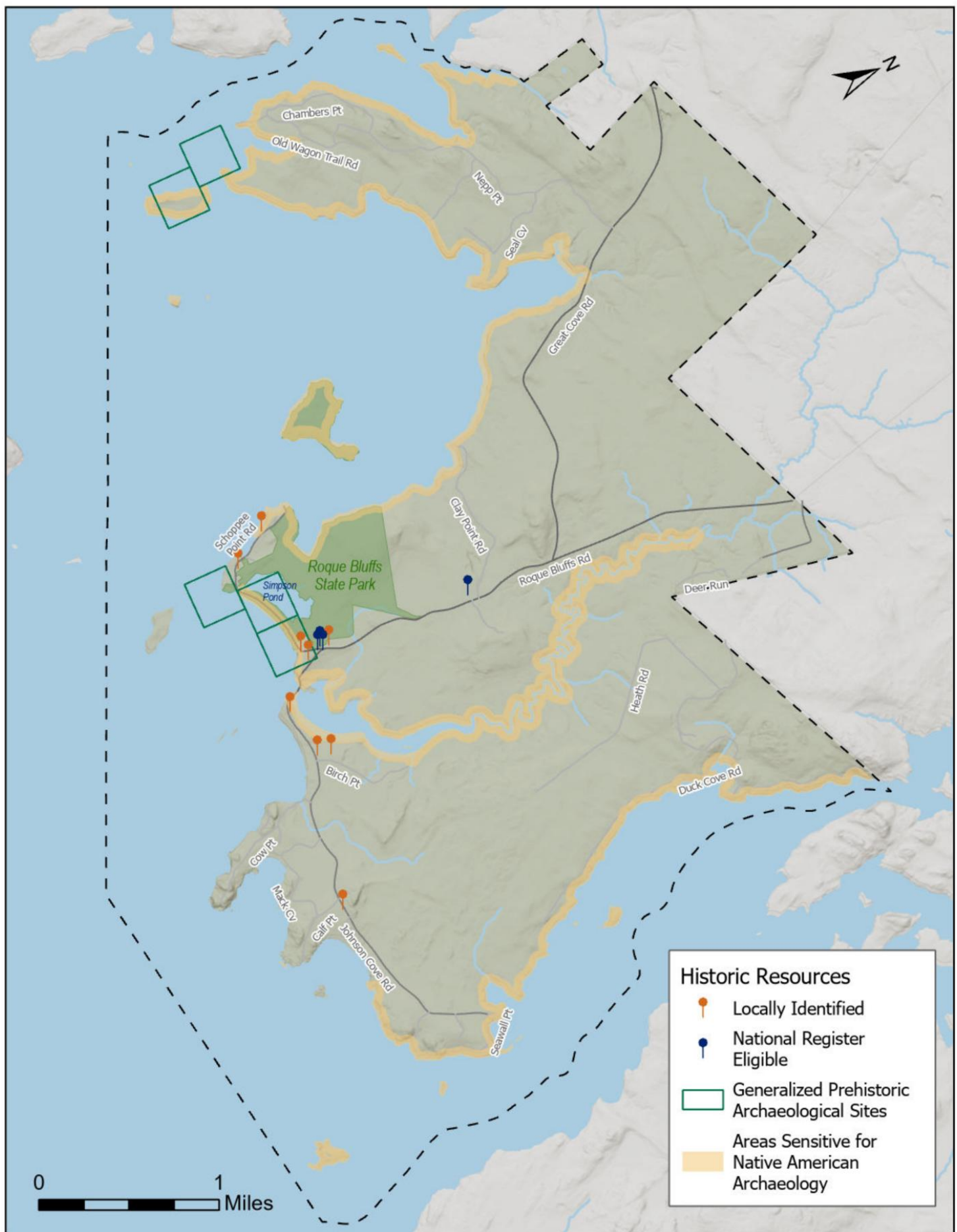
Key Findings

Roque Bluffs retains visible evidence of its fishing, farming, forestry, and maritime history in its settlement pattern, older buildings, farmsteads, and former working-waterfront areas. An informal local survey has identified roughly 70 homes believed to be historic, though only a small number have been individually documented.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission identifies known prehistoric and historic archaeological resources in town, with additional shoreline, island, and above-ground resources still needing professional survey.

Existing protections are limited. The Town's most practical role is to use current MHPC information during development review, support voluntary documentation and preservation, and work with the Roque Bluffs Historical Society, Community Center, property owners, and outside partners.

Historic and Archeological Resources



Brief History of Roque Bluffs

The first Euro-American settlers arrived in the Roque Bluffs area before the American Revolution. Early family names, including Schoppee and Watts, remain associated with the town. In 1788, when Maine was still part of Massachusetts, a deed conveying Roque Bluffs and much of the surrounding area was granted to John Coffin Jones. Benjamin Jones prepared the first survey and plan of the area in 1806.

Until 1891, the community was part of Jonesboro and was known as Englishman River. On March 31, 1891, the Maine Legislature authorized Roque Bluffs to separate from Jonesboro and establish its own municipal government.

For generations, the ocean, woods, and land shaped the town's economy. Residents fished, dug clams, built boats, cut timber, grew potatoes, harvested wild blueberries, and worked in small local enterprises, including a salt works, brick kiln, and a sawmill on the Englishman River. At Bare Cove (locally known as Arlie's Cove), waterfront industry included a lobster canning factory operated by Burnham and Morrill in the late 1890s and a fish-smoking operation in the early 1900s.



By the late nineteenth century, Roque Bluffs had also become a summer destination for families from Machias and elsewhere. The village center included two stores, a post office, and a one-room schoolhouse built in the 1860s that later became the Town Hall. A church was built on an adjacent corner of the town center in 1902. The Roque Bluffs Grange, an educational and social organization, was established in 1902 and met initially in a private home and later in the church basement. In 1916, the Grange purchased land on the third corner of the town center and acquired a boarding house built in Jonesboro in 1881, which was moved to the site and renovated between 1919 and 1921 to serve as the Grange hall.

Many former businesses and work sites have since disappeared, including the sawmill, canneries, stores, post office, boatyards, old Town wharf, and John Preston's wharf. The former schoolhouse now serves as the Town Hall, and the former Grange hall now serves as the Roque Bluffs Community Center.

Roque Bluffs State Park, established in 1974 on former farmland, remains one of the town's most important recreational and scenic resources. Today, the community retains visible evidence of its

fishing, farming, forestry, and maritime history in its road pattern, older homes, civic buildings, blueberry fields, and shoreline landscape.

Historic Patterns of Development

Roque Bluffs' historic development pattern remains visible in the village center and along Roque Bluffs Road, Johnson Cove Road, and Schoppee Point Road. The Town Hall, Community Center, chapel, older homes, farmsteads, blueberry fields, and former waterfront sites reflect how settlement developed around farming, fishing, forestry, and access to the shore.

The village center continues to serve as the Town's principal civic and community focus. Outside the village, the road network and scattered historic properties show the Town's earlier pattern of dispersed residential, agricultural, and resource-based development.

Historic Buildings and Places

No property in Roque Bluffs is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. However, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission has identified a small historic district in the village center as eligible for listing. The district includes the Town Hall, Community Center, and Chapel near the intersection of Roque Bluffs Road, Schoppee Point Road, and Johnson Cove Road. These buildings contribute to the district's architectural significance and its association with local government, education, recreation, and community life.

The Chapel has not been evaluated for individual National Register eligibility. MHPC describes it as primarily Carpenter Gothic in style, with elements of Shingle and Craftsman design.

The barn at 186 Roque Bluffs Road has been identified as eligible for listing in the National Register; MHPC determined the barn eligible in 2006 but did not have sufficient information to make a final determination on the associated house, other outbuildings, or farm fields. MHPC survey records



1 "At the Bluff," Summer Cottage, 1895

describe the property as a 280-acre parcel historically used for mixed farming and now used as a blueberry farm. The surveyed barn is estimated to date to about 1850 and is a vernacular, New England-plan barn constructed with sawn heavy timbers.

An informal survey of Roque Bluffs homes by Robin Pinto and Wayne Hanscom identified approximately 70 homes believed to be historic, a few dating to the late 1700s, others to the 1800s, and many more than 100 years old. Table 1 lists buildings that have been individually documented through professional survey or MHPC records; the Town's broader historic housing stock has not yet been comprehensively surveyed.

Table 1. Historically Significant Buildings in Roque Bluffs				
Address	Description	Built	Comments	Current Use
25 Johnson Cove Road	House	c. 1850	Center is an old Cape; may have come from Nova Scotia by barge	Private residence
90 Johnson Cove Road	House	c. 1800	Samuel Watts home; among the oldest homes in town	Private residence
150 Johnson Cove Road	House		Locally identified historic building	Private residence
339 Johnson Cove Road	Roscoe Johnson House	1850	Built by the keeper of the Libby Islands Lighthouse	Private residence
3 Roque Bluffs Road	Town Hall	c. 1860s	Former one-room schoolhouse. Contributing building in a National Register-eligible historic district	Town Hall / municipal offices
3 Schoppee Point Road	Roque Bluffs Chapel	1902	Built with support from summer residents. Contributing building in a National Register-eligible historic district	Chapel / community and religious use
4 Schoppee Point Road	Community Center, formerly Grange Hall	1881; relocated and renovated c. 1919-1921	Originally a boarding house built in Jonesboro; moved to Roque Bluffs and renovated 1919-1921 as the Grange hall; Grange active until 1962; building purchased by the Roque Bluffs Community Club in 1967; renamed Roque Bluffs Community Center in 2012. Contributing building in a National Register-eligible historic district	Community Center

10 Roque Bluffs Road	House		David Watts home; among the oldest houses in town	Private residence
18 Schoppee Point Road	Octagon House	c. 1886	Listed in <i>Sunrise County Architecture</i> (published 1987)	Private residence
147 Schoppee Point Road	House		Among the oldest houses in Roque Bluffs	Private residence
204 Schoppee Point Road	House		Example of a 19th-century summer cottage	Private residence
16 Birch Point	Farmhouse and barn		Locally identified historic farm property	Private farm property / residence
186 Roque Bluffs Road	Barn	c. 1850	Barn on a 280-acre property historically used for mixed farming and now used as a blueberry farm; the associated house, other outbuildings, and farm fields have not been evaluated for eligibility. National Register eligible (barn only; determined 2006)	Agricultural property / blueberry farm

Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

Prehistoric archaeological sites contain artifacts and other evidence from the period before written records. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission identifies five known prehistoric archaeological sites in Roque Bluffs, including two within Roque Bluffs State Park. All known sites are located within the shoreland zone, behind the high tide line.

The Schoppee Point shell midden is one known Native American archaeological site and is located on State-owned land. MHPC reports that a professional walkover archaeological survey has been completed for the shoreline from Schoppee Point to Johnson Cove at the mouth of the Englishman River.

The remainder of the Town's shoreland zone, shoreline, islands, and other archaeologically sensitive areas has not been professionally surveyed. Because archaeological sites are often associated with shorelines, rivers, ponds, wetlands, and former travel or settlement areas, additional resources may be present in unsurveyed locations.

Historic Archaeological Sites

Historic archaeological sites contain artifacts, structures, and other evidence from the period after written records began. These may include cellar holes, farm and mill foundations, wharves, boatyards, industrial sites, roads, and shipwrecks.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission identifies one documented historic archaeological site in Roque Bluffs: the unidentified shipwreck *Idahoe*, Site No. ME 375-001. The site record lists October 1, 1897, as the associated historic date. Its National Register status is undetermined, and its precise location is not publicly identified.

No documented historic archaeological sites are currently recorded on land in Roque Bluffs. However, several local features may have archaeological value. These include the former sawmill site and surviving berm or dike along the Englishman River, remnants of clam shacks and fish weirs, old wharf and boatyard locations, and the cellar hole and foundation associated with an eighteenth-century home near Johnson Cove Road.

No professional town-wide survey of historic archaeological resources has been completed.

Existing Protection Measures

Protection of historic and archaeological resources in Roque Bluffs is provided mainly through State ownership, conservation ownership, shoreland zoning, local development review, and voluntary stewardship by property owners and community organizations.

Two known prehistoric archaeological sites are located within Roque Bluffs State Park, where State ownership provides a measure of protection. Conservation ownership also protects several nearby islands. Schoppee Island is owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge. Fan Island and Pond Cove Island are owned by the State of Maine. Hickey Island is owned by Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and Poverty Island is owned by Downeast Coastal Conservancy.

The Town's most visible preservation successes involve community buildings. The Town Hall, formerly the one-room schoolhouse, and the Community Center, formerly the Grange hall, have been repaired and maintained. The Chapel has also undergone substantial restoration and improvements.

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requires proposed structural development or soil disturbance on or adjacent to properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places to be submitted to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment before local action is taken.

The Town does not generally require applicants proposing subdivisions or non-residential development in archaeologically sensitive areas to conduct a professional archaeological survey. Current local review therefore provides some protection for known or eligible resources but may not identify undocumented archaeological resources before site disturbance occurs.

Threats to Historic and Archaeological Resources

The principal threats to Roque Bluffs' historic and archaeological resources are shoreline erosion, severe storms, flooding, sea level rise, development, lack of documentation, and limited funding.

Known prehistoric archaeological sites are concentrated in the shoreland zone, where erosion and storm damage can permanently destroy artifacts and their context. Historic settlement areas along Johnson Cove Road, Schoppee Point Road, and other coastal locations may also be affected by flooding, shoreline change, and damage to roads or buildings.

Development can alter or remove archaeological sites, older settlement patterns, historic farm landscapes, and former waterfront features, particularly where resources have not been professionally surveyed or formally documented. Construction, excavation, road work, and shoreline stabilization may cause accidental damage if current MHPC information is not considered during project review.

Most historic buildings and potential archaeological sites are privately owned. Property owners may not know that a building, cellar hole, foundation, shoreline feature, or landscape has historic significance. Preservation can also be difficult where repair costs are high or specialized technical assistance is needed.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs retains a recognizable historic development pattern centered on its village, older road corridors, agricultural properties, and shoreline. These resources provide visible connections to the Town's civic, farming, fishing, forestry, and maritime history.

Existing protection measures are useful but limited. State and conservation ownership protect some archaeological resources, and the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance provides for Maine Historic Preservation Commission review of certain projects affecting National Register-listed or eligible properties. Most historic buildings, archaeological features, and cultural landscapes, however, remain privately owned and depend largely on owner awareness and voluntary stewardship.

The Town's principal information gap is the absence of comprehensive professional surveys. Only part of the shoreline has received a professional archaeological walkover survey, and no town-wide survey of historic archaeological sites or above-ground historic resources has been completed. Current MHPC maps and records should therefore be used during development review, while local knowledge from the Roque Bluffs Historical Society, Community Center, property owners, and residents can help identify areas needing further documentation.

A separate municipal historic preservation board is not necessary or practical at this time. The Town can more realistically protect resources by improving Planning Board and Code Enforcement review practices, maintaining current MHPC information, supporting voluntary National Register

nominations, and helping connect property owners and community organizations with technical assistance and funding.

Known prehistoric archaeological sites are concentrated in the shoreland zone, where erosion, flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise may cause permanent loss. The most practical priorities are to document vulnerable resources, consider them in public infrastructure and resilience projects, and pursue grant-supported survey or preservation work when opportunities arise.

Climate Considerations

Climate change presents particular risks to Roque Bluffs' archaeological and historic resources because many are located near the shore. Erosion, storm surge, coastal flooding, higher tides, and sea level rise may damage or destroy sites before they are fully documented.

Historic buildings and settlement areas may also face increased risk from wind, water intrusion, road damage, and changing drainage conditions. Adaptation work such as elevation, floodproofing, shoreline stabilization, or major repairs may be necessary in some locations and should be planned in a way that avoids unnecessary harm to historic character and archaeological resources.

The Town does not need a separate climate program for historic resources. Its most practical role is to consider these resources in broader resilience planning, consult the Maine Historic Preservation Commission when public projects may affect known or eligible sites, and support documentation or grant-funded preservation work where feasible.

The Roque Bluffs Historical Society and Community Center can also help identify vulnerable resources, preserve photographs and records, and improve public awareness before additional loss occurs.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Protect significant historic and archaeological resources to the greatest extent practicable.

Strategy 1.1: Maintain current Maine Historic Preservation Commission archaeological sensitivity maps, historic resource information, and relevant MaineDOT historic property records at the Town Office for use by the Planning Board and Code Enforcement Officer during development review.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Amend local land use ordinances or review procedures, as needed, to require use of current MHPC maps and information when reviewing subdivisions and non-residential development in archaeologically sensitive areas or near known and eligible historic resources.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 1.3: Require applicants, where applicable, to avoid or reduce impacts to known historic or archaeological resources through appropriate site design, resource protection measures, or consultation with MHPC.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing following ordinance or procedure updates

Policy 2: Improve documentation of Roque Bluffs' historic and archaeological resources.

Strategy 2.1: Work with MHPC, SCEC, and other partners to identify grants or technical assistance for professional survey of unsurveyed shoreland areas, islands, historic archaeological sites, and above-ground historic resources.

Responsibility: Select Board, Roque Bluffs Historical Society

Time frame: Long term, as funding allows

Strategy 2.2: Encourage interested property owners to pursue voluntary National Register evaluation or nomination for eligible buildings, properties, or the village-center historic district.

Responsibility: Roque Bluffs Historical Society, property owners, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Promote public awareness and voluntary preservation of local history.

Strategy 3.1: Support the Roque Bluffs Historical Society, Community Center, and volunteers in gathering, organizing, digitizing, and sharing historic photographs, oral histories, maps, records, and information through displays, talks, written materials, digital collections, or a small historical collection at the Community Center.

Responsibility: Roque Bluffs Historical Society, Community Center, volunteers

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Provide basic information at the Town Office or on the Town website about historic buildings, archaeological sensitivity, voluntary preservation, and when property owners or applicants should contact MHPC.

Responsibility: Select Board, Roque Bluffs Historical Society, Community Center

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.3: Connect property owners with available preservation guidance, tax incentives, technical assistance, and grant opportunities when relevant.

Responsibility: Roque Bluffs Historical Society, Select Board

Time frame: As opportunities arise

Policy 4: Reduce climate-related impacts to historic and archaeological resources.

Strategy 4.1: Consider known and potentially significant historic and archaeological resources when planning municipal road, drainage, shoreline, public-access, and resilience projects.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Consult MHPC when publicly funded repair, elevation, floodproofing, shoreline stabilization, or other resilience work may affect a known or eligible historic or archaeological resource.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: As needed

Strategy 4.3: Encourage documentation and compatible repair or adaptation methods for historic resources exposed to erosion, flooding, storms, or sea level rise.

Responsibility: Roque Bluffs Historical Society, property owners, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

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POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to:

6. Describe the current population and household characteristics of Roque Bluffs and compare them with patterns in the region and the State;
7. Identify the population, age, household, income, educational, and seasonal-residency trends shaping the community;
8. Determine how those trends will influence future demand for housing, municipal and school services, and community facilities; and
9. Assess the population's exposure and vulnerability to a changing climate, including the needs of the community's most vulnerable residents.

State Goal

The State of Maine establishes no separate goal for population and demographics. This section instead provides the demographic foundation that supports the goals of the housing, economy, public facilities, and other chapters of this Plan.

A Note on Data Reliability

Much of the characteristics data in this chapter is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. For a community as small as Roque Bluffs, ACS estimates are based on a very small sample and carry wide margins of error; individual indicators can shift substantially between release years for reasons of sampling alone rather than real change in the community. Where possible, official decennial Census counts and Maine Office of the State Economist projections are used for population figures, and ACS estimates are reported with their margins of error and treated as approximate. The Comprehensive Planning Committee recognizes that Census data does not always accurately reflect conditions in Roque Bluffs.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs had a year-round population of 296 residents in the 2020 U.S. Census and an estimated 316 residents in 2025. After growing from 264 residents in 2000 to 303 in 2010, the population declined slightly in 2020 but appears to have resumed gradual growth. The Maine Office of the State Economist projects approximately 346 residents by 2037, which this Plan uses as its primary planning horizon.

About one-third of residents are age 65 or older, approximately 10% are under age 18, and the Town had 16 publicly funded pupils as of May 2026. About one-third of the housing stock is also classified as seasonally vacant.

These trends point to greater need for accessible housing, emergency response, communication during storms and outages, transportation and services for older residents, and careful planning in areas exposed to coastal hazards.

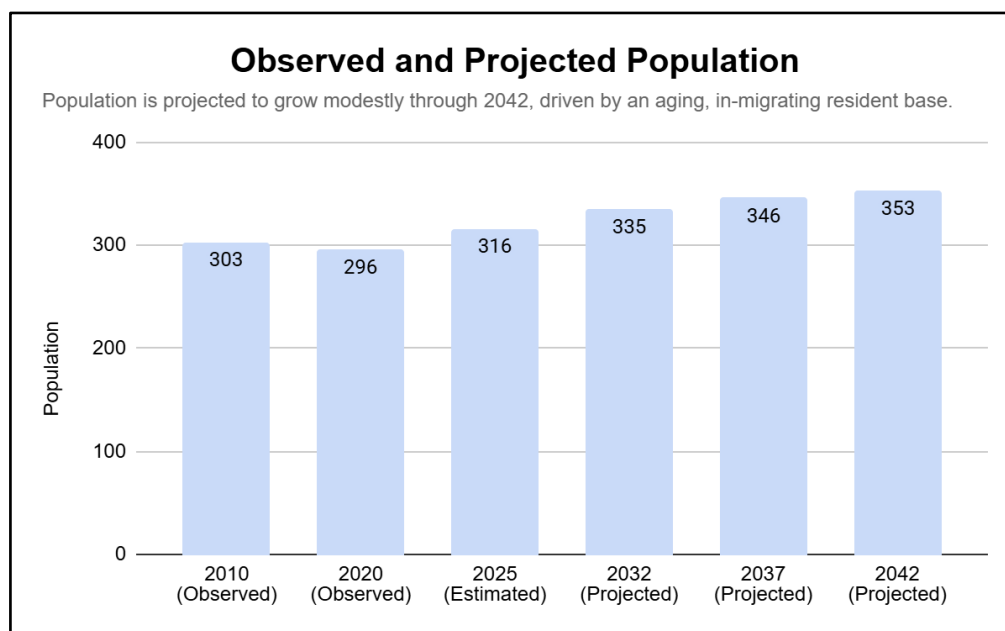
Population Trends

Roque Bluffs has grown substantially over the past half-century, although growth has not been steady in every decade. The town had 153 residents in 1970 and nearly doubled to 244 residents by 1980, its sharpest decade of growth. The population then declined slightly to 234 in 1990 before rising to 264 in 2000 and 303 in 2010. The 2020 Census recorded 296 residents, a slight decline from 2010, but the Census Bureau’s 2025 estimate places the population at 316, indicating that growth has resumed.

This recent trend differs from Washington County’s longer-term pattern of population decline, although current projections anticipate some countywide growth during the earlier part of the planning period.

The Maine Office of the State Economist projects continued growth through the planning period, with Roque Bluffs reaching approximately 346 residents by 2037. Because town-level projections are less precise than county and State projections, this Plan treats the 2037 figure as a reasonable planning target rather than a fixed forecast. The important planning issue is not rapid growth, but the type of growth expected: an older year-round population, continued seasonal influence, and modest increases in year-round household demand.

Figure 1. Observed and projected population, Roque Bluffs, 2010-2042.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2025 estimates (2025 base); Maine Office of the State Economist, Comprehensive Planning Population and Demographic Data Set: Roque Bluffs; and Maine State and County Population Projections to 2042 (April 2025 release).

Table 1. Projected percentage population change, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2025-2042.

Projected % Change	Roque Bluffs	Washington County	Maine
2025-2032	+6.0%	+6.8%	+1.7%
2032-2037	+3.3%	+0.9%	0.0%
2037-2042	+2.0%	-0.1%	-0.9%
2025-2042 (cumulative)	+11.7%	+7.7%	+0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2025 estimates (2025 base); Maine Office of the State Economist, Comprehensive Planning Population and Demographic Data Set: Roque Bluffs; and Maine State and County Population Projections to 2042 (April 2025 release).

Age Distribution & School Enrollment

Roque Bluffs has an older age structure than Washington County or Maine as a whole. In 2020, about one-third of residents were age 65 or older, compared with about 26% in Washington County and 22% statewide. At the same time, only about 10% of Roque Bluffs residents were under age 18, compared with about 18% in both the county and the State. Residents age 45 and over made up roughly two-thirds of the town's population.

Table 2. Age distribution by group, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2020.

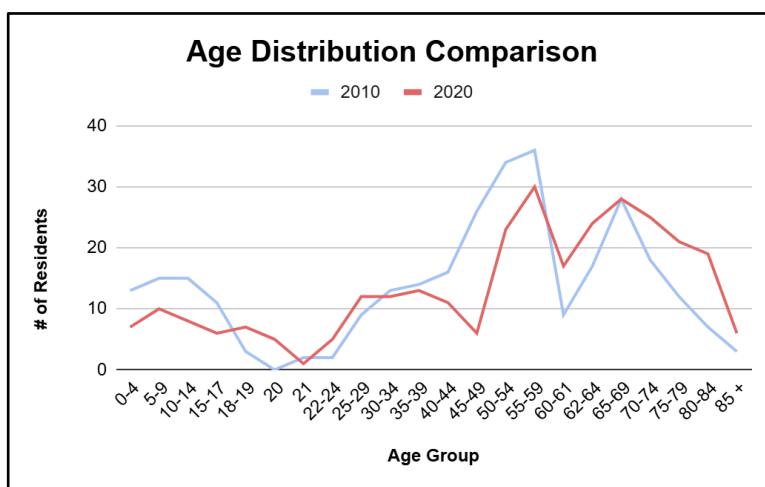
Age Group	Roque Bluffs	Washington County	Maine
Under 18	10.5%	18.3%	18.5%
18-44	22.3%	27.0%	31.3%
45-64	33.8%	28.6%	28.3%
65 and over	33.4%	26.1%	21.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census

The town's population also became significantly older between 2010 and 2020. During that decade, the number of residents under age 18 fell from 54 to 31, while the number of residents age 65 and older increased from 68 to 99. This shift reflects both aging in place among long-time residents and the continued in-migration of older adults.

The decline in younger residents is reflected in school enrollment. As of May 2026, Roque Bluffs had 16 publicly funded pupils, one of the lowest counts in the town's recent enrollment record. Continued low enrollment will affect the town's education costs, tuition planning, and long-term ability to attract and retain younger families.

Figure 2. Age distribution by age group, Roque Bluffs, 2010 and 2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Household Characteristics

The 2020 U.S. Census recorded 139 occupied housing units in Roque Bluffs. The most recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates place the number of households at approximately 140, although the margin of error is large for a town of this size. This indicates that the number of year-round households has remained relatively stable, even as the town's population has resumed modest growth.

Average household size is difficult to measure precisely. The 2020 Census implies an average of about 2.13 persons per household, while the ACS 2020-2024 estimate reports 2.64 persons per household. Given the small ACS sample size and wide margin of error, these figures should be interpreted cautiously. In practical terms, Roque Bluffs' household composition is shaped by an older population and a substantial number of one- and two-person households.

These household trends point toward continued demand for smaller, accessible year-round housing options that allow older residents to remain in the community. They also suggest that future

household growth may come more from seasonal homes converting to year-round use than from large increases in family households with children.

Table 3. Household characteristics, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2020-2024.			
Household Characteristics Indicator	Roque Bluffs	Washington County	Maine
Households (ACS 2020-2024)	140 (±30)	14,187 (±300)	597,159 (±1,514)
Average household size (ACS 2020-2024)	2.64 (±0.41)	2.14 (±0.04)	2.26 (±0.01)
Average household size (2020 Census implied)	2.13	2.20	2.29

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024

Educational Attainment

Roque Bluffs residents have relatively high levels of educational attainment compared with Washington County and Maine. According to the American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-year estimates, 96.2% of residents age 25 and over have at least a high school diploma, compared with 91.1% in Washington County and 94.8% statewide. The share of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher is also higher in Roque Bluffs, at 39.1%, compared with 24.7% in Washington County and 36.2% in Maine.

These figures reflect the town’s older and partly in-migrating population, including retirees and professionals who moved to Roque Bluffs later in life. They also suggest a resident base with strong capacity for civic participation and volunteer service. However, high educational attainment does not necessarily translate into local employment, since many residents are retired, self-employed, or employed outside the town. This relationship is addressed more fully in the Economy chapter.

Income & Poverty

Roque Bluffs has a higher estimated median household income than Washington County and Maine. According to the American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-year estimates, the town’s median household income was \$89,375, compared with \$56,024 in Washington County and \$74,733 statewide. Because Roque Bluffs is a small community, this estimate has a wide margin of error and should be treated as approximate.

Table 4. Median household income and poverty rate, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2020-2024.			
Income & Poverty Indicator	Roque Bluffs	Washington County	Maine
Median household income	\$89,375 (±\$33,950)	\$56,024 (±\$2,346)	\$74,733 (±\$795)
Families below poverty level	8.3% (±6.6%)	11.7% (±1.6%)	6.4% (±0.3%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024.

Family poverty in Roque Bluffs is estimated at 8.3%, compared with 11.7% in Washington County and 6.4% statewide. The town’s margin of error is also wide for this measure, but the data suggest that while Roque Bluffs is generally better off than the surrounding county, some year-round households still face economic hardship.

These income patterns are important for planning. Many residents are older and may rely on fixed incomes such as Social Security, pensions, retirement savings, or investment income. Even in a community with relatively high median income, rising housing costs, taxes, energy costs, healthcare costs, and storm-related home improvements may place pressure on older residents and lower-income households. These issues are addressed further in the Housing, Economy, and Public Facilities chapters.

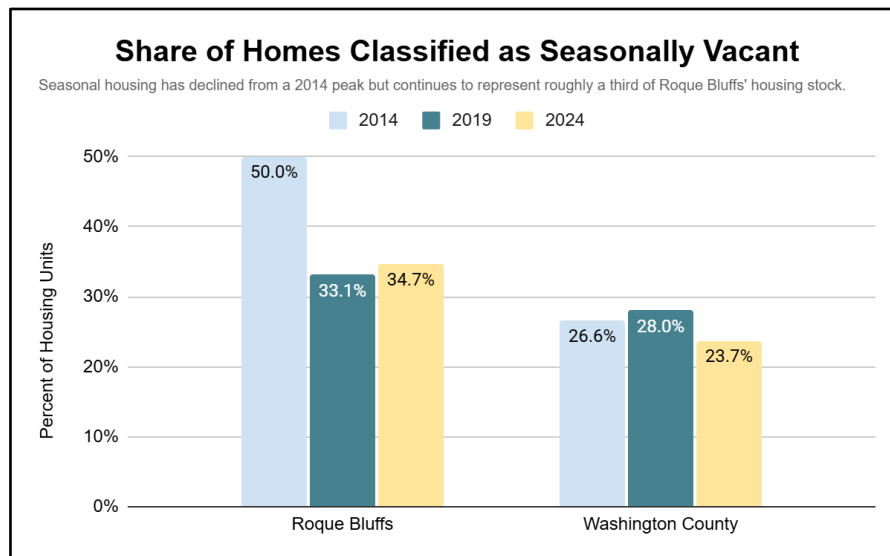
Seasonal Population

In 2024, approximately 34.7% of Roque Bluffs’ housing units were classified as seasonally vacant, compared with 23.7% in Washington County. This was lower than the town’s estimated 50% seasonal-vacancy rate in 2014 but confirms that seasonal housing remains a significant part of the local housing stock.

The decline in the seasonal share between 2014 and 2019 may reflect, in part, the conversion of some seasonal homes to year-round residences. Since 2019, the seasonal share has remained closer to one-third of the housing stock, suggesting that seasonal housing continues to represent a substantial and relatively stable component of the community. Applied to the Town’s estimated housing stock, this indicates roughly 90 to 100 seasonal homes.

Seasonal residents and visitors increase the town’s effective population during the warmer months and create additional demand for public access, road use, solid waste handling, emergency response, and recreational facilities. Seasonal property owners also contribute substantially to the tax base and community life.

Figure 3. Share of homes classified as seasonally vacant, Roque Bluffs and Washington County, 2014, 2019, and 2024.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2014, 2019, and 2024.

Analyses

Roque Bluffs is expected to experience modest population growth through the planning period. The Maine Office of the State Economist projects the town's population to reach approximately 346 residents by 2037. This is not rapid growth, but it is meaningful for a small town. The more important planning issue is the character of that growth. Recent trends suggest that new year-round population growth will continue to be shaped by retiree in-migration, aging in place, and some conversion of seasonal homes to year-round residences, rather than by natural increase among younger families.

These demographic trends will influence future demand for housing and municipal services. Housing demand is likely to shift toward smaller, accessible, lower-maintenance homes that allow older residents to remain in the community. Emergency medical response, storm preparedness, transportation assistance, and communication with residents during outages or road closures will become increasingly important as the older population grows. Municipal service demand for roads, solid waste, administration, and public facilities is expected to grow only modestly with population, but seasonal peaks will continue to place additional pressure on access points, recreation areas, and emergency response during the warmer months.

The decline in school-age population is one of the clearest demographic trends in Roque Bluffs. With only 16 publicly funded pupils reported in May 2026, school enrollment is low and may remain so unless the town becomes more accessible to younger households with children. This

trend has implications for education costs, tuition planning, and the long-term balance of age groups in the community.

Seasonal population continues to increase demand for public access, road use, solid waste handling, emergency response, and recreation facilities during the warmer months. Roque Bluffs is not a regional service center, and most employment, shopping, health care, and services are located in nearby communities, particularly Machias.

Climate Considerations

Much of the town's housing and population is located in areas that may be affected by sea-level rise, coastal storms, flooding, erosion, and extended power outages. As seasonal homes convert to year-round use and older residents continue to move to or remain in the community, more people may live year-round in locations exposed to coastal hazards.

The town's age structure increases its vulnerability to climate-related impacts. Approximately one-third of residents are age 65 or older, and some may live alone, rely on fixed incomes, or depend on electricity for medical equipment, heat, medication refrigeration, communication, or transportation. Storm-related outages, blocked or flooded roads, and communication disruptions can create greater risks for these residents.

Climate adaptation should therefore include both physical preparedness and reliable communication. The Town should continue coordinating with regional emergency response partners, identify residents who may need additional outreach during storms or extended outages, and use communication methods that do not depend entirely on internet access.

Climate-Related Strategies

Chapter 208 does not require policies or strategies for the Population and Demographics topic. However, the State's climate adaptation guidance recommends that communities consider strategies for vulnerable populations and regional emergency coordination. The following strategies are included to address those considerations and to connect the demographic findings in this chapter with the Town's broader resilience planning.

Strategy 1: Vulnerable-Population Communication and Outreach

Provide practical, voluntary means for residents who may need additional assistance during coastal storms, power outages, flooding, extreme heat, or other emergencies to make their needs known to the Town or emergency responders. Maintain communication methods that do not rely solely on internet access, including telephone, posted or mailed notices, and coordination with local and regional emergency response partners.

Responsibility: Select Board, in coordination with local and regional emergency response partners
Time Frame: Develop within two years of plan adoption; review annually

Strategy 2: Regional Emergency and Adaptation Coordination

Continue to participate in regional emergency response, hazard preparedness, and climate

adaptation efforts. Roque Bluffs relies on mutual aid, Washington County Emergency Management, neighboring municipalities, and regional partners to prepare for and respond to storms, flooding, extended outages, and other hazards.

Responsibility: Select Board, in coordination with Town emergency services

Time Frame: Ongoing

Sources

Decennial Census of Population and Housing, 1960 through 2020.

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024.

Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for States, Counties, and Incorporated Places (Vintage 2025), released May 14, 2026.

Maine Office of the State Economist. *Comprehensive Planning Population and Demographic Data Set: Roque Bluffs*. Department of Administrative and Financial Services.

Maine Office of the State Economist. *Maine Population Outlook 2022 to 2032* (April 2025) and the associated *Maine State and County Population Projections to 2042*. Department of Administrative and Financial Services.

Maine Office of the State Economist. Share of Homes That Are Seasonally Vacant comparison data (2014, 2019, 2024).

Town of Roque Bluffs. Town Hall meeting records, May 2026.

ECONOMY

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

10. Describe the labor force, economy, and economic changes in Roque Bluffs and the region;
11. Identify economic links between the town and region; and
12. Project the outlook for employment, economic vitality, and economic development of Roque Bluffs over the planning period.

State Goal

To promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs is not a regional employment center. Most residents depend on the Machias area and the broader Washington County economy for jobs, goods, services, health care, and education. Local economic activity is primarily small-scale and includes fishing, shellfish harvesting, blueberry farming, forestry, construction, property maintenance, home occupations, remote work, and seasonal services.

The Town has limited infrastructure for large-scale commercial or industrial development, including no public sewer or water system, no three-phase power, no industrial park, and no TIF district. Its most practical economic development role is to support compatible small businesses and natural resource-based work, improve broadband reliability, maintain appropriate land use standards, and coordinate with regional partners. Residents generally favor modest economic activity that does not require major new infrastructure or create significant impacts on surrounding properties.

A Note on Data Reliability : Much of the data in this chapter is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. For a community as small as Roque Bluffs, ACS estimates are based on a small sample and can carry wide margins of error. Individual indicators may shift between release years because of sampling variation rather than actual changes in the community. Where possible, ACS data is supplemented with Maine Department of Labor data, local information, and Comprehensive Planning Committee input. The data should be treated as a reasonable planning guide rather than a precise count of local conditions.

Brief Economic History

Roque Bluffs' economy developed from its coastline, forests, fields, and location near the Englishman River and Machias Bay. Early residents fished, dug clams, built boats, cut and sawed timber, grew potatoes, harvested wild blueberries and salt marsh hay, and used local shore and river access for small-scale industry. Historic enterprises included a salt works, brick kiln, and a sawmill on the Englishman River. At Bare Cove, known locally as Arlie's Cove, a lobster canning factory operated by Burnham and Morrill in the late 1890s and a fish-smoking operation in the early 1900s each employed dozens of workers, large enough that the owners built boarding houses for employee housing.

Many of those older businesses disappeared during the twentieth century, including the sawmill, canneries, stores, post office, boatyards, old town wharf, and John Preston's wharf. Roque Bluffs gradually became more residential and seasonal, while retaining parts of its natural resource economy. Fishing, shellfish harvesting, blueberry farming, forestry, construction, caretaking, and seasonal services remain important today, though much of this work is self-employed, seasonal, or tied to regional markets rather than formal local employers.

Labor Force, Employment, and Income Characteristics

The labor force is defined as all persons who are employed or actively seeking employment. According to the American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates, 166 Roque Bluffs residents, age 16 and over, were employed during the estimate period. Washington County had approximately 12,972 employed residents during the same period.

The occupational distribution of employed Roque Bluffs residents reflects a mix of professional, service, trades, natural resource, and regional employment. Because Roque Bluffs is a small community and ACS estimates are based on a limited sample, the figures should be treated as approximate rather than precise counts.

Table 1. Employed residents by occupation, Roque Bluffs, 2020-2024.		
Occupation Category	Roque Bluffs	% of Employed
Management, Business, Science & Arts	61	36.7%
Service Occupations	47	28.3%
Sales and Office Occupations	27	16.3%
Production, Transportation & Material Moving	16	9.6%
Natural Resources, Construction & Maintenance	15	9.0%
Total Employed	166	

Source: ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupations were the largest reported category, accounting for 61 employed residents, or 36.7% of employed residents. Service occupations accounted for 47 residents, or 28.3%. Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance occupations accounted for 15 residents, or 9.0%.

These figures should be interpreted carefully. Fishing, shellfish harvesting, contracting, caretaking, property maintenance, forestry, and other seasonal or self-employed work remain important locally, but small-sample ACS data may not fully capture their role in the town’s economy.

Median household income is a standard measure of economic well-being within a community. According to the ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates, Roque Bluffs had an estimated median household income of \$89,375, compared with \$56,024 in Washington County and \$74,733 statewide. The Roque Bluffs estimate has a wide margin of error, ±\$33,950, and should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 2. Median household income by geography, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2020-2024.		
Geography	Median Household Income	Margin of Error
Roque Bluffs	\$89,375	±\$33,950
Washington County	\$56,024	±\$2,346
Maine	\$74,733	±\$795

Source: ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

The ACS estimate places Roque Bluffs’ median household income above the Washington County and statewide estimates, although the Town’s wide margin of error means the difference from Washington County is not statistically significant. The figure should not be interpreted as evidence of a large local wage base or many high-paying jobs within town. Household income may reflect a mix of retirement income, remote work, employment outside Roque Bluffs, self-employment, investment income, and other non-local sources.

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan reported a median household income of approximately \$21,500. Adjusted for inflation, this is equivalent to about \$39,947 in 2026 dollars. The current ACS estimate of \$89,375 is substantially higher, although the Town’s wide margin of error means the comparison should be interpreted cautiously. Over the same period, Washington County and Maine experienced much smaller inflation-adjusted increases in median household income. These figures suggest that Roque Bluffs’ household income profile may have shifted over time, but the current estimate is not precise enough to support a definitive conclusion.

Table 3. Median household income comparison, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2002-2024.				
Geography	2001 Income	2001 Income in 2026 Dollars	2024 ACS 5-Year Estimate	Change with inflation adjusted
Roque Bluffs	\$21,500	\$39,947	\$89,375	+123%
Washington County	\$28,087	\$52,172	\$56,024	+7%
Maine	\$37,592	\$69,846	\$74,733	+7%

Source:2001 Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan, ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

Despite the higher estimated median household income, economic need still exists in Roque Bluffs. The ACS 2020-2024 estimate reports that 8.3% of families in Roque Bluffs had incomes below the poverty level, compared with 11.7% in Washington County and 6.4% statewide. The Roque Bluffs estimate has a margin of error of ±6.6%, so it should be treated as approximate. The data indicates that lower-income households remain part of the community, even as the median income is influenced by higher-income households, retirees, and residents with income from outside the local economy.

Table 4. Families below poverty level, Roque Bluffs, Washington County, and Maine, 2024.		
Geography	% Families Below Poverty	Margin of Error
Roque Bluffs	8.3%	±6.6%
Washington County	11.7%	±1.6%
Maine	6.4%	±0.3%

Source: ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

Commuting

The majority of Roque Bluffs residents with wage-based employment commute by private vehicle to jobs in Machias and other regional centers. Because Roque Bluffs has few formal employers, many employed residents work outside the town, work from home, are self-employed, or combine multiple types of work.

Table 5. Means of travel to work, Roque Bluffs, 2024.		
Means of Travel	Roque Bluffs	% of Workers
Drove alone	103	65.2%
Carpooled	31	19.6%
Work at home	22	13.9%
Public transportation	1	0.6%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other	1	0.6%
Walked	0	0.0%
Total	158	

Source: ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

According to the 2020-2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 103 Roque Bluffs workers, or 65.2% of workers, drove alone to work. Another 31 workers, or 19.6%, carpooled. Twenty-two workers, or 13.9%, worked from home. Public transportation, walking, bicycling, motorcycle, taxicab, and similar travel modes accounted for very little reported commuting activity.

Table 6. Travel time to work for non-remote workers, Roque Bluffs, 2024.	
Travel Time	Workers
Less than 5 minutes	9
5 to 9 minutes	15
10 to 14 minutes	38
15 to 19 minutes	29
20 to 24 minutes	29
25 to 29 minutes	1
30 to 34 minutes	2
45 to 59 minutes	3
60 minutes or more	10
Total (non-remote workers)	136
<i>Source: ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates</i>	

The share of workers reporting that they worked from home is significant for a small rural community. Work from home allows some residents to earn income from employers or clients outside Washington County while continuing to live in Roque Bluffs. This supports year-round residency, household income, and professional employment, but it also makes reliable internet service, cellular service, electrical service, and storm resilience more important to the local economy.

Among the 136 residents who commuted to a workplace outside the home, most traveled less than 30 minutes. The most common commute time was 10 to 14 minutes, reported by 38 workers. Another 29 workers reported travel times of 15 to 19 minutes, and 29 reported travel times of 20 to 24 minutes. This pattern is consistent with commuting to Machias, approximately 10 miles away, and other nearby employment destinations. The estimated mean travel time for commuting residents was approximately 19 minutes. This shorter average commute reflects Roque Bluffs' connection to the Machias area, but it should not be interpreted to mean that transportation is unimportant. Roque Bluffs is located at the end of a peninsula and relies on a limited road network for access to jobs, services, health care, education, and

shopping. Reliable roads, winter maintenance, storm response, internet access, and electrical service all affect residents' ability to work and maintain income.

Roque Bluffs Business and Employment Today

Roque Bluffs is a residential community with limited commercial and industrial activity. The town's local economy is shaped primarily by natural resource-based work, self-employment, home-based business activity, seasonal employment, and regional commuting. Commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, blueberry farming, forestry, construction, property maintenance, and small service businesses continue to provide income for some residents, but most wage-based employment is located outside the town.

The Town is one of the few identifiable year-round employers within Roque Bluffs. Most other local employment is small-scale, seasonal, self-employed, family-based, or tied to natural resource industries and property services.

Home-based and self-employed occupations represent a significant share of local economic activity that does not appear clearly in formal employer counts. This includes contractors, service providers, fishermen, clam diggers, caretakers, artists, craftspeople, and other independent workers.

The following table identifies known local employers and economic activities reported by the Comprehensive Planning Committee. It under-represents actual employment because many residents are self-employed, work seasonally, work from home, or operate businesses that do not appear in formal employer datasets.

Table 7. Known local employers and economic activities, Roque Bluffs.		
Employer or Activity	Industry	Number of People Employed
Town of Roque Bluffs	Municipal	2
Roque Bluffs State Park	Recreation	3 non-resident
Welch Farm	Agriculture	3 seasonal
Moose Moss of Maine	Retail	1
Commercial fishing and shellfish harvesting	Marine Resources	16 fishing 6 clamming
Construction, caretaking, and property maintenance	Services / trades	15+

Source: Roque Bluffs Town Office

Local and Regional Employment Trends

Roque Bluffs is part of the Machias Labor Market Area and depends heavily on the regional economy for jobs, goods, services, health care, education, and other daily needs. Because the town has few formal employers, regional employment trends provide a better picture of the economic conditions affecting Roque Bluffs residents than local employer counts alone.

Covered employment in the Machias Labor Market Area declined modestly over the past two decades, from 4,564 jobs in 2004 to 4,432 jobs in 2024, a decline of approximately 3 percent. The pattern was not linear. Employment fell to 4,102 jobs in 2014 before recovering during the following decade.

Figure 1. Covered employment, Machias Labor Market Area, 2004-2024.

Machias Labor Market						
	2004	2014	2024	Sector Growth % 2004-2024	% of Total Change	2024 % of Total
	Employees					
Total, All Industries	4,564	4,102	4,432	-2.98%	See * Note	See * Note
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	280	342	440	36.36%	3.79%	9.93%
Utilities	0	0	29	100.00%	0.65%	0.65%
Construction	225	155	232	3.02%	0.30%	5.23%
Manufacturing	620	517	469	-32.20%	-3.00%	10.58%
Wholesale Trade	180	212	196	8.16%	0.48%	4.42%
Retail Trade	792	724	759	-4.35%	-0.23%	17.13%
Transportation and Warehousing	87	99	111	21.62%	0.60%	2.50%
Information	43	51	32	-34.38%	-0.22%	0.72%
Finance and Insurance	209	203	194	-7.73%	-0.20%	4.38%
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	54	33	18	-67%	0.78%	0.41%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	48	73	96	50.00%	1.11%	2.17%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	76	105	100.00%	2.37%	2.37%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	23	87	157	85.35%	3.04%	3.54%
Educational Services	0	118	137	100.00%	3.09%	3.09%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,408	942	910	-54.73%	-10.32%	20.53%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	27	18	21	-28.57%	-0.12%	0.47%
Accommodation and Food Services	391	328	355	-10.14%	-0.56%	8.01%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	79	103	157	49.68%	1.81%	3.54%

Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information, Covered Employment by Industry, Machias Labor Market Area, 2004-2024.

***Note:** % of Total Change reflects each sector's contribution to the net employment change from 2004 to 2024. 2024 % of Total shows each sector's share of total employment in 2024. The Total, All Industries row equals 100 percent by definition.

Total covered employment in the Machias Labor Market Area has been relatively stable overall, but the composition of employment has changed. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting increased substantially, from 280 jobs in 2004 to 440 jobs in 2024. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services; Construction; and Other Services also increased. These trends are relevant to Roque Bluffs because they align with the town's existing strengths in natural resource-based work, self-employment, home-based business activity, property services, and regional commuting.

Several sectors declined over the same period. Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, Information, Finance and Insurance, Health Care and Social Assistance, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services all had fewer covered jobs in 2024 than in 2004. Health Care and Social Assistance remains the largest sector in the Machias Labor Market Area, but it declined substantially over the twenty-year period. This matters for Roque Bluffs because access to health care, retail, and services affects quality of life, aging in place, and the ability to attract and retain year-round residents.

These regional trends are relevant to Roque Bluffs because several of the growing sectors are consistent with types of work already present in the town, including natural resource-based activity, construction, property services, self-employment, and other small-scale work.

Short-Term Rentals and Tourism

Tourism and seasonal visitation contribute to the Roque Bluffs economy, but the town is not a commercial tourism center. Roque Bluffs State Park is the community's principal visitor destination, providing access to a sand beach, freshwater pond, trails, picnic areas, and coastal scenery. Seasonal homes, short-term rentals, boating, fishing, walking, biking, and other quiet outdoor recreation also bring visitors to the community.

Because Roque Bluffs has few visitor-serving businesses, much of the direct spending associated with tourism occurs in Machias and other nearby service centers. Short-term rentals provide lodging in a town with few other accommodation options and may also provide supplemental income for some property owners.

Tourism-related economic activity is therefore expected to remain small-scale and tied primarily to the town's natural and recreational assets rather than to major commercial development.

Home Occupations and Remote Work

Home occupations and remote work are important parts of Roque Bluffs' economy. Many residents earn income through self-employment, trades, caretaking, marine-related work, professional services, arts and crafts, seasonal work, or employment with businesses located outside the town.

Reliable internet service is increasingly important for these activities. Residents currently use a mix of providers, including Spectrum, Consolidated Communications, and Starlink, and fiber optic

service is being installed to much, but not all, of the town. Continued improvement in internet reliability and coverage would support remote work, home-based businesses, education, telehealth, and emergency communication.

Commercial and Industrial Development Capacity

Roque Bluffs is better suited to small-scale commercial activity than to large commercial or industrial development. The town has no public sewer or water system, no industrial park, no traditional commercial district, and no three-phase power. Development depends on private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal systems, which limits the scale and type of business activity that can be reasonably accommodated.

The town's location at the end of a peninsula, limited road network, rural settlement pattern, and small municipal scale further limit its suitability for industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, or other utility-intensive uses. Most commercial, medical, educational, and professional services are available in nearby Machias and other regional service centers.

Economic Development Priorities, Regional Plans, and Incentives

Roque Bluffs does not have a formal municipal economic development program, economic development staff, tax increment financing district, industrial park, or local business incentive program. The town's economic development role is limited by its small municipal structure and lack of public sewer, public water, and three-phase power.

Local priorities are therefore focused on small-scale economic activity that fits Roque Bluffs' rural, residential, and coastal character, including fisheries, shellfish harvesting, agriculture, forestry, home occupations, remote work, small trades and services, and low-impact recreation-related activity.

Because most economic development capacity is regional, Roque Bluffs relies on coordination with Sunrise County Economic Council, Washington County, state agencies, and other regional partners for assistance related to broadband, housing, workforce development, marine resources, small business support, and infrastructure.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs is closely tied to the Machias and Washington County economy. Most residents depend on regional employment, services, health care, education, and shopping, while local economic activity is concentrated in self-employment, fisheries, shellfish harvesting, agriculture, forestry, trades, property services, seasonal work, and remote employment.

The town's economy has changed from one with more locally based fishing, farming, forestry, and waterfront businesses to one that is primarily residential, with fewer formal employers. Resource-

based work remains important, even though it is not always well represented in employment datasets.

Home occupations and remote work are increasingly important because they allow residents to earn income without major commercial infrastructure. Reliable internet, cellular service, electricity, and road access are therefore important to the local economy.

Tourism has a limited direct economic role in Roque Bluffs. Roque Bluffs State Park, seasonal homes, short-term rentals, and outdoor recreation bring visitors to the community, but most visitor spending occurs in nearby service centers, while local economic benefits are generally limited to rentals, local products, and other small-scale seasonal activity.

Roque Bluffs has limited capacity for large commercial or industrial development. The lack of public sewer and water systems, three-phase power, an industrial park, and a commercial center, together with the town's road network and location, limits the practicality of utility-intensive or high-traffic uses.

The Town does not have a formal economic development program, TIF district, or local incentive program. Its most practical role is to allow compatible local businesses, support existing livelihoods, maintain access to regional employment and services, improve communications infrastructure, and use regional programs when assistance is needed.

Major commercial expansion is not expected during the planning period. Economic activity is more likely to continue through fisheries and agriculture, home occupations, remote work, property services, and employment elsewhere in the region.

Climate Considerations

Climate change may affect Roque Bluffs' economy through impacts to fisheries, shellfish harvesting, blueberry farming, forestry, and seasonal activity. These sectors depend on natural systems that may be affected by coastal storms, flooding, erosion, warming waters, pests, invasive species, and other changing conditions.

Storm-related road closures, power outages, and communication disruptions can also affect residents' ability to work, operate home-based businesses, reach regional employment centers, and move products or supplies.

Economic resilience should therefore focus on maintaining access, reliable communications, and the natural resources that support existing local livelihoods.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Support compatible local economic activity.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to allow appropriate home occupations, remote work, small trades, professional services, property services, arts and crafts, marine-related work, agriculture, forestry, and other low-impact businesses that are compatible with surrounding residential uses.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: When updating land use ordinances, maintain reasonable standards for home occupations and small businesses to address traffic, parking, noise, lighting, signage, odor, and public safety.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 1.3: Avoid ordinance changes or public investments that would encourage large-scale commercial, industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, or other utility-intensive development that is inconsistent with existing infrastructure and the Future Land Use Plan.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Support fisheries, agriculture, forestry, and other resource-based livelihoods.

Strategy 2.1: Protect access to marine resources, agricultural lands, forest lands, and other resource areas that support fishing, shellfish harvesting, farming, forestry, and related work.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Shellfish Committee

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Coordinate with Maine DMR, DACF, SCEC, and other appropriate partners to identify technical assistance, grants, and programs that support local resource-based businesses.

Responsibility: Select Board, Shellfish Committee

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Monitor short-term rental activity and seasonal visitation for changes that may affect housing, public services, or local economic conditions. Address specific impacts through the appropriate housing, land use, or public facilities policies if needed.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Short to medium term

Policy 3: Support reliable communications and regional connections that help residents work and do business.

Strategy 3.1: Work with state, regional, and service-provider partners to identify internet and broadband coverage gaps and reliability issues in Roque Bluffs.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Short term and ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Support improvements to internet and cellular service where feasible, recognizing their importance for remote work, home occupations, business activity, education, telehealth, and emergency communication.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.3: Continue to participate in regional efforts related to workforce, housing, broadband, marine resources, transportation, and small-business assistance when those efforts affect Roque Bluffs residents or businesses.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Use practical economic development tools that match the town's scale and resources.

Strategy 4.1: Continue to rely primarily on regional partnerships, private investment, small business support, grant opportunities, and compatible land use policies rather than creating a municipal economic development program that would be difficult for a small town to administer.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: If a future economic development opportunity is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan, local character, and available infrastructure, evaluate whether grants, partnerships, or other limited incentive tools are appropriate.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: As needed

Strategy 4.3: Maintain information at the Town Office or on the town website about regional small business assistance, broadband programs, marine resource programs, agricultural and forestry assistance, and other economic resources available to residents and small businesses.

Responsibility: Select Board, Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024.

U.S. Census Bureau. Decennial Census of Population and Housing, 2000 and 2020.

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Town of Roque Bluffs. Community Public Survey, 2025.

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Maine Department of Marine Resources. Shellfish and marine resources information.

HOUSING

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

13. Describe Roque Bluffs' existing housing stock, occupancy patterns, and housing conditions.
14. Evaluate seasonal housing, vacancy, rental availability, and housing affordability.
15. Identify local and regional housing needs, including workforce, senior, assisted, and low- to moderate-income housing.
16. Consider how local land use regulations, infrastructure, and environmental constraints affect housing opportunities.
17. Identify policies and strategies that support housing choice, affordability, and consistency with state comprehensive planning requirements.

State Goal

To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs has a substantial housing stock relative to its year-round population, but a large share is seasonal, recreational, or owned by non-residents.

The year-round housing market is dominated by owner-occupied, single-family homes, with very limited rental housing and few local options for senior, assisted, or subsidized housing. Affordability is most constrained for moderate-income households and those with limited or fixed incomes.

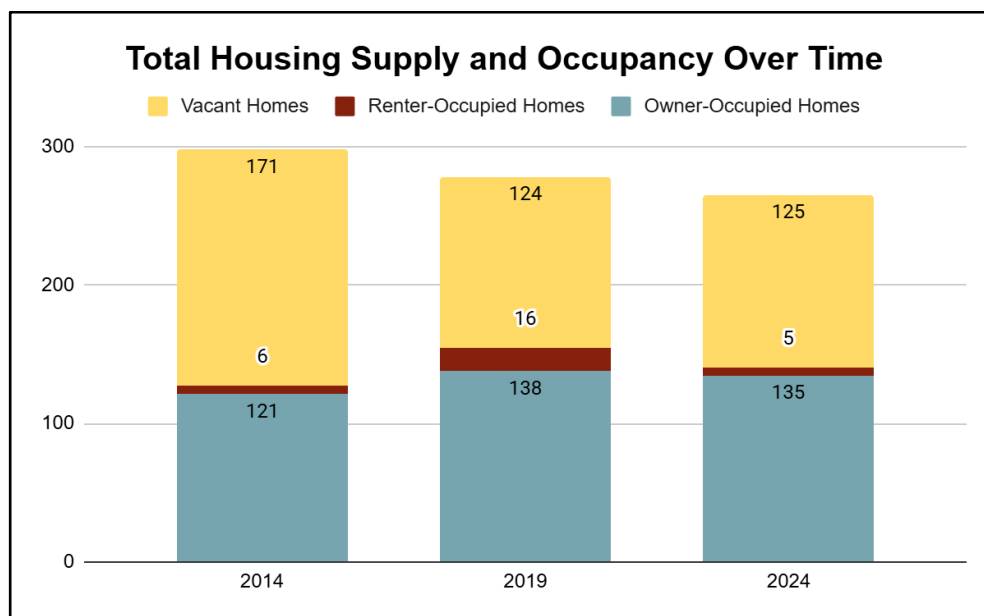
Residential permitting increased temporarily during the pandemic period but declined sharply after 2022. Over the full ten-year period, building activity was modest and uneven and does not indicate sustained development pressure.

Housing Stock and Occupancy

Roque Bluffs has a substantial number of housing units relative to its year-round population. In 2024, the Town had an estimated 140 occupied housing units and 125 vacant housing units. In Roque Bluffs, vacant housing does not necessarily indicate abandoned or deteriorated housing. Many vacant units are seasonal, recreational, or used only occasionally.

Of the estimated occupied units, 135 were owner-occupied and five were renter-occupied. This shows that the year-round housing market is heavily weighted toward owner occupancy and that rental housing is very limited.

Figure 1. Total housing supply and occupancy, Roque Bluffs, 2014-2024.



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau

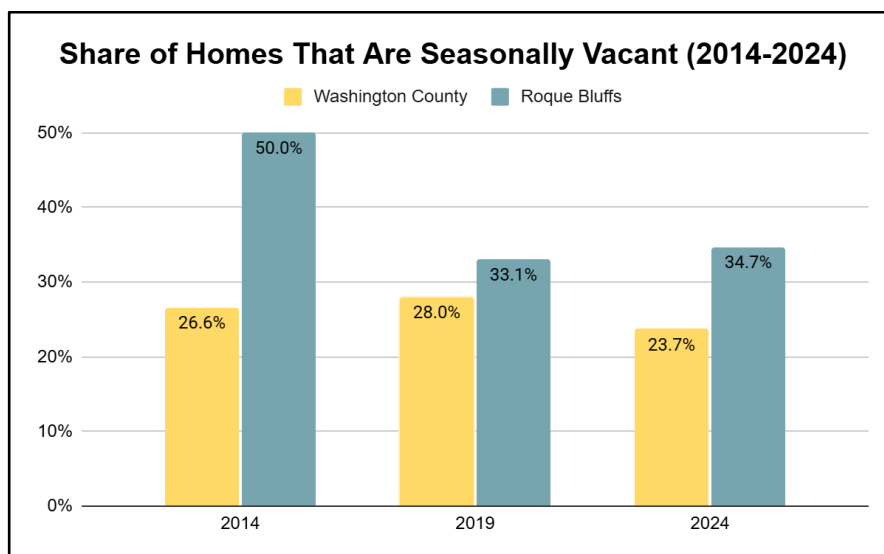
The apparent decline in the total number of housing units shown by the ACS estimates should be interpreted cautiously. In a community the size of Roque Bluffs, small survey samples can produce noticeable variation between five-year estimate periods. Town building permit records show continued residential construction and do not indicate that housing units were removed from the local stock at the scale suggested by the ACS figures.

The limited rental supply reduces housing choice for year-round residents and households seeking smaller, temporary, or lower-maintenance options.

Seasonal Housing and Vacancy

Seasonal housing is a defining feature of Roque Bluffs' housing market. In 2024, the Town's seasonal vacancy rate was estimated at 34.7 percent, compared with 23.7 percent for Washington County. Although the Town's rate has declined from an estimated 50.0 percent in 2014, it remains high and indicates that seasonal,

Figure 2. Share of homes classified as seasonally vacant, Roque Bluffs and Washington County, 2014-2024.



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

recreational, and occasional-use homes continue to make up a substantial share of the housing stock.

Seasonal homes contribute to the property-tax base, but they also reduce the number of units available for year-round occupancy in an already small housing market.

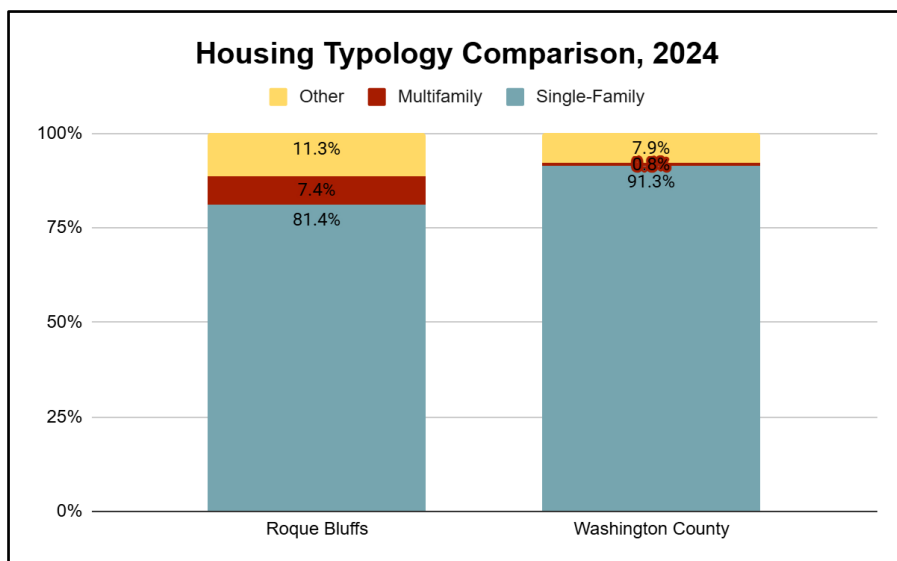
Short-term rentals are also present. A point-in-time VRBO search conducted in June 2026 identified 17 listings in or near Roque Bluffs. This is not a complete inventory, but it confirms that short-term rental activity is part of the local housing market.

Housing Type and Age

Roque Bluffs' housing stock is primarily single-family. In 2024, single-family homes represented 81.4 percent of the housing stock, while multifamily housing represented 7.4 percent and other housing types represented 11.3 percent. This limited variety reduces housing choices beyond conventional single-family ownership, including smaller homes, accessory dwelling units, manufactured housing, duplexes, and other modest housing types.

The Town has a mixed-age housing stock. Older homes contribute to Roque Bluffs' historic development pattern but may require maintenance, weatherization, energy-efficiency upgrades, or accessibility improvements.

Figure 3. Housing typology comparison, Roque Bluffs and Washington County, 2024

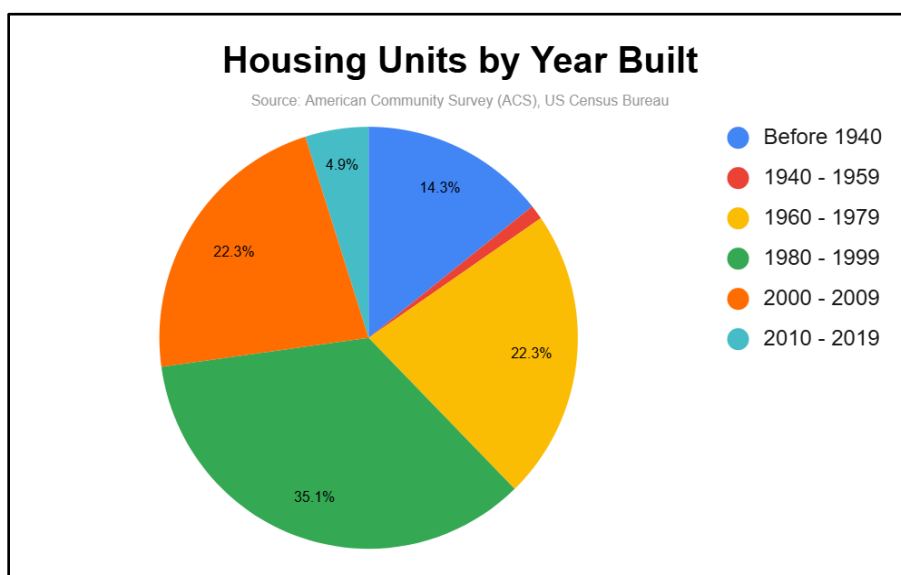


Source:

American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

ACS year-built estimates do not report housing units constructed in Roque Bluffs since 2019. These estimates should be interpreted cautiously because small survey samples may not fully capture limited annual construction activity. Town permit records provide a more reliable local measure of recent residential construction and are discussed in the following section.

Figure 4. Housing units by year built, Roque Bluffs.



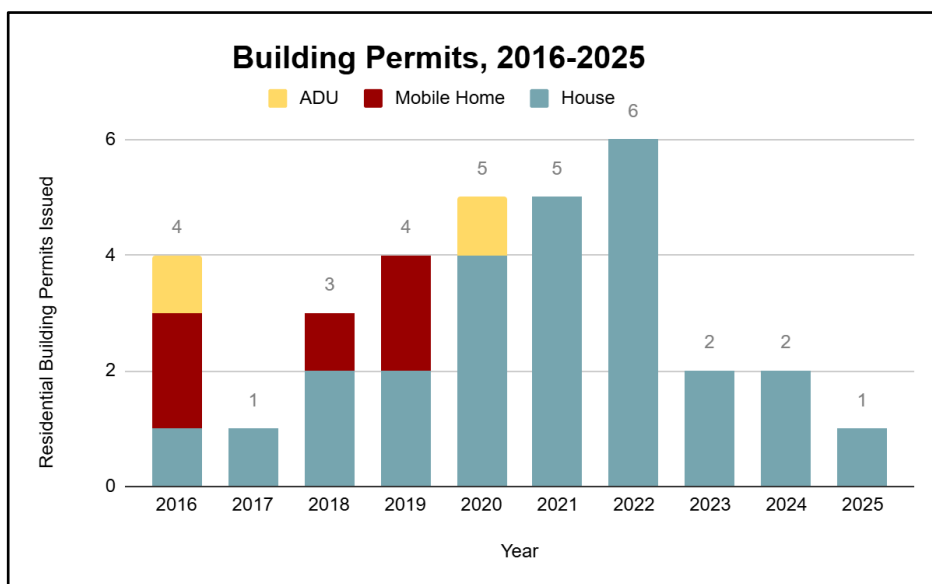
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Residential Building Activity, 2016-2025

Town permit records show that 33 permits for new residential units were issued between 2016 and 2025. These included 26 houses, five mobile homes, and two accessory dwelling units. Because the figures cover a ten-year period and include different housing types and occupancy patterns, they should not be interpreted as evidence of sustained year-round population growth.

Permit activity was uneven and concentrated within a relatively short period. Sixteen of the 33 permits were issued from 2020 through 2022, including a peak of six permits in 2022. This temporary increase coincided with the broader pandemic-era rise in demand for homes and property in rural and coastal communities throughout the region. In Roque Bluffs, the increase appears to represent a short-term response to those unusual market conditions rather than the beginning of a continuing growth trend.

Figure 5. Residential building permits issued, Roque Bluffs, 2016-2025.



Source: Roque Bluffs Town Office, 2026

Residential permitting declined sharply after 2022, falling to two permits in each of 2023 and 2024 and one permit in 2025. Viewed across the full ten-year period, the record shows modest and episodic residential activity, with an average of approximately three permits per year and no pattern of sustained increase. The recent decline, together with the Town's seasonal housing pattern and development constraints, indicates that future residential growth is likely to remain limited and dispersed.

Ownership records associated with these permits reinforce this point. Fifteen of the 33 permits, or approximately 45 percent, were issued to owners with a Roque Bluffs mailing address, while 18 permits, or approximately 55 percent, were issued to owners with an out-of-state or out-of-town mailing address. This pattern is consistent with the Town's broader ownership profile, in which

approximately 67 percent of parcels are non-resident owned, and indicates that a substantial share of recent residential construction reflects seasonal or investment activity rather than growth in the Town's year-round population.

The geographic distribution of this permit activity is shown in Figure 1 of the Existing Land Use chapter.

Housing Affordability

Housing is generally considered affordable when total housing costs do not exceed 30 percent of gross household income. For homeowners, these costs typically include mortgage principal and interest, property taxes, and insurance.

The following planning-level analysis uses 2024 American Community Survey median household income and median home value data. Because Roque Bluffs is a small community, ACS estimates should be interpreted cautiously and used as general indicators rather than exact measures.

The affordability estimate assumes:

18. A 30-year mortgage.
19. A 7.0 percent interest rate.
20. A 5 percent down payment.
21. The current Roque Bluffs mil rate of 6.00.
22. Homeowner's insurance of \$1,800 per year.
23. Housing costs limited to 30 percent of gross household income.

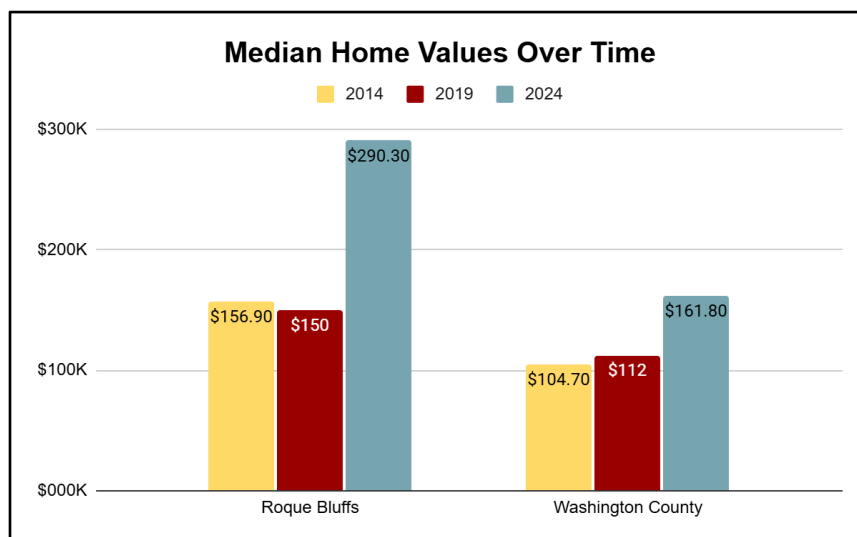
These assumptions do not account for individual circumstances such as credit, existing debt, closing costs, heating, maintenance, or variations in insurance costs.

Table 1. Housing affordability assumptions and estimated purchasing ability, Roque Bluffs, 2024.		
Item	Median Household	80% of Median Household
Annual income	\$89,375	\$71,500
Affordable monthly housing cost at 30 % of income	~ \$2,234	~\$1,788
Estimated affordable home price	~\$305,600	~\$240,100
2024 Roque Bluffs median home value	\$290,300	\$290,300
Estimated affordability gap	No gap, about \$15,300 above median home value	~\$50,200

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024.

Under these assumptions, the 2024 ACS median home value of \$290,300 is within the estimated purchasing ability of the median-income household but approximately \$50,200 above the estimated affordable purchase price for a household earning 80 percent of median household income. Ownership affordability therefore appears less constrained at the median income level but remains a concern for moderate-income and fixed-income households.

Figure 6. Median home values, Roque Bluffs and Washington County, 2014-2024.



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Local assessing records provide a useful comparison. Following the revaluation effective April 1, 2025, the median assessed value of residential property was approximately \$225,000. Because assessed value and ACS owner-reported home value are different measures, the figures should not be directly compared.

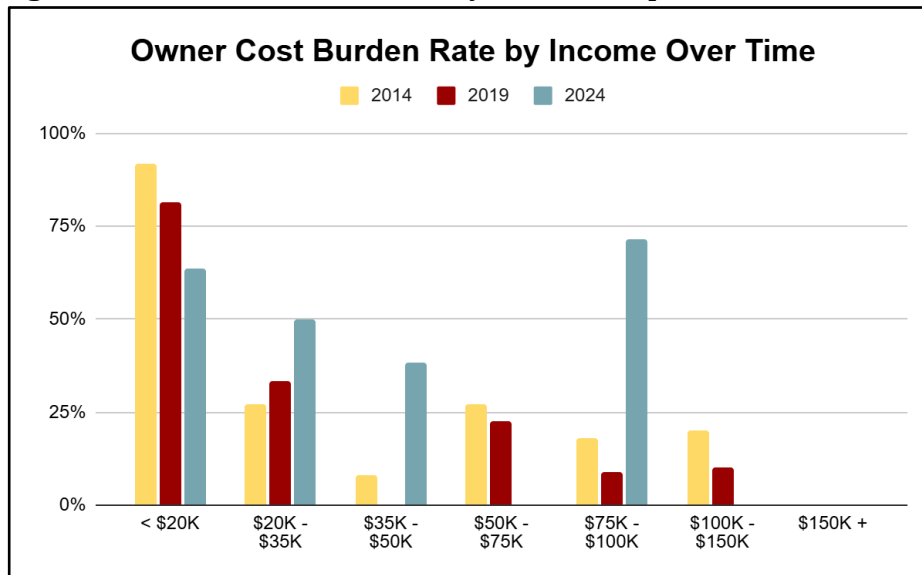
Owner Housing Cost Burden

Housing affordability extends beyond the purchase price of a home. Property taxes, insurance, heating, maintenance, repairs, and accessibility improvements can create financial pressure, particularly for lower- and moderate-income households and older residents living on fixed incomes.

Available ACS estimates indicate that owner cost burden is concentrated among lower-income households. Because Roque Bluffs has a small population and a limited survey sample, these figures should be interpreted cautiously.

Preserving the existing year-round housing stock and connecting residents with available repair, weatherization, energy-efficiency, and accessibility programs can help reduce long-term housing costs.

Figure 7. Owner cost burden rate by income, Roque Bluffs, 2014-2024.



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau

Rental Housing

The year-round rental market in Roque Bluffs is very limited. In 2024, the Town had an estimated five renter-occupied homes. Because the number of renter households is so small, detailed renter affordability estimates should be interpreted cautiously.

The limited number of rental units restricts housing choice within the year-round market.

Senior, Assisted, and Subsidized Housing

Roque Bluffs has no subsidized housing, senior housing, or assisted living facilities. Residents who need these housing types generally rely on options in Machias and elsewhere in Washington County.

Local and Regional Housing Efforts

Roque Bluffs does not have a municipal housing program, housing committee, or formal housing coalition. Local housing needs are addressed primarily through land use regulations, individual property decisions, and regional services.

Workforce housing, senior housing, assisted living, home repair, weatherization, and housing rehabilitation are generally addressed through regional, state, federal, and nonprofit programs and services.

Local Regulations Affecting Housing

Roque Bluffs' Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance regulate where and how housing may be developed. The ordinances establish residential and shoreland districts, dimensional standards, permitting requirements, and protections for coastal, wetland, and water resources.

One-family residential uses are broadly allowed in residential areas, while multifamily uses are more limited and generally require Planning Board review where permitted. Minimum lot sizes are 20,000 square feet in the Village Residential and Growth Residential districts and 42,000 square feet in the Rural Residential district. Larger lot and frontage standards apply in shoreland areas.

Most housing relies on private wells and septic systems. Soil suitability, lot size, road access, shoreland conditions, wetlands, flood risk, and coastal hazards therefore affect where additional housing can be accommodated.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs has a substantial housing stock relative to its year-round population, but many homes are seasonal, recreational, or occasionally occupied. The principal housing issue is therefore not the total number of units, but the limited availability and variety of housing for year-round residents.

The year-round market is dominated by owner-occupied, single-family homes, with very few rental units. Limited housing variety reduces options for residents seeking smaller, lower-maintenance, rental, or more affordable housing.

Housing affordability is mixed. The ACS median home value appears affordable at the median household income level under the assumptions used in this chapter, but affordability becomes more constrained for moderate-income and fixed-income households. Ongoing costs such as taxes, insurance, heating, maintenance, and repairs may add to that burden.

Permit records show modest and uneven residential construction from 2016 through 2025. The temporary increase during the pandemic period was followed by a sharp decline after 2022, and the ten-year record does not indicate sustained development pressure.

Seasonal housing and short-term rentals may affect year-round housing availability, but available information does not establish the extent of that effect. Continued review of local permit, assessing, and occupancy information would help the Town track changes over time.

Senior, assisted, subsidized, and other specialized housing needs will continue to be addressed primarily through regional resources. Locally, the Town's most practical role is to maintain

reasonable housing options, preserve the existing year-round housing stock, and participate in regional housing efforts when appropriate.

Private wells and septic systems, road access, shoreland areas, wetlands, flood risk, and other site conditions will continue to influence where housing can be safely accommodated. Local ordinance review should remain consistent with state housing requirements while reflecting these limitations.

Climate Considerations

Coastal flooding, storm surge, erosion, heavy precipitation, and drainage problems may affect housing in low-lying and shoreline areas of Roque Bluffs and may increase maintenance, repair, and insurance costs for affected properties.

Housing-related ordinance review should continue to consider flood risk, stormwater management, septic suitability, and coastal hazards when determining where additional housing can be safely accommodated.

Weatherization, home repair, and resilience programs may help protect the existing year-round housing stock, particularly for lower- and moderate-income households and older residents.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Maintain reasonable housing options consistent with local conditions and state requirements.

Strategy 1.1: Review land use provisions for one-family homes, accessory dwelling units, manufactured and mobile homes, mobile home parks, and multifamily housing to ensure that appropriate housing options are allowed where site conditions are suitable.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Select Board

Time frame: Short to medium term and ongoing

Strategy 1.2: When reviewing land use ordinances, consider whether lot size, frontage, setback, density, and other dimensional standards provide reasonable opportunities for affordable, workforce, and rental housing while protecting public health, environmental resources, and site suitability.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Select Board

Time frame: Medium term

Policy 2: Support affordable and workforce housing opportunities appropriate to Roque Bluffs' needs and capacity.

Strategy 2.1: Seek to have at least 10 percent of any new residential units built or placed during the planning period be affordable, consistent with state comprehensive planning requirements and the Town's anticipated limited level of residential development.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Consider practical measures that may support affordable or workforce housing when a demonstrated local need and feasible opportunity arise, including dimensional flexibility or participation in regional housing initiatives.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Medium to long term

Policy 3: Preserve and improve the existing year-round housing stock.

Strategy 3.1: Make information available at the Town Office or on the Town website about home repair, weatherization, energy efficiency, septic, accessibility, resilience, and housing rehabilitation programs.

Responsibility: Town Office, Select Board

Time frame: Short term and ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Continue to track permits for new dwellings, replacement dwellings, manufactured or mobile homes, accessory dwelling units, additions, and major housing improvements to monitor local housing trends.

Responsibility: Code Enforcement Officer, Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Coordinate regionally on housing needs that cannot reasonably be addressed locally.

Strategy 4.1: Participate in regional housing efforts addressing workforce housing, senior and assisted housing, home repair, weatherization, accessibility, and housing rehabilitation where those efforts may benefit Roque Bluffs residents.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Review available information on seasonal housing, short-term rentals, and year-round housing availability during periodic Comprehensive Plan reviews or when considering relevant ordinance changes.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.3: Consider flood risk, stormwater management, septic suitability, shoreland protection, and coastal hazards when reviewing housing-related ordinance changes or identifying suitable locations for future housing.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Housing Occupancy, Housing Type, Housing Tenure, Housing Units by Year Built, Median Home Value, Median Household Income, and Housing Cost Burden data for Roque Bluffs, Maine.

Residential building permit records, including permits for houses, mobile homes, and accessory dwelling units and assessing data 2016-2025.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Local parcel ownership data, 2026.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Planning Committee input, 2025-2026.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

VRBO, For Rent by Owners and Hearts of Maine; Roque Bluffs area short-term rental search results 2026.

Maine Office of Community Affairs. Climate Change Adaptation Resource Manual.

Maine Legislature. LD 1829, An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses, Public Law 2025, Chapter 385.

PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

24. Describe Roque Bluffs' public facilities and services, including their ownership, condition, capacity, and management;
25. Assess whether existing facilities and services are adequate for current needs and projected demographic change;
26. Identify needed improvements during the planning period;
27. Evaluate whether public investments support the Future Land Use Plan; and
28. Consider the exposure of public facilities and services to climate-related risks.

State Goal

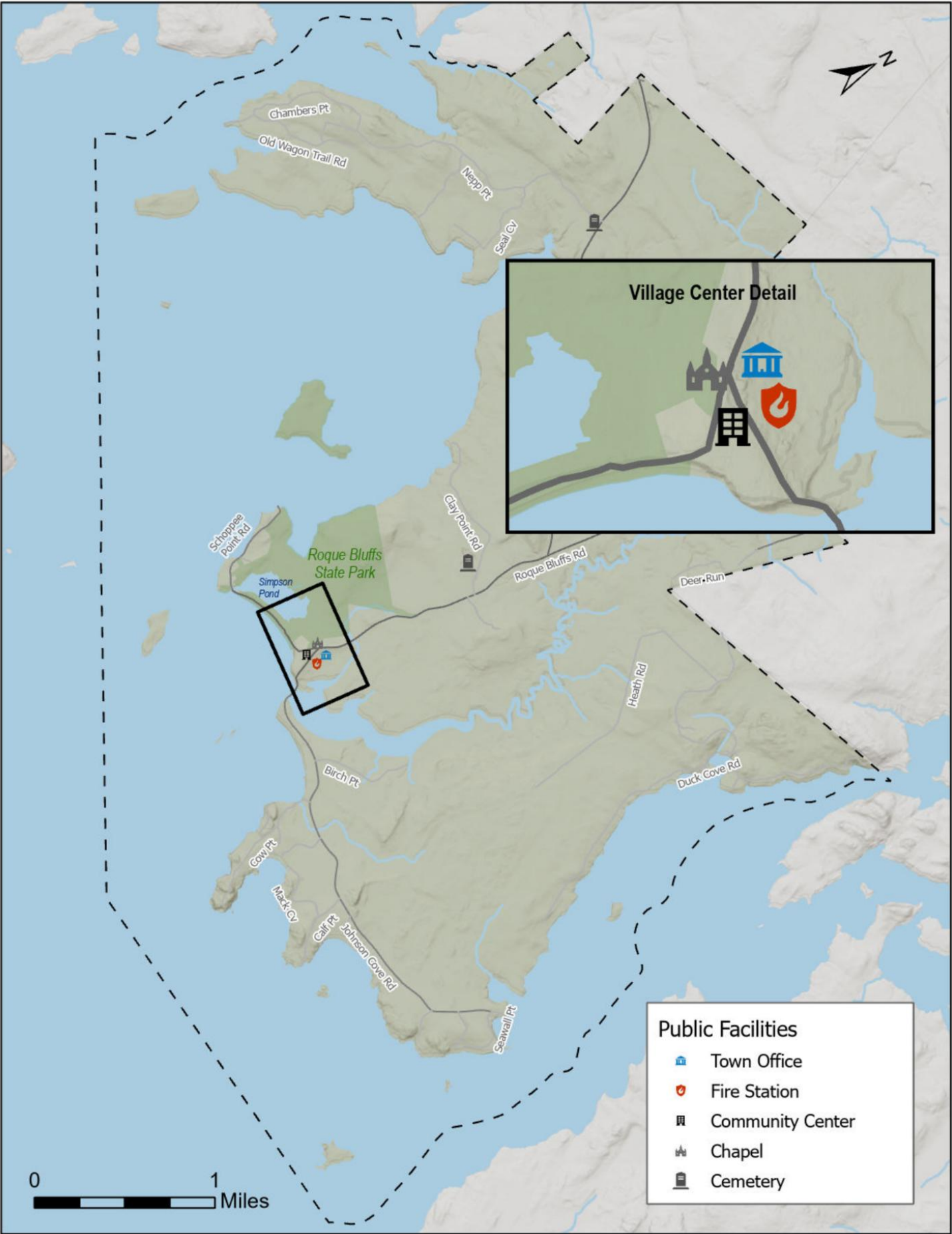
To plan for, finance, and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs provides public facilities and services through a combination of municipal facilities, contracted services, interlocal agreements, and regional arrangements. Existing services are generally adequate for current needs and the modest growth projected during the planning period.

The Town Hall and adjacent fire station are the primary municipal facilities. Continued attention will be needed for building maintenance, emergency response, broadband and cellular reliability, road drainage and culverts, solid waste and recycling access, health care access, and emergency preparedness.

Public Facilities & Services



Data Sources: Town of Roque Bluffs, 2024-2025 Annual Municipal Report and Comprehensive Planning Committee input and municipal records (2025-2026); Maine Department of Transportation (MDOTJURIS) roads; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Maine Office of GIS town boundary; Maine DACF Bureau of Parks and Lands, Conserved Lands dataset; Esri World Hillshade.

Municipal Government

Roque Bluffs operates under a Select Board and Town Meeting form of government. The annual Town Meeting is held in the fall. Elected and appointed officials include the Select Board, Town Clerk, Treasurer and Tax Collector, Code Enforcement Officer, Licensed Plumbing Inspector, Animal Control Officer, Shellfish Warden, Shellfish Committee, Harbormaster, Fire Warden, Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Warden, Public Health Officer, General Assistance Officer, Planning Board, School Board representatives, and Road Commissioner.

The Town Hall at 3 Roque Bluffs Road is the primary municipal facility and serves as the center of town administration. The Town also maintains a municipal website and email address for public communication.

The Town Hall was originally constructed as a one-room schoolhouse. It remains functional and centrally located and continues to serve as the Town's primary administrative facility.

The fire station is located adjacent to the Town Hall and forms part of the Town's primary municipal facility complex.

The Roque Bluffs Community Center at 4 Schoppee Point Road is an important community facility and serves as a warming and cooling center during emergencies. A generator supports continued use during power outages.



The Roque Bluffs Community Chapel at 3 Schoppee Point Road is a community resource but is not a municipal facility.

Roque Bluffs is a member of the Maine Municipal Association, which provides training, legal resources, model ordinances, and technical assistance. Regional planning and economic development assistance is available through Sunrise County Economic Council.

Water Supply, Wastewater, and Septage Disposal

Roque Bluffs has no public water or sewer system. Homes and businesses rely on private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal systems.

Protection of groundwater is especially important because private wells are the primary source of drinking water. Local land use review, shoreland zoning, septic permitting, stormwater management, and regular property-owner maintenance all help protect water quality.

New and replacement septic systems must meet State subsurface wastewater disposal standards and receive required permits. In shoreland areas, near wetlands, and on sites with poor soils or

limited lot area, wastewater disposal may constrain new development or expansion of existing structures.

Property owners arrange septage pumping through licensed haulers. Roque Bluffs does not operate a septage disposal facility, and pumped septage is transported to approved receiving facilities outside the Town. The Town does not maintain annual septage-volume data.

The Town provides permitting and regulatory oversight through the Code Enforcement Officer and Licensed Plumbing Inspector, while property owners are responsible for private well testing, septic maintenance, pump-out scheduling, and arranging approved septage disposal.

Stormwater Management

Roque Bluffs does not operate a municipal stormwater system. Runoff from roads, driveways, and developed areas is managed primarily through roadside ditches, driveway culverts, cross culverts, and natural drainage patterns.

The Town maintains drainage associated with municipal roads and coordinates with MaineDOT where state or state-aid roads are involved. Existing ditches and culverts require periodic clearing, repair, and replacement as part of routine road maintenance.

New development is subject to applicable subdivision, shoreland zoning, and land use standards for stormwater runoff and erosion control. These requirements are particularly important in areas draining toward wetlands, streams, ponds, and coastal waters.

Road drainage also affects private wells, septic systems, roadbeds, surface waters, and emergency access.

Solid Waste

Roque Bluffs provides curbside household solid-waste collection through a private contractor. Collected waste is transported to the Casella Jonesboro Transfer Station. The Town does not operate a municipal landfill, transfer station, or solid-waste disposal facility.

Residents also have access to regional disposal and recycling facilities. The Machias Bay Area Transfer and Recycling Center and the Pleasant River Transfer Station accept materials in accordance with their current rules and fees. Depending on the facility, accepted materials may include bagged municipal solid waste, recyclable paper and containers, demolition debris, furniture, white goods, tires, universal waste, and other specified materials.

The Town budgets for curbside collection and waste-transfer services and receives revenue from the sale of transfer-station stickers. The Town does not maintain annual records of the total volume or tonnage of municipal solid waste or recyclable material generated by Roque Bluffs residents.

Seasonal residents and visitors increase waste generation during the warmer months. Curbside collection and access to regional facilities currently provide disposal options for residents.

Power and Communications

Electrical distribution service in Roque Bluffs is provided by Versant Power. The Town does not have three-phase electrical power, which limits the type and scale of commercial, industrial, and utility-intensive development that can be supported.

Telephone, internet, and cellular service are important for emergency response, remote work, home-based businesses, telehealth, education, municipal administration, and aging in place. Service quality and availability vary by location.

Residents use a mix of cable, DSL, satellite, fixed wireless, and cellular-based internet services. Consolidated Communications is installing Fidium fiber service through much, but not all, of Roque Bluffs.

Significant areas of town do not have cellular telephone service. This can affect emergency communication, visitors, seasonal residents, and residents who rely primarily on mobile phones.

Fire Protection

Fire protection in Roque Bluffs is provided through a regional arrangement with the Jonesboro Fire Department. The Roque Bluffs fire station, located adjacent to the Town Hall at 3 Roque Bluffs Road, functions as a local fire protection facility and supports response within the Town.

Jonesboro provides primary fire response, with support from Roque Bluffs volunteers and locally based equipment as available. Mutual aid agreements with neighboring departments provide additional personnel and apparatus when needed.

The Town owns a 1974 Mack tanker and a 1984 Ford engine. Both are reported to be in good condition and are housed at the Roque Bluffs fire station.

Roque Bluffs includes forested areas, seasonal homes, private roads, and properties that may be difficult to access during emergencies. Address signage, driveway access, road conditions, and volunteer availability can affect response.

Emergency Medical Services and Law Enforcement

Emergency medical services are provided through a contracted regional ambulance service based in Machias. Roque Bluffs does not maintain a municipal ambulance department. Response times vary depending on staffing, call volume, weather, road conditions, and the location of the emergency.

Law enforcement services are provided by the Washington County Sheriff's Office. Roque Bluffs does not have a municipal police department, and routine patrol coverage is limited. Based on local experience, non-emergency response may take several hours depending on deputy availability, call priority, travel distance, and other incidents occurring within the county. The Town may also

receive assistance from the Machias Police Department during certain emergency or enforcement situations.

Emergency dispatch for fire, police, and ambulance services is provided through the regional communications system funded through the county tax.

Clear road names, visible address signage, passable driveways, and reliable communication are especially important because emergency responders often travel from outside the Town and may need to reach seasonal homes, private roads, and coastal properties.

Emergency Management

Roque Bluffs maintains a local emergency management plan addressing short- and long-term preparedness and response.

The Roque Bluffs Community Center serves as the Town's warming and cooling center during emergencies and is equipped with a generator for use during power outages. A separate generator installed at the Town Hall in 2015 provides backup power for the Town Hall and adjacent fire station.

The Washington County Emergency Management Agency provides countywide coordination, training, preparedness support, and disaster-response assistance. The agency has also assisted Roque Bluffs following storm events, including support related to state and federal funding for storm-damage repair.

Education

Roque Bluffs is part of AOS 96 and does not operate a municipal school building. Public school students attend schools outside the Town through the regional school administrative structure.

As of May 2026, Roque Bluffs had 16 publicly funded pupils. School enrollment is tracked through the regional school system and Town records.

Because the Town does not own or operate a school facility, school building maintenance, staffing, and most facility planning occur through AOS 96 rather than through municipal capital planning.

Roque Bluffs participates in regional education planning through its school board representation. School transportation, road conditions, emergency access, and communication with families remain relevant local considerations.

Health Care and Social Services

Roque Bluffs does not operate municipal health care or social-service facilities. Residents rely primarily on regional providers in Machias and other Washington County communities for medical care, dental care, behavioral health services, elder services, food assistance, transportation assistance, and related support.

Down East Community Hospital in Machias is the nearest hospital and serves as the principal source of emergency, inpatient, outpatient, diagnostic, and specialty care for Roque Bluffs residents. Additional hospital services are available in Calais, Ellsworth, and Bangor.

Home health, hospice, behavioral health, elder services, transportation assistance, food assistance, and other support services are provided through regional, county, state, nonprofit, and tribal organizations.

The 2025 community survey identified access to health care as a significant concern, particularly primary care, specialty care, behavioral health services, and services for older residents.

The Town administers General Assistance in accordance with state law and maintains a local General Assistance Ordinance. The Town Office also serves as a point of contact for information about available regional programs and services.

Cemeteries, Library, and Street Trees

Roque Bluffs has three identified cemetery resources: the Old Burial Ground/Roque Bluffs Cemetery, Great Cove Cemetery, and Longfellow Cemetery. The Old Burial Ground has no remaining burial capacity. Capacity information for Great Cove Cemetery is not available, and Longfellow Cemetery is privately owned.

Table 1. Cemeteries in Roque Bluffs

Table 1. Cemeteries in Roque Bluffs			
Name	Location	Capacity Status	Condition
Old Burial Ground / Roque Bluffs Cemetery	Clay Point Rd	No remaining capacity	Good
Great Cove Cemetery	Corner of Great Cove Rd and Nepp Point Rd	Not documented	Good
Longfellow Cemetery	Schoppee Point Rd	Private	Good

Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Committee

Roque Bluffs does not operate a municipal library. Residents use library services available in Machias and neighboring communities.

The Town does not maintain a formal street tree program. Tree maintenance along public roads is addressed through routine road work, utility coordination, and storm response as needed.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs' existing public facilities and service arrangements are generally adequate for current needs and the modest growth projected during the planning period. The Town relies on a combination of municipal facilities, contracted services, interlocal agreements, and regional providers rather than maintaining a large local service structure.

The Town Hall, adjacent fire station, and Community Center are the principal local facilities. Continued maintenance and periodic improvements will be needed to keep these facilities functional and available for municipal and emergency use.

The absence of public water, public sewer, and three-phase power limits the scale and type of development that can reasonably be supported. Future development will continue to depend largely on private wells and septic systems, suitable sites, and access to existing roads and services.

The most significant service concerns are emergency response, limited law enforcement availability, road drainage and culvert capacity, broadband and cellular reliability, solid-waste and recycling access, health-care access, and emergency preparedness. Many of these needs are likely to continue being addressed through regional arrangements and targeted local improvements.

Major new public infrastructure systems are not anticipated during the planning period. Public investment should therefore focus on maintaining existing facilities, protecting emergency access, addressing drainage and communications needs, and supporting the Future Land Use Plan.

Climate Considerations

Heavy rainfall, coastal storms, flooding, erosion, winter storms, wildfire, and power outages may affect roads, culverts, emergency access, communications, coastal access points, and municipal facilities in Roque Bluffs.

Climate exposure should be considered when maintaining municipal buildings, replacing culverts, planning road and drainage improvements, and preparing for emergency response and service disruptions.

Information on repeatedly affected roads, culverts, access points, and municipal facilities should inform maintenance priorities, capital planning, and grant applications.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Maintain public facilities and services that meet current needs and anticipated growth.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to maintain the Town Hall, adjacent fire station, Community Center, and other municipal facilities so they remain safe, functional, accessible, and suitable for continued use.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Identify major building, equipment, road, drainage, and service needs early enough to incorporate them into capital planning and grant applications.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: Direct public investments toward maintaining existing facilities, protecting public safety, and carrying out the Future Land Use Plan.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Continue to provide essential services through regional, contractual, and interlocal arrangements.

Strategy 2.1: Continue coordinating with neighboring municipalities, county agencies, AOS 96, MaineDOT, SCEC, and other service providers where shared services or technical assistance support local needs.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Periodically review contracts and service arrangements for fire protection, ambulance service, solid waste, education, and other regional services to ensure they remain effective and affordable.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Consider shared purchasing, equipment use, grant applications, planning, and interlocal agreements when they may improve service delivery or reduce costs.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Protect public health, safety, and emergency access.

Strategy 3.1: Continue coordination with fire, ambulance, law enforcement, dispatch, and emergency management providers.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Maintain clear road names, visible address signs, passable public access routes, and current emergency location information to assist responders.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.3: Update the local emergency management plan to include current warming and cooling center procedures and communication methods for outages and other emergencies.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Short term

Strategy 3.4: Make information available about General Assistance, regional health care, elder services, transportation assistance, emergency preparedness, and other community-support resources.

Responsibility: Town Office, General Assistance Administrator, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Maintain roads, drainage, and communications that support public safety and service continuity.

Strategy 4.1: Continue to identify and address ditching, culvert, erosion, and drainage needs through regular road maintenance and coordination with MaineDOT where applicable.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Give priority to road, culvert, drainage, and coastal-access improvements where repeated flooding, erosion, or access limitations affect emergency response or public safety.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Short term to ongoing

Strategy 4.3: Consider current and projected storm flows, road protection, and fish and wildlife passage when replacing culverts, where applicable.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.4: Track fiber deployment and remaining broadband or cellular-service gaps and coordinate with service providers as opportunities arise.

Responsibility: Select Board, Town Office

Time frame: Short term to ongoing

Policy 5: Maintain practical solid-waste and recycling services.

Strategy 5.1: Continue curbside solid-waste collection and access to regional transfer and recycling facilities while these arrangements remain practical and affordable.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 5.2: Provide current information about transfer-station access, stickers, fees, accepted materials, and special disposal options.

Responsibility: Town Office, Select Board

Time frame: Short term and ongoing

Strategy 5.3: Consider regional collection events, shared services, or other practical recycling and waste-reduction opportunities when available and cost-effective.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 6: Use capital planning and outside funding to address priority facility and infrastructure needs.

Strategy 6.1: Include major public-facility, fire-equipment, road, culvert, drainage, emergency-power, communications, and resilience needs in the Town's capital planning process.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 6.2: Seek available outside funding for eligible public-facility, road, culvert, emergency-preparedness, broadband, and resilience projects.

Responsibility: Select Board, Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

Down East Community Hospital. Hospital and health care service information.

Machias Bay Area Transfer and Recycling Center. Transfer station and recycling facility information, service area materials, and 2025 transfer station pricing.

Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center. Emergency care, tertiary care, and Level II trauma center information.

Roque Bluffs. 2024-2025 Annual Municipal Report.

Roque Bluffs. Addressing Ordinance.

Roque Bluffs. General Assistance Ordinance.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Planning Committee input and municipal records concerning public facilities, fire protection, emergency management, service arrangements, infrastructure, cemeteries, and local service conditions, 2025-2026.

TRANSPORTATION

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

29. Describe Roque Bluffs' transportation system, including roads, bridges, parking, pedestrian and bicycle access, public transit, aviation access, and marine transportation facilities;
30. Assess whether existing transportation infrastructure and services are adequate for current and projected needs;
31. Identify transportation safety, maintenance, access, and capital improvement needs; and
32. Evaluate the vulnerability of transportation infrastructure to flooding, erosion, storms, and other climate-related impacts.

State Goal

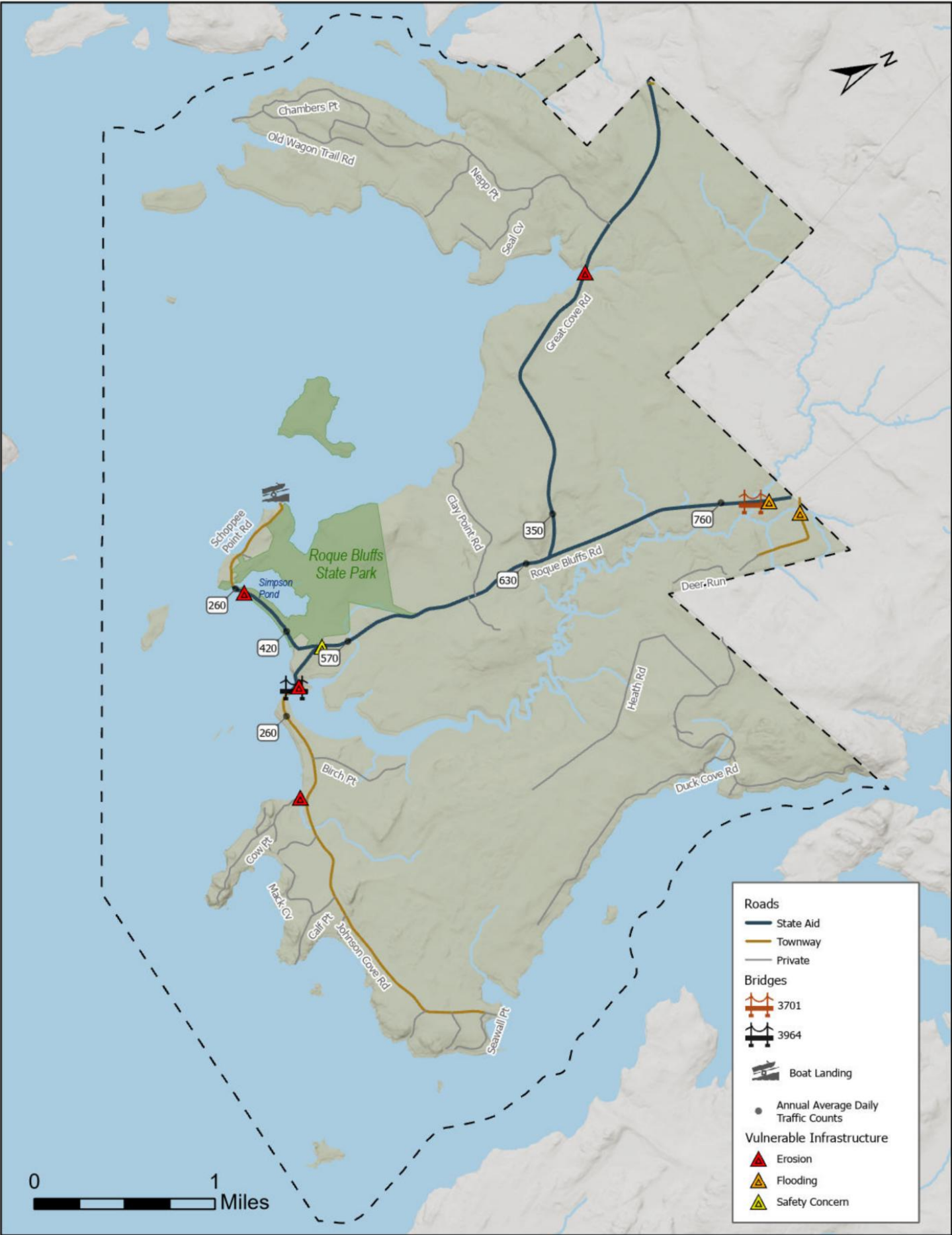
To plan for a safe and efficient transportation system that serves all users, promotes economic development, protects natural resources, and supports the community's land use goals.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs depends on a limited network of state, town, and private roads for daily travel, emergency access, school transportation, regional services, and seasonal traffic. Traffic volumes are low and the road network is generally adequate, but concerns remain related to culvert capacity, storm vulnerability, pedestrian safety, and parking and access at the Town boat launch.

The Town has no sidewalks, bicycle lanes, rail service, airport, or ferry terminal. Regional bus service is available through nearby stops, but local and demand-responsive transportation options are limited. Transportation planning should focus on maintaining existing infrastructure, protecting emergency access, improving safety where feasible, supporting marine access, and increasing resilience to storm damage.

Transportation



Data Sources: Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Public Map Viewer: road classification, bridge inventory, culvert inventory, and 2024 Average Annual Daily Traffic data; MaineDOT Bridges dataset; Town of Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Planning Committee input and municipal records (2025-2026), including documented storm impacts from the June 2021 regional storm event; Maine Office of GIS town boundary; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Esri World Hillshade.

Road Network

Roque Bluffs is served by approximately 10.3 miles of public roads, including about 3.4 miles of town roads and 6.9 miles of state or state-aid roads. The Town also has approximately 8 miles of private roads serving subdivisions and other residential areas.

The primary transportation corridors are Roque Bluffs Road, which connects the Town to Machias by way of Kennebec Road, and Great Cove Road, which provides access toward Jonesboro. Johnson Cove Road and Schoppee Point Road are also important local routes. Together, these roads serve residents, emergency response, school transportation, marine and resource-based activities, State Park traffic, and other local travel.

Table 1. Public Road Inventory and Condition				
Road Name	Jurisdiction	Length	Condition	Notes
Roque Bluffs Road	State	2.8 miles	Good	Primary access route to Machias; includes Bridge 3701 at Meadow Brook/Englishman River and a large culvert near the Twin Gullies area
Great Cove Road	State	2.9 miles	Good	Western access route toward Jonesboro; Sanford Cove area has been identified locally as a safety, drainage, and storm vulnerability concern
Johnson Cove Road	State/Town	2.8 miles	Good, last mile fair	Serves southern portion of town; includes Johnson Cove Road bridge over Englishman River, built in 2016 and rated in good to very good condition
Schoppee Point Road	State/Town	1.2 miles	Good, portion poor (storm damage)	Serves village center, State Park access, and coastal access areas; seasonal traffic increases during summer
Duck Cove Road	Town/Private	0.6 miles public portion		Private road system with limited town-maintained sections; serves Duck Cove residential area
Total Public Roads		10.3 miles		

Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer, Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Committee

Private roads serve several residential areas and subdivisions and are maintained by property owners or road associations. These include Duck Cove Road, Chambers/Nepp Point Road, Calf Point Road, and Cow Point Road. The Town maintains two short sections of Duck Cove Road totaling approximately 275 feet.

Table 2. Private Roads Inventory and Condition			
Road Name	Length	Condition	Surface
Duck Cove Rd	3.5 miles		Dirt
Chambers / Nepp Point Rd	3 miles		Dirt
Calf Point Rd	0.5 miles		Dirt
Cow Point Rd	1 mile		Dirt
Total miles	8 miles		

Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Committee

Road Maintenance and Financing

The State is responsible for major maintenance and capital repairs on state and state-aid roads, including Roque Bluffs Road, Great Cove Road, and portions of Johnson Cove Road and Schoppee Point Road. The Town coordinates with MaineDOT as needed regarding safety, drainage, maintenance, and capital improvement concerns on these roads.

The Town contracts annually for snow removal, salting, and sanding on town and state-aid roads within Roque Bluffs. These costs are funded through local appropriations. The elected Road Commissioner works with the Select Board to identify local road needs and coordinate maintenance priorities.

Annual road maintenance costs vary considerably depending on paving, culvert, drainage, and repair needs. The current annual road maintenance budget is approximately \$300,000, while the annual snow removal budget is approximately \$150,000. The Town also receives funding through the Urban-Rural Initiative Program for eligible road improvements.

The Town maintains a road reserve account to support future capital repairs and provide matching funds when grant or state funding becomes available. The current reserve balance is reported in the Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan chapter.

Bridges and Culverts

MaineDOT identifies two state-maintained bridge structures in Roque Bluffs: the Johnson Cove Road bridge over the Englishman River and the Roque Bluffs Road bridge at Meadow Brook/Englishman River.

The Johnson Cove Road bridge was built in 2016. MaineDOT rates its deck as good and its superstructure and substructure as very good. Scour conditions are listed as stable. Local observations indicate that the bridge and its approaches may be overtopped by waves and affected by storm debris during severe coastal events, and the bridge has been undermined in certain areas following the severe coastal storms of December 2023 and January 2024.



2 Johnson Cove Rd bridge overtopped during coastal storm, December 2023

The Roque Bluffs Road bridge was built in 1940. MaineDOT rates its deck and superstructure as poor and its substructure as fair. Bank erosion has also been noted, while scour conditions are listed as stable.

Table 3. State-Maintained Bridges in Roque Bluffs						
Bridge No.	Road	Crossing	AADT	Year Built	Length	Condition Notes
3964	Johnson Cove Road	Englishman River	260	2016	88 ft	Deck rated good; superstructure and substructure rated very good; scour conditions stable
3701	Roque Bluffs Rd	Meadow Brook / Englishman River	754	1940	14 ft	Deck and superstructure rated poor; substructure rated fair; bank erosion noted; scour conditions stable

Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer, bridge structure data for Roque Bluffs.

Small culverts beneath town roads are maintained through the Town's road program. Some culverts have been identified locally as undersized or prone to overtopping during heavy rainfall. The culvert near Twin Gullies on Roque Bluffs Road has occasionally overflowed.

MaineDOT also identifies a large culvert on Roque Bluffs Road, Asset ID 1003804, near the Meadow Brook/Englishman River crossing. It is listed as a 64-inch-wide arched steel pipe, 48 feet long, and in good condition at the time of its August 5, 2019 inspection.



The Great Cove Road area near Sanford Cove and the private Duck Cove Road community have both experienced significant storm-related damage. In June 2021, heavy rainfall and flash flooding washed out Great Cove Road and other access roads, while a separate washout on Duck Cove Road left residents without vehicle or emergency access. These events demonstrate the vulnerability of roads with limited alternative access to flooding, erosion, and drainage failure.



3 Duck Cove Road washout, June 2021 storm event

4 Great Cove Rd washout, June 2021 storm event

Traffic Volumes and Patterns

MaineDOT's 2024 Average Annual Daily Traffic data show low traffic volumes throughout Roque Bluffs. The highest count is on Roque Bluffs Road near the northern access to Town, with lower volumes on Johnson Cove Road, Great Cove Road, Schoppee Point Road, and near the State Park.

Table 4. MaineDOT Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts			
Road / Segment	Count Location	AADT	Notes
Roque Bluffs Road	South of Route 366, at Bridge 3701	760	Highest recorded AADT in town; primary northern access route
Roque Bluffs Road	North of Johnson Cove Road	630	Minor collector; primary north-south route through town
Johnson Cove Road	East of Schoppee Point Road	570	Minor collector; Serves southern portion of town and connects Johnson Cove Road traffic to the village area.
Schoppee Point Road	Southwest of Roque Bluffs Road and north of State Park entrance	420	State Park and village access corridor
Great Cove Road	Northwest of Roque Bluffs Road	350	Western access route toward Jonesboro
Johnson Cove Road	East of Roque Bluffs Road, at Bridge 3964	260	Local road; serves Johnson Cove area
Schoppee Point Road / State Park access area	Southwest of State Park entrance and parking lot	260	Local road; serves Roque Bluffs State Park and coastal access

Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer, Traffic Count data, 2024 Average Annual Daily Traffic counts for Roque Bluffs.

MaineDOT crash data indicate that the most recent recorded crash in Roque Bluffs occurred in 2009. No current High Crash Locations have been identified.

Traffic increases during the summer as seasonal residents, State Park visitors, beach users, boaters, and other visitors travel through Town. Schoppee Point Road and the village center experience the most noticeable increase during peak summer use and community events.

There are no traffic signals in Roque Bluffs. The intersection of Roque Bluffs Road, Schoppee Point Road, and Johnson Cove Road has no crosswalks or other formal pedestrian accommodations.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Roque Bluffs has no sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or dedicated roadside pedestrian facilities. Walking and bicycling occur along existing roads and shoulders, many of which are narrow, soft, or absent.

The village center intersection at Roque Bluffs Road, Schoppee Point Road, and Johnson Cove Road has no crosswalks or other formal pedestrian accommodations. Seasonal traffic near the village center and State Park increases exposure for people walking or bicycling where shoulders are narrow or absent.

Roque Bluffs is part of the Bold Coast Scenic Byway and Bold Coast Scenic Bikeway, and Roque Bluffs State Park is a recognized destination along these regional routes.

Walking trails within Roque Bluffs State Park are maintained by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands and provide the primary off-road walking opportunities in Town.

Parking

Roque Bluffs has no dedicated municipal parking lot. Public parking is generally associated with facilities in the village center, including the Town Hall, fire station, Community Center, and church.

Roque Bluffs State Park maintains parking at the main beach, within the park, and near the trailhead close to the village center. These areas are owned and managed by the State.

Parking at the Town boat launch is limited and serves commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, recreational boating, and other public access needs. During periods of high use, parking and vehicle circulation can become constrained.

Public and Regional Transportation

Roque Bluffs has no fixed-route local bus service, taxi service, or ride-share service based in the community. Residents who do not drive generally rely on family, neighbors, volunteer transportation, or regional transportation services when available.

West's Transportation operates the Coastal Connection, serving Calais, Machias, Ellsworth, Bangor, and intermediate communities. The service connects with Bangor International Airport and Concord Coach Lines. Roque Bluffs residents must travel to nearby stops in Machias or along the Route 1 corridor to use the service.

Until 2025, Downeast Community Partners provided rural demand-responsive transportation in Washington and Hancock counties. That program ended in September 2025, reducing transportation options for residents who relied on assistance for medical appointments, errands, and access to services.

Aviation

Roque Bluffs has no airport or private airstrip. The nearest aviation facility is Machias Valley Airport in Machias, approximately seven miles from the town center.

Machias Valley Airport is owned by the Town of Machias and supports private aviation, emergency access, and LifeFlight of Maine operations.

No airport zoning applies within Roque Bluffs, and no aviation-related land use conflicts have been identified.

Marine Transportation Facilities

Roque Bluffs has one Town-owned public boat launch providing access to coastal waters. The facility serves commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, recreational boating, and general public access.

The Town has no public ferry service, public wharf, marine passenger terminal, or commercial marine transportation terminal.

Private piers and shore access points are located along the coast but are privately owned and maintained. Public marine access is concentrated at the Town boat launch, Roque Bluffs State Park, and other publicly accessible shoreline locations.

Parking and vehicle circulation at the boat launch are limited during periods of high use.

Access Management and Road Standards

Roque Bluffs does not have a local access management program. MaineDOT access management standards apply to state and state-aid roads and regulate the location and design of driveways and entrances to support traffic safety, drainage, and roadway function.

The Town does not have a separate local road design ordinance. Subdivision review may include requirements for road width, right-of-way, drainage, and emergency access under the Town's existing land use regulations.

Several residential areas are served by private roads. Many are dead ends because of shoreline configuration, wetlands, existing parcel patterns, and the Town's geography. Maintenance is generally the responsibility of property owners or road associations.

Regional Transportation Plans

Roque Bluffs participates in regional transportation planning primarily through coordination with MaineDOT on road, bridge, drainage, and safety needs. MaineDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and capital work plans identify transportation projects and funding priorities that may affect the Town and its regional connections.

Although U.S. Route 1 does not pass through Roque Bluffs, it provides the Town's primary regional connection to employment, schools, health care, commercial services, freight movement, and intercity bus service through Machias and Jonesboro.

Roque Bluffs is also located along the Bold Coast Scenic Byway and Bold Coast Scenic Bikeway, with Roque Bluffs State Park serving as a regional destination along these routes.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs' transportation system is generally adequate for current traffic volumes and the modest level of growth anticipated during the planning period. No roadway capacity problems or high-crash locations have been identified. The principal concerns are the condition and reliability of existing roads, bridges, culverts, drainage systems, and public access facilities.

Because the Town depends on a limited number of road connections, damage to a bridge, culvert, road approach, or embankment can disrupt emergency response, school transportation, and access to employment and regional services. Storm damage near Sanford Cove and the June 2021 Duck Cove Road washout demonstrate the vulnerability of both public and private roads where alternative access is limited.

Pedestrian and bicycle use is constrained by narrow or absent shoulders and the lack of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and crosswalks. The village center and State Park access area are the most appropriate locations for evaluating modest safety improvements.

Transportation options for residents who do not drive remain limited. Regional bus service is available through nearby communities, but the end of Downeast Community Partners' demand-responsive transportation program in 2025 reduced access to medical care, shopping, and other services for some residents.

The Town-owned boat launch is an important transportation and public access facility for commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, and recreation. Limited parking and circulation can create conflicts during periods of high use.

Roque Bluffs does not require major new transportation infrastructure. Priorities during the planning period should be maintaining existing facilities, improving drainage and storm resilience, protecting emergency access, addressing localized safety concerns, and coordinating with state and regional partners.

Climate Considerations

The June 2021 storms demonstrated how quickly flooding and washouts can disrupt travel and emergency access in Roque Bluffs, particularly where alternative routes are limited.

Road, culvert, bridge-approach, and drainage improvements should consider observed storm performance and current design guidance to reduce repeated damage and protect access.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Maintain a safe and reliable transportation network that supports residents, emergency access, local services, and seasonal travel.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT on maintenance, drainage, safety, bridge condition, and capital needs affecting Roque Bluffs Road, Great Cove Road, Johnson Cove Road, and Schoppee Point Road.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Continue to fund routine road maintenance, snow removal, and the road reserve account, and use available state and outside funding for prioritized road, drainage, and culvert work.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: Report locally identified concerns affecting bridges, culverts, drainage, erosion, overtopping, and storm-damaged road areas to MaineDOT where applicable.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Improve transportation safety and public access through practical improvements suited to local conditions.

Strategy 2.1: Evaluate practical pedestrian safety measures in the village center and near the State Park access area, including signs, pavement markings, crosswalks, or shoulder improvements where feasible.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Short term

Strategy 2.2: Continue to pursue practical improvements at the Town boat launch, including parking, circulation, dock approach safety, drainage, and lighting, as funding and permitting allow.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Consider pedestrian and bicycle safety when state or local road improvements are planned, particularly along the Bold Coast Scenic Byway and near the State Park.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Support access to regional transportation services for residents who do not drive.

Strategy 3.1: Keep current information about regional bus, volunteer, medical, and demand-responsive transportation services available through the Town Office and Town website.

Responsibility: Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Participate in regional efforts to maintain or improve transportation options for residents without reliable transportation.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Increase the resilience of roads, bridges, culverts, and public access facilities to flooding, erosion, and severe storms.

Strategy 4.1: Maintain a practical inventory of Town-maintained culverts and known drainage problem areas, beginning with locations that have experienced flooding, overtopping, erosion, or washouts.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 4.2: When culverts or drainage facilities are replaced, consider current design guidance, observed storm performance, and fish-passage needs where applicable.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.3: Document storm-related damage to roads, culverts, bridge approaches, and embankments to support emergency reimbursement, capital planning, and grant applications.

Responsibility: Select Board, Town Office, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.4: Coordinate with appropriate state and county agencies where storm damage could restrict emergency access or isolate portions of the Town.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

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WATER RESOURCES

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

33. Describe Roque Bluffs' surface water, groundwater, wetlands, and coastal water resources;
34. Assess the condition of those resources and the adequacy of existing protections;
35. Identify known and potential threats to water quality and quantity; and
36. Establish practical policies and strategies to protect water resources during the planning period.

State Goal

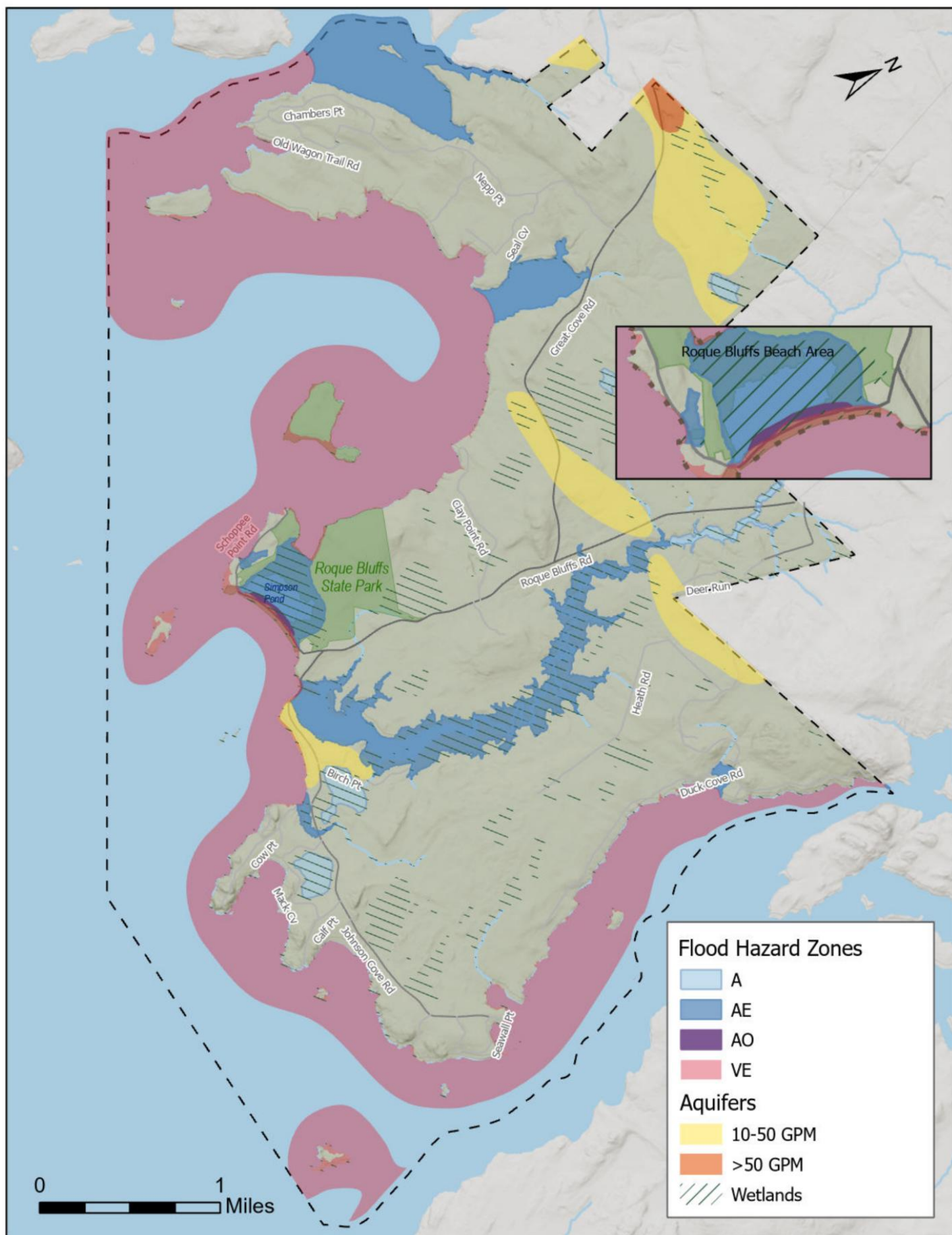
To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the state's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, rivers, streams, coastal waters, and wetlands.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs contains important freshwater, groundwater, wetland, estuarine, and coastal resources. These include the Englishman River and its tidal marshes, Simpson Pond, mapped sand and gravel aquifers, freshwater wetlands, and the marine waters surrounding the Town. Most of Roque Bluffs lies within the Englishman River watershed, while smaller areas drain toward the Chandler River and Little Kennebec Bay.

The Town has no public water supply or municipal wastewater treatment system. Residents and businesses rely on private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal systems. Water resources are generally in good condition, with the principal concerns related to private well quality, septic systems, runoff, erosion, and protection of shoreland and wetland areas.

Water Resources



Data Sources: U.S. Geological Survey, Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD), HUC12 subwatersheds; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL), Washington County, Maine (effective 7/18/2017); Beginning with Habitat, National Wetlands Inventory-derived wetland data; Maine Geological Survey, Sand and Gravel Aquifer Mapping; Maine Department of Transportation (MDOTJURIS) roads; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Maine Office of GIS town boundary; Maine DACF Bureau of Parks and Lands, Roque Bluffs State Park boundary; Esri World Hillshade.

Watersheds and Surface Waters

Watersheds

Roque Bluffs' land area is covered by three federally mapped HUC12 subwatersheds. Most of the Town's mainland lies within the Roque Bluffs-Frontal Atlantic Ocean Watershed (HUC12 010500020803), which includes the Englishman River corridor, its associated wetlands and tributary streams, and the area on the eastern side of Town that drains toward Little Kennebec Bay. A separate subwatershed, the Chandler River Watershed (HUC12 010500020801), covers the northwestern portion of Town. A third, much smaller subwatershed, the Great Wass Island-Roque Island Watershed (HUC12 010500020804), covers only Roque Bluffs' outlying islands and contributes a negligible amount of mainland town area.

All three of these land-based subwatersheds ultimately drain into the Western Bay-Englishman Bay Watershed (HUC12 010500020805), a marine receiving water body offshore of Town that in turn discharges to the Gulf of Maine. Because this offshore unit is open water rather than upland drainage area, it is not counted among Roque Bluffs' land watersheds, though it is the shared downstream destination for all of the Town's freshwater runoff.



The Englishman River

The Englishman River is Roque Bluffs' most significant freshwater and estuarine water resource. Its river corridor, tributary streams, salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, and riparian areas provide habitat, store and filter runoff, and help protect downstream coastal water quality.

The river corridor is regulated through the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Shoreland zoning districts along the Englishman River include Limited Residential, Resource Protection, and

Stream/Freshwater Wetland Protection districts. These standards regulate development, vegetation removal, soil disturbance, and stream crossings within protected shoreland areas.

Freshwater stream segments in Roque Bluffs are classified by Maine DEP as Class B waters. No freshwater streams in Town have been identified by Maine DEP as impaired.

Simpson Pond

Simpson Pond is the only natural freshwater pond in Roque Bluffs and is classified as a GPA great pond under Maine law. The pond covers approximately 60 acres and is located within Roque Bluffs State Park on Schoppee Point Road.

The pond and most of its immediate watershed are within state-owned park lands, which limits nearby development pressure. Maine DEP does not identify Simpson Pond as impaired, and no phosphorus-loading problem has been documented.

Simpson Pond supports recreational fishing and is stocked by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. No invasive aquatic plant infestation is shown for the pond in Maine DEP's aquatic invasives data.

Wetlands

Roque Bluffs contains extensive freshwater and estuarine wetlands.

Based on National Wetlands Inventory-derived Beginning with Habitat data, Roque Bluffs contains approximately 1,900.6 acres of wetlands, or about 19 percent of the Town's land area. This includes approximately:

- 37. 80.9 acres of non-forested freshwater wetlands;
- 38. 706.9 acres of freshwater forested and shrub wetlands; and
- 39. 1,112.8 acres of estuarine and saltwater wetlands.

Saltwater wetlands are concentrated along the Englishman River and around coastal coves, with smaller areas near Cow Point. These areas are regulated through Resource Protection and other applicable shoreland zoning districts.

Smaller freshwater wetlands occur throughout Town and may also be regulated under the Maine Natural Resources Protection Act. No significant vernal pools have been identified in available state data.

Groundwater and Aquifers

Roque Bluffs has no public water supply system. Residents and businesses rely on private wells drawing from bedrock and sand and gravel aquifers. The Maine Drinking Water Program identifies no public water supply sources within Town.

The Maine Geological Survey maps several sand and gravel aquifer areas in Roque Bluffs. These are classified as ATYPE 1 aquifers, where properly constructed wells may yield approximately 10 to 50 gallons per minute. A higher-yield ATYPE 2 aquifer is mapped immediately northwest of the Town boundary in Jonesboro, near Great Cove.

Local information indicates that some private wells in the village area have tested positive for coliform bacteria. Because private wells are not routinely monitored by the Town or State, individual property owners are responsible for testing, maintenance, and responding to water-quality concerns.

Roque Bluffs does not have a local aquifer protection ordinance or public wellhead protection program. Existing groundwater protection is provided indirectly through shoreland zoning, subsurface wastewater disposal standards, and other land use requirements.

Coastal and Estuarine Waters

All estuarine and marine waters in Roque Bluffs are classified by Maine DEP as Class SB waters. These waters are managed to support fish, shellfish, other aquatic life, wildlife, recreation, fishing, aquaculture, and navigation.

Roque Bluffs is within Maine Department of Marine Resources Growing Areas EP and EQ. Growing Area EP extends from Kelley Point in Jonesport to Seawall Point in Roque Bluffs and covers most of the Town's coastline. Growing Area EQ extends from Seawall Point to Point of Maine in Machiasport and covers the eastern portion of Town. The Town also participates in DMR's volunteer water-quality monitoring program.

Available DMR information identifies the Roque Bluffs portion of the growing area as Approved for shellfish harvesting. Closures within the broader growing area are located outside Roque Bluffs, including areas in Little Kennebec Bay. No licensed overboard discharges or wastewater treatment facilities have been identified in the Roque Bluffs portion of the growing area.

Point and Nonpoint Sources

No known point sources of pollution have been identified within Roque Bluffs. The Town has no municipal wastewater treatment facility, permitted wastewater outfall, or licensed overboard discharge.

Nonpoint source pollution is the principal water-quality concern. Potential sources include road salt and sand, erosion from roads and driveways, runoff from ditches and culverts, exposed soils from construction or land clearing, and poorly functioning subsurface wastewater disposal systems.

Sand and salt used for road maintenance are stored at a shared facility outside Roque Bluffs. Although there is no municipal storage site within Town, materials applied to roads can still enter roadside soils, ditches, wetlands, streams, groundwater, and coastal waters.

Protection Measures

The Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, including its shoreland zoning provisions, is the Town's primary local tool for protecting water resources. These standards regulate development and land disturbance near great ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands, and coastal waters.

Resource Protection, Stream/Freshwater Wetland Protection, Limited Residential, and other applicable shoreland districts establish setbacks, vegetation standards, and limits on soil disturbance and other activities that could affect water quality.

The Town does not have a separate stormwater ordinance, aquifer protection ordinance, local wellhead protection program, invasive species response plan, or municipal water-quality monitoring program. Water-resource protection therefore relies on existing land use standards, state regulations, private well and septic-system maintenance, and state monitoring programs.

The 2025 community survey identified continued public interest in protecting private wells, septic systems, coastal waters, and other water resources.

Flood Hazard Areas

Portions of Roque Bluffs are mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Flood Hazard Layer as subject to flooding from the 1 percent annual chance storm event. Mapped flood hazard areas are concentrated along the Englishman River corridor, associated wetlands and tidal marshes, and the Town's coastline.

Zone A areas are subject to the 1 percent annual chance flood, but detailed studies have not established base flood elevations. Zone AE areas are also subject to the 1 percent annual chance flood, but base flood elevations have been determined through detailed study. Zone VE areas include the additional hazard of storm-induced wave action and are mapped along portions of the open coastline. Smaller areas of Zone AO, associated with shallow flooding, occur near the northern Town boundary.

Many of these flood hazard areas overlap with shoreland and wetland areas already regulated under the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. The current FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer for Washington County became effective July 18, 2017.

FEMA flood hazard mapping provides an important regulatory and planning reference, but the current Washington County maps may not fully reflect subsequent changes in coastal conditions, including sea level rise and recent storm impacts. The mapped flood zones should therefore be considered together with current site conditions, observed flooding, and more recent state or federal guidance when evaluating future development or infrastructure decisions.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs' water resources are generally in good condition. The Town has no municipal wastewater discharge, licensed overboard discharge, identified impaired freshwater stream, or known industrial point source. Extensive wetlands, forested land, state-owned parkland, and existing shoreland zoning provide important protection for surface water, groundwater, and coastal waters.

The principal concerns are nonpoint source pollution and localized private well issues. Road runoff, salt, erosion, disturbed soils, failing septic systems, and poorly managed drainage can affect wetlands, streams, aquifers, and coastal waters. Because residents rely entirely on private wells and septic systems, testing, maintenance, and proper siting remain important.

Mapped sand and gravel aquifers are important long-term water-supply resources. Development in these areas should continue to be reviewed for potential contamination and drainage impacts.

Existing shoreland zoning and land use standards are the Town's primary local protection tools. A separate municipal water-quality monitoring program is not necessary at this time, but continued enforcement of existing standards, sound road and drainage practices, private well and septic maintenance, and coordination with state agencies remain important.

Continued support for DMR shellfish-water monitoring is also important because approved coastal waters support harvesting and other marine uses.

Climate Considerations

Climate-related water-resource concerns in Roque Bluffs include heavier rainfall, increased runoff, coastal flooding, sea level rise, and saltwater intrusion in vulnerable coastal wells and groundwater supplies.

Because the Town relies on private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal systems, prolonged saturation, flooding, and changing groundwater conditions may increase the risk of well contamination or septic-system failure in vulnerable locations. Coastal wetlands and vegetated buffers will remain important for storing runoff, filtering pollutants, and reducing erosion.

Water-resource planning should therefore continue to emphasize stable drainage, erosion control, vegetated buffers, private well testing, septic maintenance, and protection of aquifer recharge areas. Findings from the Town's vulnerability assessment can help identify locations where saltwater intrusion, flooding, or stormwater runoff may require closer attention.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Protect current and potential drinking-water resources.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to administer and enforce shoreland zoning, subsurface wastewater disposal requirements, and applicable land use standards that protect wells, aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, streams, and other water resources.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Licensed Plumbing Inspector

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Make private well-testing information available through the Town Office and Town website, including guidance on bacteria, arsenic, saltwater intrusion, and other common water-quality concerns.

Responsibility: Town Office, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: During future ordinance reviews, consider whether existing standards provide adequate protection for mapped sand and gravel aquifers and groundwater recharge areas.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Medium term

Policy 2: Protect surface waters, wetlands, and coastal waters from pollution and land disturbance.

Strategy 2.1: Continue to support shellfish-water monitoring and the Town's participation in volunteer monitoring activities as local participation allows.

Responsibility: Select Board, Shellfish Committee

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Continue to require appropriate setbacks, vegetated buffers, erosion controls, stormwater management, and septic-system siting when reviewing development near streams, wetlands, Simpson Pond, the Englishman River, and coastal waters.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Licensed Plumbing Inspector

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Make information available to property owners on septic maintenance, shoreline vegetation, erosion control, and other practices that protect nearby water resources.

Responsibility: Town Office, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Minimize water-quality impacts from roads, drainage, and land disturbance.

Strategy 3.1: Use practical best management practices for road maintenance, ditching, culvert replacement, salt and sand application, erosion control, and stabilization of disturbed areas.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Include appropriate water-quality and erosion-control expectations in road maintenance contracts and Town-funded drainage projects where practical.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 3.3: Make water-quality best management practice information available from appropriate state, regional, and educational sources.

Responsibility: Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Protect water resources in areas where future development may occur.

Strategy 4.1: Use the Future Land Use Plan and existing land use regulations to guide development away from the most sensitive wetlands, shoreland areas, aquifer recharge areas, and flood-prone locations.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: When reviewing subdivisions and other applicable development proposals, consider effects on groundwater, streams, wetlands, coastal waters, drainage patterns, and private wells and septic systems.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Licensed Plumbing Inspector

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 5: Coordinate with state and regional partners to protect shared water resources.

Strategy 5.1: Continue to seek water-quality data, technical assistance, education, and monitoring support from appropriate state and regional organizations.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 5.2: Incorporate relevant findings from the Town's vulnerability assessment into future decisions involving private wells, coastal wetlands, stormwater, drainage, culverts, and aquifer protection.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 5.3: Make aquatic invasive species information and clean, drain, and dry guidance available for users of Simpson Pond.

Responsibility: Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

40. Describe Roque Bluffs' significant natural resources, including wildlife habitat, rare species and natural communities, wetlands, forests, scenic areas, and conserved lands;
41. Assess the adequacy of existing protections;
42. Identify natural resource opportunities and constraints relevant to future land use; and
43. Establish practical policies and strategies for natural resource protection.

State Goal

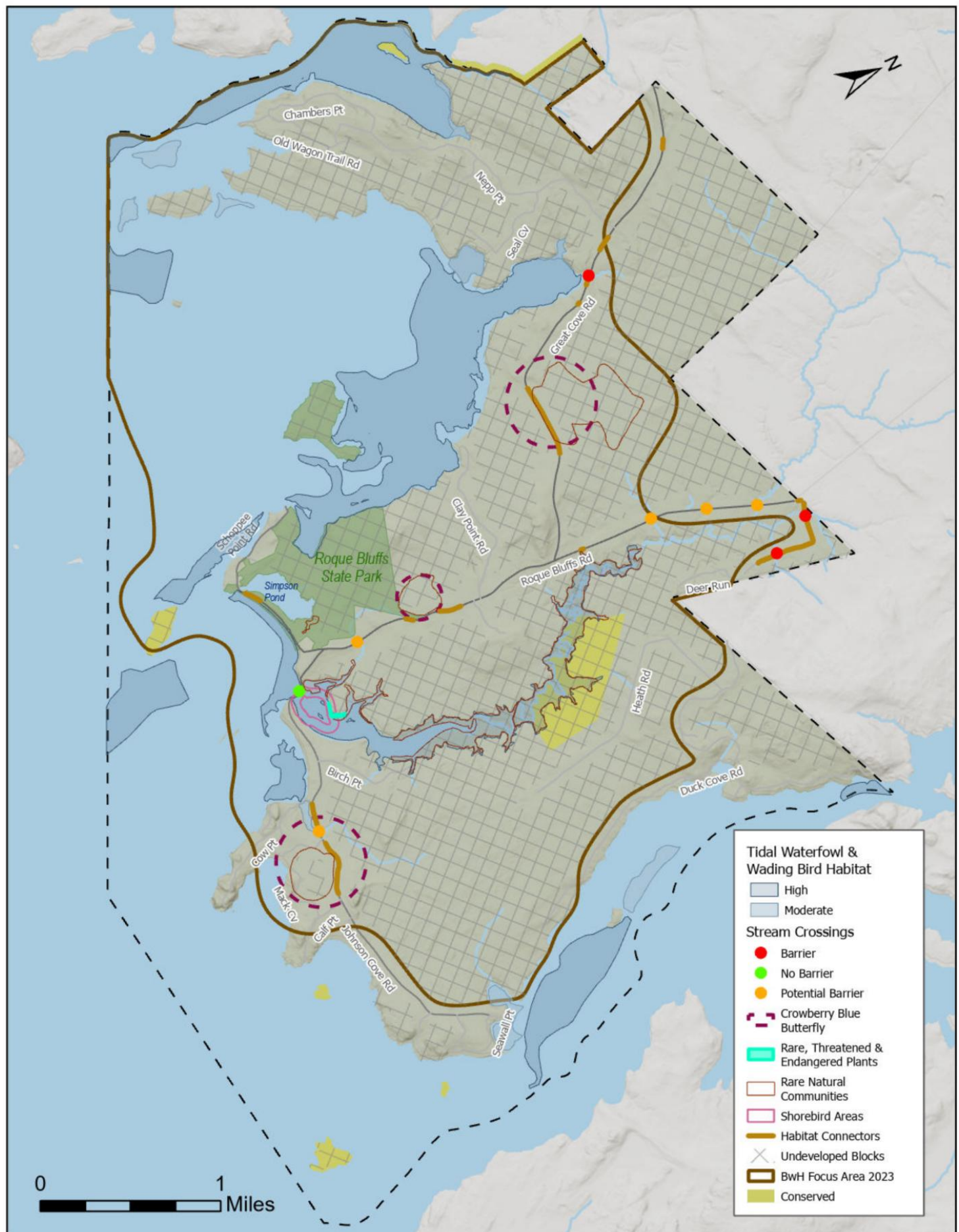
To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs contains extensive forest, wetland, coastal, and estuarine habitats, including large undeveloped habitat blocks, rare plants and natural communities, significant wildlife habitat, and important fisheries resources. Much of the Town lies within the Englishman Bay Focus Area, and the municipality is within federally designated Atlantic salmon critical habitat.

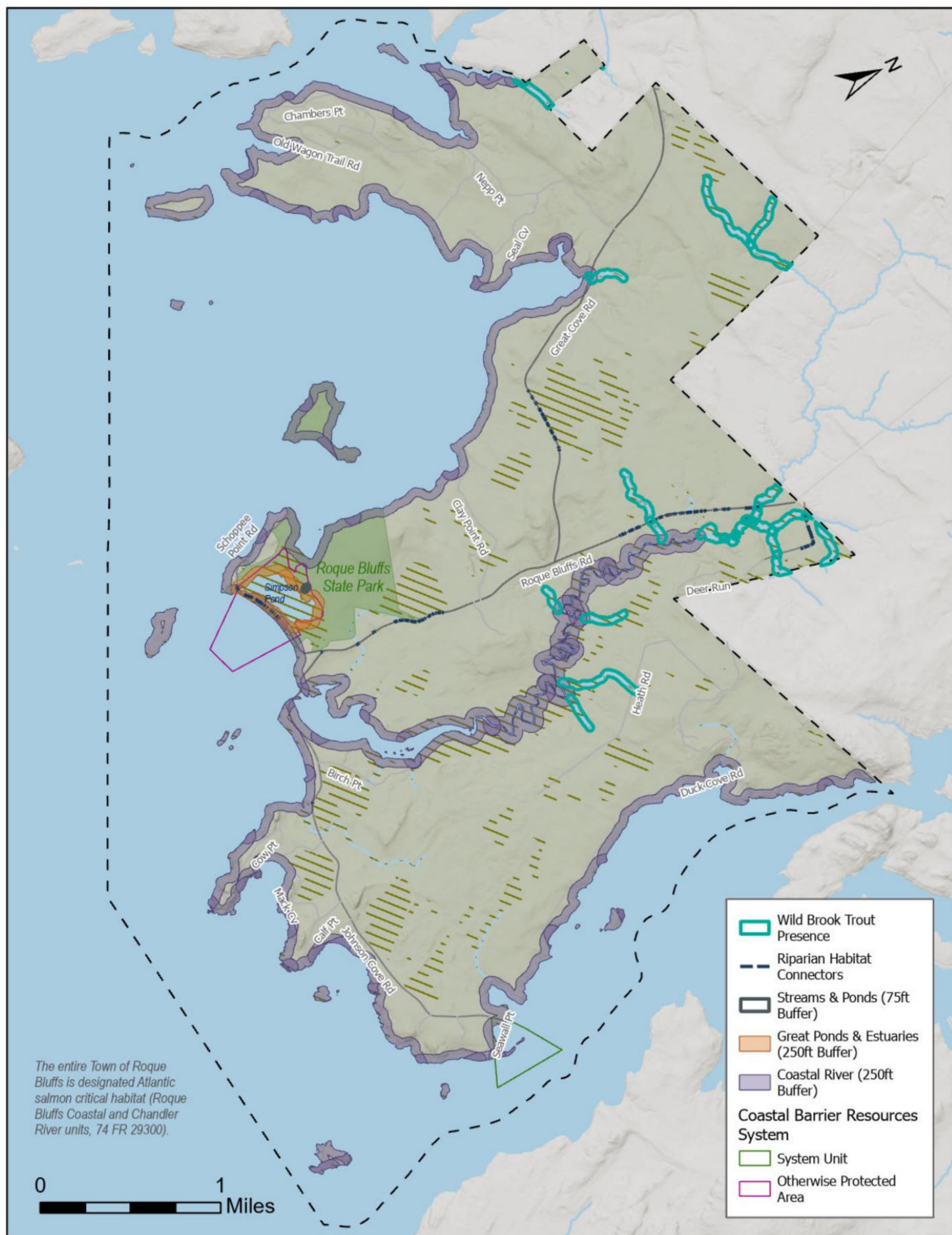
Existing protections include shoreland zoning, state and federal environmental review, Roque Bluffs State Park, and nearby conserved lands. The principal concerns are maintaining habitat connectivity, protecting sensitive shoreland and wetland areas, and improving aquatic passage where feasible.

Wildlife Habitats & Critical Areas



Data Sources: Maine Stream Habitat Viewer, ME DEP & partners, Stream Crossings/AOP data; Maine IF&W Beginning with Habitat, Habitat Connectors, Crowberry Blue Butterfly, Shorebird Areas, Tidal Waterfowl & Wading Bird Habitat, Undeveloped Habitat Blocks & Englishman Bay Focus Area (2023); Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP), Rare Natural Communities & Rare, Threatened & Endangered Plants; ME IF&W BwH Municipal Strategy Letter, Roque Bluffs (2024–2026); MaineDOT (MDOTJURIS) roads; Maine Office of GIS town boundary; Maine DACF BPL Conserved Lands; Esri World Hillshade.

Aquatic Resources & Wetlands



Landscape, Forest Resources, and Habitat Connectivity

Roque Bluffs includes a mix of maritime spruce-fir forest, forested wetlands, freshwater wetlands, salt marsh, tidal flats, rocky shoreline, blueberry barrens, and scattered residential development. These areas form a connected network of inland and coastal habitats.

Large undeveloped habitat blocks are concentrated mainly in the interior and southern portions of Town. Smaller and more fragmented habitat areas occur near developed roads and portions of the coast. Beginning with Habitat maps also identify habitat connectors and likely wildlife crossing areas between undeveloped blocks.

Aquatic connectivity is a notable issue. Beginning with Habitat identifies nine surveyed stream crossings in Roque Bluffs, of which only one is considered fully passable to aquatic organisms. The remaining crossings are identified as barriers or potential barriers.

Conserved Lands and Regional Conservation Context

Roque Bluffs contains several conserved lands that protect coastal, wetland, forest, and island habitat. Roque Bluffs State Park protects land on Schoppee Point, including the beach, Simpson Pond, forest, wetlands, and shoreline habitat.

Schoppee Island is owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge. Fan Island and Calf Island are owned by the State of Maine. Hickey Island is owned by Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and Poverty Island is owned by Downeast Coastal Conservancy.

Beginning with Habitat identifies much of Roque Bluffs as part of the Englishman Bay Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance. The focus area includes the Englishman River, tidal marshes, estuarine habitat, wetlands, islands, and other coastal resources extending into neighboring communities.

Roque Bluffs does not have a conservation commission, municipal land bank, or separate open space plan. Conservation activity occurs through state and federal ownership, nonprofit conservation organizations, existing land use protections, and voluntary landowner participation.

Wildlife Habitats and Fisheries Habitat

Roque Bluffs contains a range of wildlife habitats associated with its forests, wetlands, streams, ponds, shoreline, tidal coves, and undeveloped land. Beginning with Habitat maps identify tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat, shorebird habitat, and habitat associated with rare, threatened, endangered, or special concern species.

Tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat is mapped along portions of the Englishman River, Johnson Cove, Mack Cove, Little Kennebec Bay, and other coastal areas. Shorebird habitat is also identified along tidal flats, rocky shoreline, and other intertidal areas.

Beginning with Habitat datasets show no mapped Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat or Deer Wintering Areas within Roque Bluffs. While freshwater wetlands and forested areas may still support these species locally, no such habitat is currently identified in state mapping for the Town.

The entire Town is within federally designated Atlantic salmon critical habitat, encompassed by the Roque Bluffs Coastal and Chandler River units designated under the Atlantic Salmon Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment critical habitat rule (74 FR 29300, June 19, 2009).

Rare Plants, Rare Species, and Exemplary Natural Communities

Roque Bluffs contains several rare plants, special concern animal species, and exemplary natural communities identified by the Maine Natural Areas Program and Beginning with Habitat. These resources are concentrated mainly in coastal, wetland, peatland, and estuarine habitats.

Mapped exemplary natural communities include *Spartina* saltmarsh, Low Sedge-Buckbean Fen Lawn, Tidal Marsh Estuary Ecosystem, Brackish Tidal Marsh, Coastal Plateau Bog Ecosystem, and Maritime Huckleberry Bog.

Gaspe arrow-grass, a plant species of special concern in Maine, is documented in Roque Bluffs. Saltmarsh sedge, a plant species with a historical state rarity ranking, is also documented in the brackish tidal marsh along the Englishman River. The Crowberry Blue butterfly, also a species of special concern, has multiple documented occurrences and is associated with black crowberry and maritime bog or heath habitat.

Purple Sandpiper is documented along the rocky coastline.

Eelgrass, an important nearshore habitat for fish, shellfish, and waterfowl, has been declining in the Englishman River estuarine area and other coastal locations in Roque Bluffs.

Scenic Resources and Coastal Features

Roque Bluffs' scenic resources include Roque Bluffs State Park, Simpson Pond, the Englishman River and its tidal marshes, Johnson Cove, Mack Cove, Little Kennebec Bay, blueberry barrens and open lands along portions of Great Cove Road, forested interior areas, rocky shoreline, island views, and working waterfront areas.

The Town does not have a separate scenic overlay district or scenic-view protection ordinance. Existing shoreland zoning, vegetation standards, height limits, setbacks, and the current low-density development pattern provide some protection for scenic areas.

Portions of Roque Bluffs are within the federal Coastal Barrier Resources System. The Roque Bluffs Unit, ME-07P, is classified as an Otherwise Protected Area and covers approximately 9 acres of land and 66 acres of associated aquatic habitat near Roque Bluffs State Park and Simpson Pond. The Bare Cove Unit, ME-06, known locally as Arlie's Cove, is classified as a System Unit, the more restrictive of the two designations, and covers approximately 4 acres of land and 13 acres of

associated aquatic habitat. System Unit status generally restricts most federal financial assistance for new development, while Otherwise Protected Area status primarily affects the availability of federal flood insurance.

The Coastal Barrier Resources Act allows specified exceptions to these restrictions for certain existing infrastructure, conservation, recreation, research, and other eligible activities.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs' natural resources function as a connected system of forests, wetlands, streams, tidal marshes, estuarine waters, shoreline, islands, peatlands, and open habitat. This connected landscape supports wildlife movement, fisheries habitat, water quality, recreation, and scenic resources.

Existing local, state, federal, and conservation protections provide a strong foundation. Shoreland zoning, state environmental review, Atlantic salmon critical habitat requirements, the Coastal Barrier Resources System, Roque Bluffs State Park, and conserved island properties protect many of the Town's most sensitive resources. Beginning with Habitat maps also provide useful information for local review, although mapped rare species and habitat locations may be generalized and should be supplemented with site-specific information when needed.

The principal concern is not large-scale development but the cumulative effect of smaller changes. Residential development, road and driveway construction, vegetation removal, altered drainage, and poorly designed stream crossings can gradually fragment habitat or affect wetlands, rare natural communities, shoreland areas, and aquatic systems.

Habitat connectivity remains one of the Town's most important natural-resource strengths. Large undeveloped blocks in the interior and southern portions of Town remain connected to wetland, stream, and coastal habitats. Maintaining these connections does not require preventing development, but it does support careful site design and consideration of mapped habitat connectors during applicable reviews.

Aquatic connectivity is the clearest identified management need. Only one of nine surveyed stream crossings is considered fully passable to aquatic organisms. Priority replacements or upgrades should use Stream Smart principles where feasible to improve passage and reduce repeated maintenance or washout concerns.

Conserved lands already protect representative coastal, island, forest, wetland, and recreational resources. Additional conservation should remain voluntary and focused on willing landowners, regional partnerships, easements, stewardship, and outside funding rather than creating a new municipal land-acquisition program.

Natural-resource planning should also recognize that the Englishman Bay Focus Area, Englishman River watershed, fisheries habitat, coastal marshes, and wildlife corridors extend beyond the Town boundary. Regional coordination will therefore remain important.

The Town's existing protection framework is appropriate, but its effectiveness depends on consistent ordinance administration, use of current resource maps, and site-specific review where necessary. Whether or not Roque Bluffs designates a formal growth area, the Future Land Use Plan should identify significant habitats, wetlands, shoreland areas, rare natural communities, and large connected habitat blocks as considerations when evaluating land for future development.

Climate Considerations

Roque Bluffs' wetlands, tidal marshes, floodplains, forested buffers, beaches, and undeveloped shorelands help store floodwater, reduce erosion, filter runoff, and provide space for habitat movement.

Sea level rise, stronger coastal storms, heavier rainfall, and warming temperatures may affect tidal marshes, shoreland habitat, stream crossings, coldwater fisheries, eelgrass, rare natural communities, and the timing of migration, flowering, breeding, and other seasonal habitat use.

The Town should continue to use Beginning with Habitat information, maintain shoreland and wetland protections, support voluntary conservation, and consider climate-related changes when reviewing projects affecting sensitive resources. Findings from the Town's vulnerability assessment can help identify areas where flooding, erosion, habitat loss, or changing coastal conditions warrant closer attention.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Protect critical natural resources through existing land use review and ordinance administration.

Strategy 1.1: Maintain local land use and shoreland zoning standards consistent with applicable state requirements for wetlands, shorelands, significant wildlife habitat, rare natural communities, and other critical natural resources.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Use current Beginning with Habitat maps and related state resource information when reviewing subdivisions, non-residential development, and other applicable land use proposals.

Responsibility: Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: Require applicants, where applicable, to identify critical natural resources on or near a proposed development site and avoid or minimize impacts through site design, buffers, limited clearing, adjusted road or driveway placement, or other appropriate measures.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.4: Whether or not the Town designates a formal growth area, use the Future Land Use Plan to identify significant habitats, wetlands, shoreland areas, rare natural communities, and large connected habitat blocks as considerations when evaluating land for future development.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

Policy 2: Maintain habitat connectivity and improve aquatic passage where feasible.

Strategy 2.1: Consider large undeveloped habitat blocks, mapped habitat connectors, and likely wildlife crossing areas during subdivision review and future land use decisions.

Responsibility: Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Identify priority stream-crossing improvements and seek outside funding for eligible projects where feasible.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Use Stream Smart principles when replacing or upgrading Town-maintained stream crossings where practical.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Support voluntary conservation and stewardship of important natural resources.

Strategy 3.1: Make information available to landowners about voluntary conservation easements, stewardship assistance, current use taxation, habitat management, and applicable state and federal requirements.

Responsibility: Town Office, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Support conservation, habitat restoration, and stewardship projects involving willing landowners when they align with Town priorities and do not create unplanned municipal costs or management obligations.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.3: Participate in regional and state efforts addressing shared natural-resource priorities when those efforts are relevant to Roque Bluffs.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Maintain the resilience of natural systems that reduce flooding, erosion, and habitat loss.

Strategy 4.1: Continue to protect wetlands, tidal marshes, floodplains, forested buffers, beaches, undeveloped shorelands, and other areas that provide flood storage, erosion reduction, and habitat movement.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Consider sea level rise, heavier rainfall, coastal flooding, erosion, and habitat migration when reviewing projects that may affect sensitive natural resources.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.3: Use findings from the Town’s vulnerability assessment and available grant programs to support priority culvert, habitat restoration, and conservation projects where appropriate.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

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MARINE RESOURCES

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

44. Describe Roque Bluffs' coastal waters, marine habitats, shellfish resources, working waterfront, harbor facilities, and public access;
45. Assess the condition of marine resources and the adequacy of existing protections;
46. Identify threats to marine water quality, shellfish resources, waterfront access, and continued marine use; and
47. Establish practical policies and strategies to protect marine resources and support water-dependent activities during the planning period.

State Goal

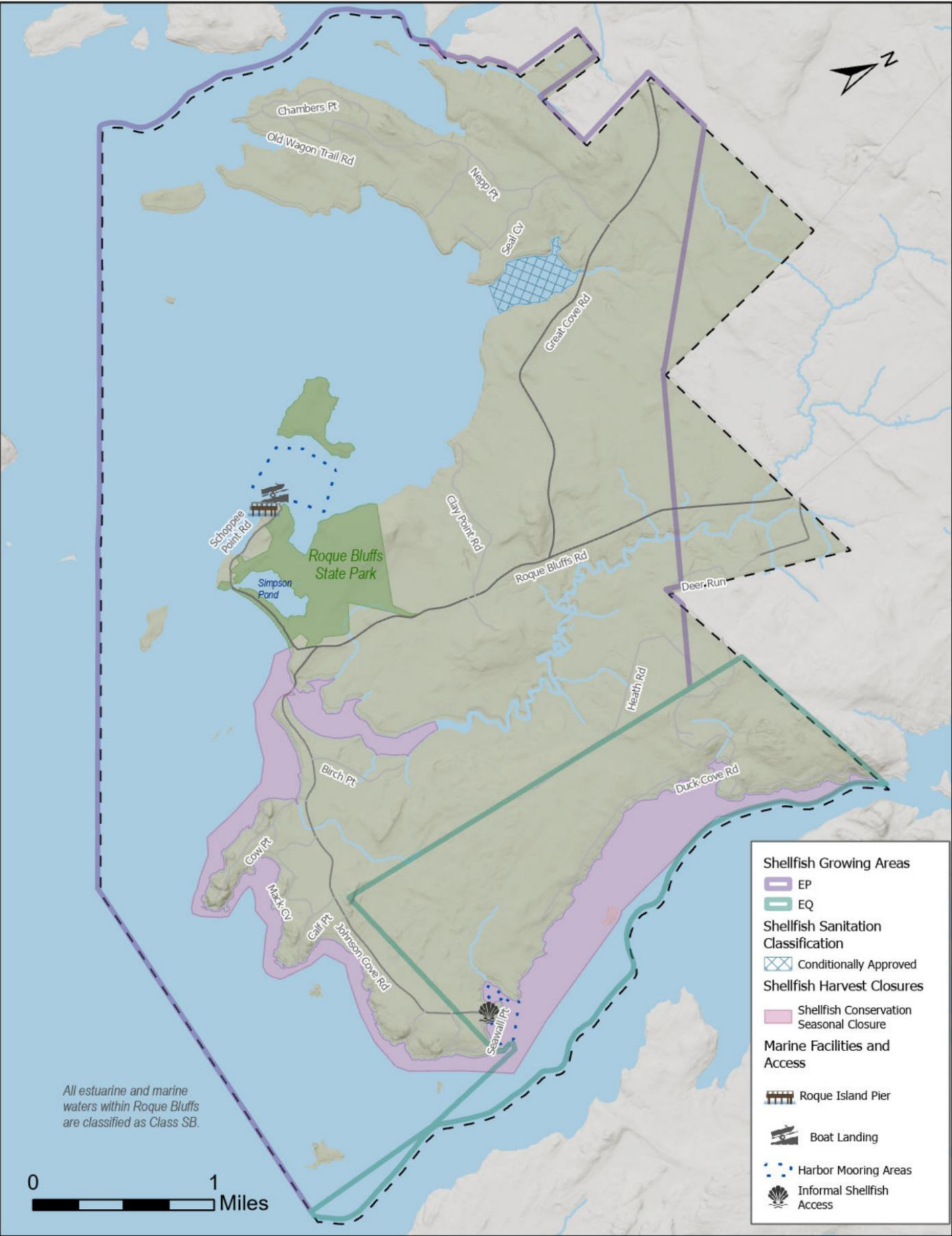
To protect the State's marine resources industry, ports and harbors from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public.

Key Findings

Commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, aquaculture, recreational boating, and other marine activities remain important uses of Roque Bluffs' coastal waters and working waterfront. Soft-shell clams are the principal species reflected in recent municipal landings data, and although reported landings and harvest participation have declined over the past decade, marine license and vessel data show that local residents remain actively connected to the marine economy.

The Town manages and protects marine resources through local ordinances, shellfish management, and coordination with the Maine Department of Marine Resources. The municipal boat ramp at Pond Cove is the Town's primary public working-waterfront and marine-access facility. Limited parking, circulation, shore-side facilities, and exposure to coastal conditions constrain use of the site.

Marine Resources



Data Sources: Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Growing Area Boundaries; Maine DMR Public Health, Current Shellfish Classifications (NSSP) and Biotoxin Closures; Maine DMR, Municipal Shellfish Conservation Closures (2026); Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Statutory Water Classification (Class SB); Maine Department of Transportation (MDOTJURIS) roads; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Maine Office of GIS town boundary; Maine DACF Bureau of Parks and Lands, Roque Bluffs State Park boundary; Esri World Hillshade.

Coastal Waters and Marine Habitat

Roque Bluffs is located along Englishman Bay and the Gulf of Maine and has approximately 27 miles of coastline. Its coastal environment includes sheltered coves, tidal estuaries, mudflats, rocky shoreline, nearshore waters, and coastal wetlands that support commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, aquaculture, recreational boating, and marine habitat.

These areas also support water quality, shoreline stability, and habitat for fish, shellfish, shorebirds, waterfowl, and other marine species.

A more detailed inventory of coastal wetlands, significant wildlife habitat, rare species, and other natural resources is provided in the Natural Resources chapter. This chapter focuses on marine use, management, water quality, working-waterfront conditions, and access to coastal waters.

Commercial Fisheries

Commercial fishing remains an active part of Roque Bluffs’ marine economy. In 2024, Maine Department of Marine Resources data identified 31 marine licenses held by Roque Bluffs residents. These included commercial shellfish, lobster and crab, scallop dragger, commercial fishing, pelagic and anadromous, halibut, apprentice, and non-commercial lobster and crab licenses.

Table 1. Commercial Marine Licenses Held by Roque Bluffs Residents, 2024	
License Type	Number
Commercial Shellfish	12
Lobster and Crab, Commercial Classes	10
Scallop Dragger	3
Commercial Fishing Single	2
Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Single	1
Non-Federal Halibut Single	1
Lobster/Crab Apprentice	1
Lobster/Crab Non-Commercial	1
Total	31

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources, 2024 municipal marine license data for Roque Bluffs.

Reported commercial landings for Roque Bluffs consist primarily of soft-shell clams, with sea scallop landings reported in some years. Annual landings vary based on resource conditions, harvest participation, market conditions, regulations, access, and reporting practices.

Table 2. Reported Commercial Marine Landings, Roque Bluffs, 2015-2024						
Year	Species	Unit	Pounds	Value	Trips	Harvesters
2015	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	215,336	\$495,095	2,563	45
2015	Sea Scallop	Meat lbs	3,500	\$45,041	39	5
2016	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	187,753	\$366,315	2,488	48
2016	Sea Scallop	Meat lbs	6,332	\$79,894	61	6
2017	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	138,527	\$250,629	1,884	44
2018	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	134,804	\$240,532	1,691	30
2018	Sea Scallop	Meat lbs	4,520	\$47,733	51	6
2019	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	134,539	\$304,883	1,646	38
2020	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	88,293	\$230,420	891	25
2021	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	98,983	\$341,590	804	25
2022	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	103,375	\$295,274	913	22
2023	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	55,856	\$138,051	470	18
2024	Soft-shell Clam	Live lbs	48,394	\$130,385	375	12

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources, commercial marine landings data for Roque Bluffs, 2015-2024.

Shellfish Resources

Harbor Facilities and Public Access

Roque Bluffs maintains a municipal harbor that provides access to Englishman Bay for commercial fishermen, shellfish harvesters, aquaculturists, recreational boaters, and other water-dependent users. Harbor operations are managed under the Town's Harbor Ordinance.

At the time this plan was prepared, the harbor contained 14 registered moorings. The Harbormaster is responsible for assigning mooring locations within five designated zones, setting mooring fees, approving mooring gear, and conducting annual inspections of resident moorings.

Public marine access is provided through the municipal boat ramp at Pond Cove, located at the end of Schoppee Point Road. The facility consists of a single-lane ramp with adjacent parking and circulation areas. There is no dock or public restroom.

The site also includes an existing breakwater, and periodic maintenance dredging is conducted at the base of the ramp where sediment accumulates.

A privately owned pier is located at Schoppee Point adjacent to the municipal boat ramp. The pier serves private property and is not a public access facility.

Informal shoreline access is also available at the end of Johnson Cove Road, where



5 Pond Cove municipal boat ramp



6 Roque Island Pier

clambers access nearby shellfish flats. Additional informal shoreline access occurs at Cow Point.

Scenic Resources and Visual Access

Scenic coastal views occur throughout Roque Bluffs, including views of Englishman Bay, the Englishman River, coves, islands, and the Town's shoreline. Much of the shoreline is privately owned, while publicly accessible coastal scenery is available at Roque Bluffs State Park and from Town-owned property.

The Town does not maintain a formal inventory of designated scenic viewpoints. Shoreland Zoning provides the principal local land-use protection along the shoreline.

Working Waterfront

Roque Bluffs' working waterfront is concentrated at the municipal harbor and Pond Cove boat ramp. These facilities support commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, aquaculture, mooring access, recreational boating, emergency response, and other water-dependent activities.

Maine Department of Marine Resources vessel data for 2025 identified 21 vessels associated with Roque Bluffs, ranging from 14 to 38 feet in length. Local information also identifies at least five recreational vessels moored in Town, ranging from approximately 17 to 42 feet.

DMR dealer-license data identified one retail seafood license in Roque Bluffs in 2025.

As of 2024, two parcels totaling approximately 4.1 acres were enrolled in Maine's Working Waterfront current use taxation program, with a total assessed current-use value of \$40,600.

Marine Water Quality

Roque Bluffs' estuarine and marine waters are classified by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection as Class SB waters. Class SB waters are managed to support recreation, fishing, aquaculture, shellfish propagation and harvesting, navigation, and habitat for estuarine and marine life.

Maine Department of Marine Resources shellfish classifications identify Approved, Conditionally Approved, Prohibited, and conservation-closure areas in and around Roque Bluffs. These classifications are used by DMR to manage shellfish harvesting based on water-quality and public-health conditions.

Local protection of marine water quality is supported through the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, Shellfish Conservation Ordinance, and applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

Additional information concerning stormwater, septic systems, wetlands, and watershed conditions is provided in the Water Resources chapter.

Existing Local Protections

Roque Bluffs uses several local ordinances to manage and protect marine resources. The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance regulates development and land disturbance near coastal waters and wetlands. The Shellfish Conservation Ordinance establishes local procedures for shellfish licensing, conservation, enforcement, and resource management. The Harbor Ordinance governs harbor use, moorings, navigation, administration, and safety.

The Town's Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance also includes provisions applicable to development near coastal areas. Together, these ordinances provide the Town's principal local framework for protecting marine water quality, managing shellfish resources, maintaining orderly harbor use, and supporting public access.

These local measures are supplemented by applicable state and federal programs administered by the Maine Department of Marine Resources, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and federal fisheries agencies.

Analysis

Marine resources continue to support commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, aquaculture, recreational boating, seafood sales, and public access in Roque Bluffs. Marine license and vessel data indicate continued participation in water-dependent activities, although commercial soft-shell clam landings, trips, and harvesters declined between 2015 and 2024. These trends may reflect changes in resource conditions, participation, markets, regulations, access, and reporting. The absence of lobster landings in the municipal data does not necessarily indicate an absence of lobster fishing by Roque Bluffs residents because catch may be landed or reported elsewhere.

Shellfish water quality is monitored by the Maine Department of Marine Resources through Growing Areas EP and EQ and associated harvest classifications and closures. Most Roque Bluffs waters are classified as Approved, with smaller areas subject to conditional approval, conservation closures, or periodic biotoxin closures. Recent closures have generally been associated with conservation management, biotoxin events, or water-quality conditions rather than a documented long-term point source of pollution.

Marine water quality remains closely connected to runoff, erosion, septic-system performance, shoreline disturbance, and broader watershed conditions. Continued monitoring, shoreland protection, and local shellfish management are important to maintaining harvesting opportunities and other marine uses.

The balance between commercial, recreational, and other marine uses is generally reasonable under current conditions. Roque Bluffs has experienced no significant conversion of its principal public working waterfront to non-water-dependent use. The Working Waterfront current use

taxation program also provides a mechanism for retaining qualifying waterfront land in water-dependent use.

The Pond Cove boat ramp and municipal harbor provide the Town's principal public marine access. The single-lane ramp, limited parking and circulation, absence of a dock and public restroom, and limited protection provided by the existing breakwater constrain use during periods of higher activity. These conditions affect commercial harvesters, aquaculturists, recreational boaters, emergency users, pedestrians, and users from neighboring communities. The harbor may have capacity for additional moorings, but increased mooring activity would also place additional demand on shore-side access and facilities.

Local dredging needs are limited to periodic maintenance dredging at the base of the Pond Cove boat ramp, where sediment accumulates. A larger harbor dredging program is not currently identified as necessary.

Roque Bluffs does not have a formal harbor or bay management plan. The Harbor Ordinance and Harbormaster currently provide the principal framework for mooring management, navigation, safety, and harbor administration. A separate harbor or bay management plan does not appear necessary under current conditions but could be reconsidered if harbor use, mooring demand, or management issues increase.

Physical and visual access to coastal waters is provided at several locations. The Pond Cove boat ramp provides formal municipal access, Roque Bluffs State Park provides protected public beach and scenic access, and Johnson Cove Road and Cow Point provide informal shoreline access. Maintaining existing access and evaluating practical improvements will remain important during the planning period.

The Town's highest-priority marine facility need is continued maintenance and practical improvement of the Pond Cove working-waterfront area. Improvements should be considered as a coordinated project addressing launching, parking, circulation, pedestrian safety, drainage, shoreline conditions, breakwater protection, and other shore-side needs rather than as isolated improvements.

Climate Considerations

Changing coastal conditions may affect Roque Bluffs' marine resources through warmer ocean temperatures, changing species distribution, ocean acidification, stronger coastal storms, sea level rise, and changes in shellfish productivity and habitat.

The Pond Cove boat ramp, breakwater, parking area, and shore-side access are particularly exposed to coastal storms, flooding, erosion, and changing shoreline conditions. Future maintenance and improvements should consider long-term site conditions and the continued ability of the facility to support commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, aquaculture, recreational boating, and emergency access.

Heavier rainfall and increased runoff may also affect shellfish-growing areas and marine water quality. Continued shellfish monitoring, conservation management, shoreland protection, drainage management, and coordination with the Maine Department of Marine Resources will remain important as conditions change.

Policy 1: Protect marine water quality, shellfish habitat, and coastal resources.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to administer and enforce the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, Shellfish Conservation Ordinance, and applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that protect marine water quality and coastal habitat.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Continue local shellfish management through the Shellfish Management Committee, shellfish warden, conservation closures, licensing, enforcement, and coordination with the Maine Department of Marine Resources.

Responsibility: Select Board, Shellfish Management Committee, Shellfish Warden

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: Apply practical erosion-control, stormwater, and shoreline-protection measures when reviewing development and land disturbance near coastal waters and shellfish areas.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Support commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, aquaculture, and other water-dependent uses.

Strategy 2.1: Consider the needs of commercial fishermen, shellfish harvesters, aquaculturists, recreational boaters, and emergency users when planning public access and harbor improvements or reviewing applicable waterfront land-use proposals.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Protect existing physical and visual access to coastal waters and avoid actions that would unnecessarily reduce access to the Pond Cove boat ramp, harbor, Roque Bluffs State Park, or other established shoreline access used for water-dependent or public purposes.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Make information available to waterfront property owners about the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program and Maine's Working Waterfront current use taxation program as tools for maintaining long-term commercial fishing access.

Responsibility: Select Board, Assessor

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.4: Make information on clean marina and boatyard practices available to marine businesses and waterfront users, as applicable.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Maintain and improve the Pond Cove boat ramp and working-waterfront area as the Town's primary public marine access facility.

Strategy 3.1: Continue to maintain the boat ramp, parking area, access road, signs, drainage, and surrounding public-use area.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Develop a coordinated improvement concept for the Pond Cove site that evaluates practical improvements to launching and docking, parking and circulation, restroom access, drainage, shoreline stabilization, breakwater protection, and accommodation of additional moorings as appropriate.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 3.3: Pursue Northern Border Regional Commission funding and other state, federal, and private grant opportunities for engineering, permitting, design, and construction of priority improvements.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Maintain safe and orderly harbor operations.

Strategy 4.1: Continue to administer the Harbor Ordinance and maintain current records of moorings, harbor users, and harbor-related concerns.

Responsibility: Harbormaster, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Evaluate the practical capacity for additional moorings together with the ability of shore-side access and facilities to accommodate increased use.

Responsibility: Harbormaster, Select Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 4.3: Reconsider the need for a formal harbor or bay management plan if harbor use, mooring demand, or management issues increase substantially.

Responsibility: Harbormaster, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 5: Improve the resilience of marine access facilities and support long-term marine resource stewardship.

Strategy 5.1: Consider coastal flooding, storm exposure, erosion, sea level rise, and long-term maintenance when planning improvements to the Pond Cove boat ramp, breakwater, parking area, and associated harbor facilities.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 5.2: Continue to coordinate with the Maine Department of Marine Resources, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and other appropriate partners on shellfish management, marine water quality, shoreline conditions, and marine-resource concerns.

Responsibility: Select Board, Shellfish Management Committee, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

Maine Department of Marine Resources. Marine resource data and records for Roque Bluffs, including commercial landings, marine licenses, dealer licenses, vessel information, shellfish classifications and closures, Growing Areas, and shellfish management information, 2015-2026.

Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Statutory Water Classification Program and Classification of Maine Waters.

Maine Legislature. Title 38, Section 465-B, Standards for Classification of Estuarine and Marine Waters.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Harbor Ordinance.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Shellfish Conservation Ordinance.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Planning Committee, Harbormaster, Shellfish Management Committee, shellfish warden, and other municipal information concerning harbor use, moorings, vessel activity, shellfish management, boat ramp conditions, working-waterfront access, and marine resource priorities, 2025-2026.

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands. Information concerning Roque Bluffs State Park and coastal public access.

Northern Border Regional Commission. Grant program information applicable to municipal marine access and working-waterfront improvements.

Maine Coastal Program. Working waterfront, public access, coastal resilience, and shoreline planning guidance.

RECREATION

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

48. Describe Roque Bluffs' recreation facilities, open space, trails, water access, and regional recreation opportunities;
49. Assess whether existing recreation resources are adequate for current and projected needs;
50. Identify access, maintenance, and capacity concerns; and
51. Establish practical policies and strategies to maintain recreation opportunities, public water access, and open space during the planning period.

State Goal

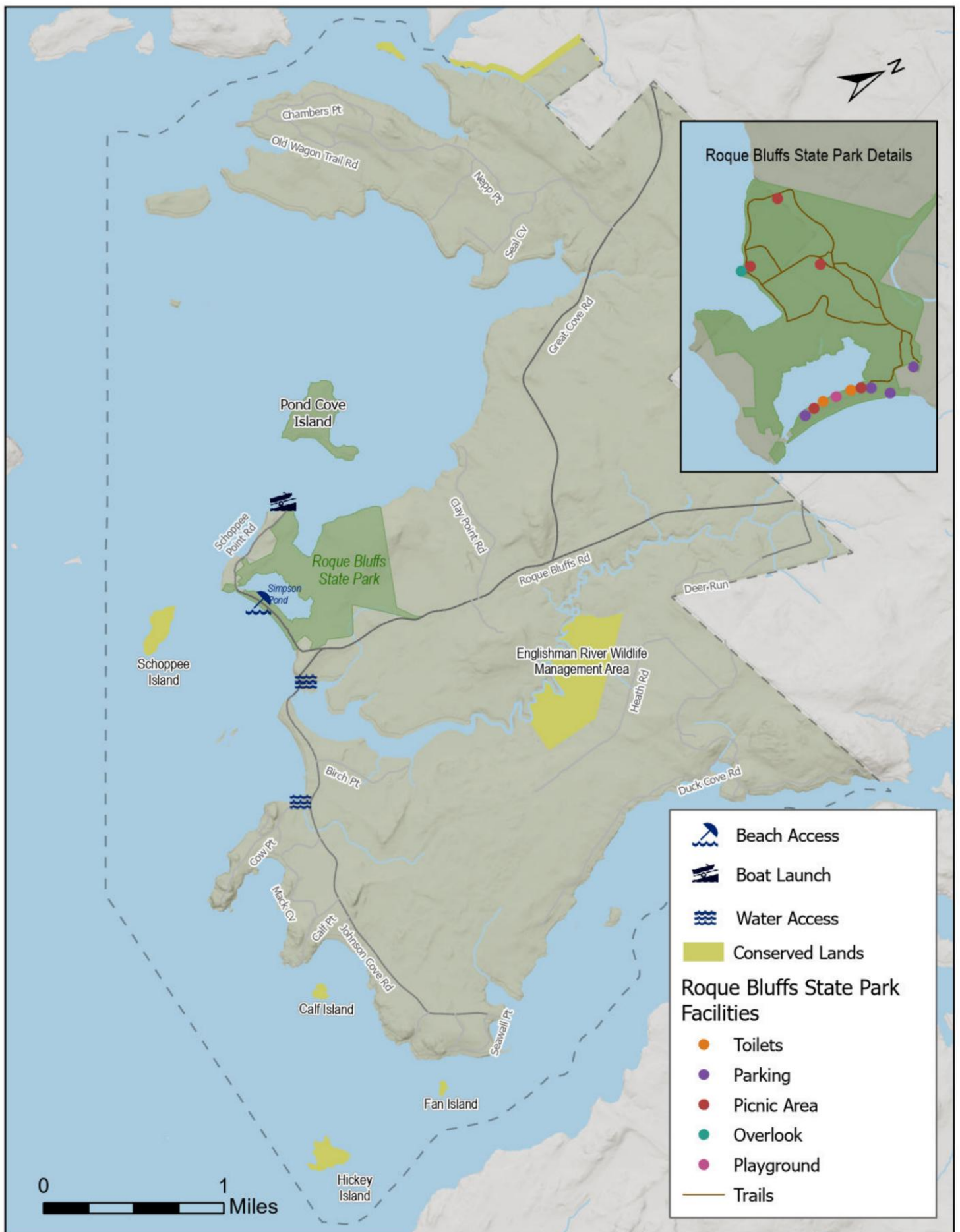
To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs has substantial outdoor recreation opportunities through Roque Bluffs State Park, Simpson Pond, Englishman Bay, the Englishman River area, the Town boat launch, Cow Point, conserved lands, and regional recreation facilities. These resources support swimming, boating, paddling, fishing, hunting, hiking, wildlife observation, beach use, and other outdoor activities.

Existing recreation resources are generally adequate for current and projected needs. The principal concerns are maintaining public access, addressing maintenance needs at existing facilities and trails, advancing planned improvements at the Town boat launch, and respecting private property where recreation depends on landowner permission.

Recreation



Public Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Facilities

Roque Bluffs State Park

Roque Bluffs State Park is the Town's largest developed public recreation area. The approximately 274-acre park on Schoppee Point provides access to Englishman Bay, the ocean beach, Simpson Pond, picnic areas, a children's play area, parking, and seasonal day-use facilities.

The park supports swimming, beach walking, picnicking, hiking, paddling, fishing, hunting where permitted, wildlife observation, and other outdoor recreation. Its trail system includes approximately three miles of walking trails through fields, former orchards, wooded areas, and shoreline landscapes near Great Cove and Pond Cove.



7 Roque Bluffs State Park Beach

The park is owned and managed by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. The Town does not operate or maintain the facility, but the park provides an important share of the recreation opportunities available to residents and visitors.

Pond Cove Island

Pond Cove Island is a 50-acre island in Englishman Bay and is part of Roque Bluffs State Park. The island was acquired by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, which held interim ownership while a conservation and funding plan was developed, before the island was conveyed to the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands and added to Roque Bluffs State Park in 2021.

Access is by water. The island supports low-impact recreation such as paddling, small-boat landing, hiking, picnicking, birdwatching, fishing, and other uses allowed under State Park rules. The Town boat launch provides the most direct municipal access point for boaters traveling to the island.

Campsite development has been discussed or planned for Pond Cove Island, but the current status and availability of overnight camping had not been confirmed with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands at the time this plan was prepared.

Englishman River Wildlife Management Area and Focus Area

The Englishman River area provides recreation opportunities while also supporting sensitive wetland, marsh, bog, shoreland, and wildlife habitat. The Englishman River Lot, managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, supports activities such as boating, canoeing, fishing, hunting, and wildlife observation where public access is available and conditions allow.

The broader Englishman Bay Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance includes the Englishman River tidal marsh and surrounding uplands. This area has both recreation and conservation value.

Ownership, access rights, parking, and site conditions vary within the area. Public access should therefore be identified only where legal access has been confirmed.

Water Access and Boating

Roque Bluffs provides access to both saltwater and freshwater recreation, including boating, paddling, fishing, shellfishing, swimming, and wildlife observation. Public water access is available at Roque Bluffs State Park, Simpson Pond, the State Park beach, the Town boat launch at Schoppee Point, Cow Point, and confirmed public access associated with the Englishman River area.

The Town boat launch at Schoppee Point is the primary municipal water access facility. Built in 1998 through the efforts of local fishermen and the Select Board, the paved ramp serves commercial and recreational users. The Town funds operation and maintenance of the ramp, and boat excise tax revenues are dedicated to the facility. The adjacent parking area is leased from the Roque Island Gardner Homestead Corporation.

Roque Bluffs State Park provides additional access to Englishman Bay and Simpson Pond. Kayaks and other small craft may be launched from the State Park beach, although users should account for fog, wind, tides, and open-water conditions.

The Town owns land at Cow Point that provides public water access and limited parking. Access at Great Cove, Johnson Cove Road, Duck Cove, and other shoreline locations is private or informal unless a public right has been confirmed. This plan does not establish public access where none legally exists.

Other Outdoor Recreation Uses

Roque Bluffs supports a range of outdoor recreation activities, including hunting, fishing, shellfishing, paddling, beach walking, birdwatching, ice fishing, wildlife observation, and informal walking or running.

Roque Bluffs State Park provides the Town's primary formal hiking trail system. Committee input indicates that some trail maintenance needs have been identified, but no significant use conflicts have been reported.

There are no designated or maintained ATV or UTV trails in Roque Bluffs.

Hunting and fishing occur where allowed by state law and where access is public or landowner permission has been granted. Recreation on private land depends on the continued cooperation of landowners and respectful use by the public.

Community and Regional Recreation

Roque Bluffs does not operate a formal municipal recreation program. Community activities are supported through the Community Center, local organizations, and volunteers.

Activities include yoga, garden and art programs, public suppers, the Turkey Trot, the townwide lawn sale, the annual Summer Fair and Auction, Wild Blueberry Weekend activities, beach volleyball, and informal cross-country running near the beach. The University of Maine at Machias and area schools also use local beaches, rivers, and outdoor areas for nature-based study and recreation.

Regional facilities supplement local opportunities. Residents use recreation facilities and programs in Machias, area schools, the University of Maine at Machias, and other nearby communities. These include organized sports, playing fields, regional events, ATV and UTV trail access, and public access to the University of Maine at Machias fitness center and pool through memberships, passes, or other arrangements.

Additional regional opportunities include the Down East Sunrise Trail, Downeast Coastal Conservancy preserves and trails, Maine Coast Heritage Trust preserves, Maine Island Trail Association resources, The Nature Conservancy lands, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service properties, golf, and roller skating in Lubec. Nearby State destinations include Cobscook Bay State Park, Cutler Coast Public Lands, Fort O'Brien State Historic Site, Quoddy Head State Park, and Rocky Lake Public Lands.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs' recreation needs are largely met through Roque Bluffs State Park, municipal water access, conserved lands, private land used with permission, volunteer-supported activities, and regional facilities. Existing opportunities are generally adequate for the projected population, and the Town does not need to create a formal recreation department or duplicate facilities available in Machias and nearby communities.

Roque Bluffs State Park is the Town's principal developed recreation resource. It provides beach access, swimming, hiking, paddling, fishing, picnicking, playground facilities, and access to Simpson Pond. Because the park is owned and managed by the State, the Town's role is primarily to communicate local concerns, coordinate on trail and facility needs, and support appropriate volunteer or partnership opportunities.

The Town boat launch at Schoppee Point is the most important municipally controlled recreation facility. It supports commercial and recreational boating, fishing, paddling, access to nearby islands,

and emergency use. Current limitations include the narrow ramp, constrained parking and circulation, lack of restroom facilities, and absence of a dock or float system.

The Town is planning a substantial improvement project that would triple the width of the boat ramp, add approximately 280 feet of floating dock, provide parking for 32 vehicles with trailers, and include lighting and bathrooms. These improvements would significantly increase the capacity and usability of the site, but they will require engineering, permitting, funding, and long-term maintenance planning. The project should remain coordinated with the Marine Resources and Capital Investment Plan chapters.

Trail maintenance has also been identified as a concern. Because the primary formal trail system is within Roque Bluffs State Park, improvements will depend largely on coordination with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. Volunteer assistance or outside stewardship programs may be appropriate where supported by the State.

Public recreation access outside the State Park and Town-owned properties is more limited. Some shore access and outdoor recreation depend on private landowner permission or informal arrangements. The Town should avoid implying public rights where none have been established and should continue to support respectful use of private land.

The Town's recreation priorities are maintaining established access, advancing the planned boat-launch improvements, addressing trail and parking concerns through partnerships, protecting sensitive recreation areas from damage, and avoiding new municipal responsibilities that are not supported by a clear need or funding source.

Climate Considerations

Climate-related recreation concerns in Roque Bluffs are concentrated at shoreline access points, beaches, trails, parking areas, and the Town boat launch. Coastal flooding, sea level rise, erosion, storm surge, heavier rainfall, and drainage problems may damage facilities, reduce access, and increase maintenance needs.

The State Park beach, Schoppee Point boat launch, Cow Point, Black Head, low-lying parking areas, and informal shore access locations may be particularly exposed. Natural features such as beaches, marshes, dunes, and vegetated shorelines also help reduce storm impacts and should be protected as part of recreation planning.

Future recreation investments should emphasize maintenance and resilience at existing facilities. Drainage, erosion control, safe parking, signage, shoreline protection, and durable access improvements should be incorporated where practical. New recreation facilities should generally be avoided in locations subject to repeated flooding, erosion, or storm damage unless no reasonable alternative exists.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Maintain and improve existing recreation facilities and public access.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to maintain the Town boat launch at Schoppee Point as the primary municipal water access facility and address routine needs involving the ramp, parking, circulation, drainage, signs, and shoreline conditions.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Advance the planned boat launch improvement project, including expansion of the ramp, approximately 280 feet of floating dock, parking for 32 vehicles with trailers, lighting, and bathrooms, as engineering, permitting, funding, and site conditions allow.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 1.3: Continue to pursue Northern Border Regional Commission funding and other grant opportunities for design, permitting, construction, and resilience improvements at the boat launch.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.4: Coordinate with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands regarding trail maintenance, visitor management, signs, erosion, storm damage, and other needs at Roque Bluffs State Park.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Maintain public access to major water bodies and recreation areas.

Strategy 2.1: Continue to support public access to Englishman Bay through the Town boat launch and Roque Bluffs State Park, and to Simpson Pond through the State Park.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Maintain Cow Point as a public water access location, subject to available parking, maintenance needs, and protection of adjacent resources.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Confirm the legal status of other locally used shore access points before identifying them as public or investing municipal resources in improvements.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Short term

Strategy 2.4: Work with nearby property owners and State partners to address parking, trespass, litter, safety, signs, erosion, and other concerns at established access locations.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Support open space and outdoor recreation while respecting private property and sensitive resources.

Strategy 3.1: Work with willing landowners, State agencies, and conservation organizations when opportunities arise to protect important open space, shoreline access, trail connections, islands, and recreation resources.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Avoid encouraging public use of private or environmentally sensitive land unless ownership, access rights, parking, and resource impacts are understood.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board, Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.3: Make information available about respectful recreation on private land, including permission, posted property, litter, and landowner liability protections.

Responsibility: Town Office

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.4: Continue to recognize State Park land, Pond Cove Island, the Englishman River area, conserved islands, and other public or conserved properties as part of the Town's recreation and open space system.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Improve the resilience of recreation facilities and access points.

Strategy 4.1: Consider flooding, erosion, storm surge, heavier rainfall, drainage, and long-term maintenance when planning improvements to the boat launch, parking areas, trails, and shore access points.

Responsibility: Select Board, Harbormaster, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Prioritize maintenance and resilience improvements at existing facilities before creating new recreation sites in areas subject to repeated storm damage.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.3: Use findings from the Town's vulnerability assessment and available grant programs to identify practical recreation and public-access improvements.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

Sources

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Planning Committee input and municipal information concerning recreation facilities, community activities, public water access, trail conditions, Cow Point, and planned improvements to the Town boat launch, 2025-2026.

Town of Roque Bluffs. *Comprehensive Public Survey*. 2025.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Municipal records concerning the Schoppee Point boat launch, boat excise revenues, maintenance responsibilities, parking lease, and planned facility improvements. Accessed 2026.

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AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

52. Describe Roque Bluffs' agricultural and forest resources, including productive land, current activities, soils, and current use taxation;
53. Assess trends affecting farming, forestry, and the continued availability of working lands;
54. Identify potential conflicts between resource-based uses and future development; and
55. Establish practical policies and strategies to protect productive farm and forest land and support continued resource use.

State Goal

To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

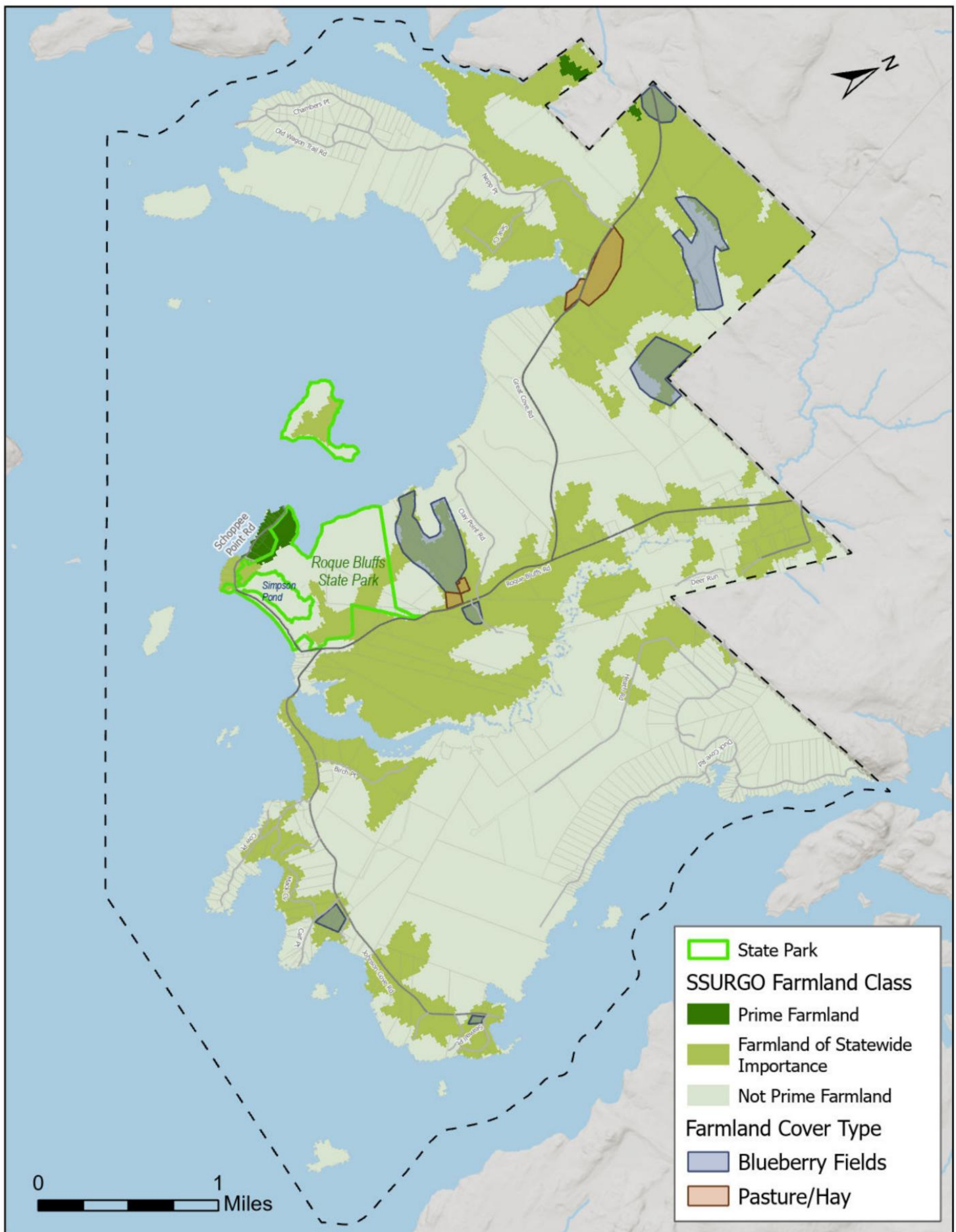
Key Findings

Forests are the dominant land cover in Roque Bluffs, while wild blueberry fields are the Town's principal agricultural resource. Local activities include blueberry production, selective timber harvesting, firewood cutting, balsam fir tip harvesting, and private woodlot management. These uses contribute to the local economy and help maintain productive land, forest cover, and open areas.

Reported timber harvesting has declined from earlier levels, and blueberry production faces pressures related to operating costs, markets, yields, and changing environmental conditions. In 2025, 820.8 acres were enrolled in Tree Growth, 235.8 acres in Open Space, and 4.1 acres in Working Waterfront. No land was enrolled in the Farmland current use program. The principal land-use concern is the possible fragmentation or conversion of larger farm and forest parcels through subdivision or other development.

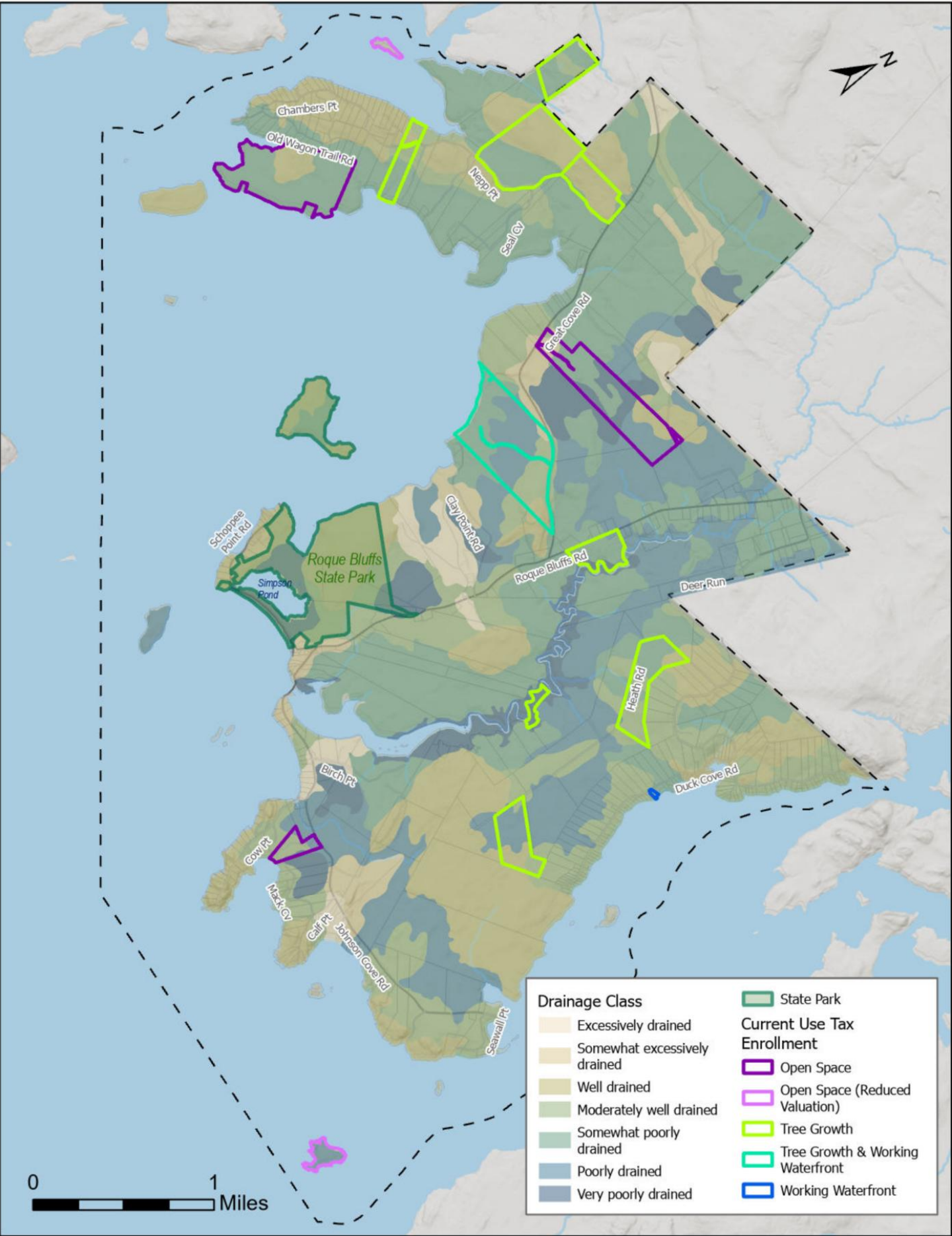
Current use taxation, voluntary stewardship, compatible land-use standards, and access to technical assistance are the principal tools available to support continued agricultural and forestry use.

Agricultural Resources



Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS (MEGIS), statewide parcel data for Roque Bluffs; Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA, Web Soil Survey (2025); Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Beginning with Habitat Program, land cover data (Blueberry Fields, Pasture/Hay); Town of Roque Bluffs, 2025 Commitment Book, current use enrollment by parcel; Maine Department of Transportation (MDOTJURIS) roads; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Maine Office of GIS town and township boundaries; Esri World Hillshade.

Forest Resources & Current Use Lands



Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS (MEGIS), statewide parcel data for Roque Bluffs; Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA, Web Soil Survey (2025), Drainage Class; Town of Roque Bluffs, 2025 Commitment Book, current use enrollment by parcel (Tree Growth, Open Space, Working Waterfront); Maine Department of Transportation (MDOTJURIS) roads; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Maine Office of GIS town and township boundaries; Esri World Hillshade.

Agricultural Resources and Land Use

Agriculture in Roque Bluffs is limited in scale but remains locally important. The Town's soils and coastal growing conditions are not well suited to extensive row-crop agriculture, but they support wild blueberry production and other agricultural uses.

Blueberry fields are concentrated mainly along Great Cove Road and in other scattered locations. Welch Farm is the most prominent agricultural operation identified by the Comprehensive Planning Committee, and several smaller blueberry operations also contribute to the Town's agricultural activity.

Wild blueberry production has become more difficult for many small and mid-sized growers. Rising maintenance costs, changing yields, limited purchaser access, market pressure, and climate-related variability have made it harder for some growers to operate at previous levels. These challenges are not unique to Roque Bluffs and reflect broader conditions affecting the wild blueberry industry in Washington County.

Forest Resources

Roque Bluffs' forests support timber harvesting, firewood cutting, balsam fir tip harvesting, wildlife habitat, water quality, and private woodlot management. They include maritime spruce-fir stands, mixed softwood and hardwood forest, and forested wetlands.

Table 2. Summary of Timber Harvest Information for Roque Bluffs Maine Forest Service, (10-17-2024)

Roque Bluffs						
2024-10-17						
Summary of Timber Harvest Information for the town of: Roque Bluffs						
Harvest Area By Town (Acres).						
Year	Selection	Shelter wood	Land Use Change	Clearcut	Totals	# of Reports
After 2011	132	6	0	0	138	7
Before 2012	972	35	11	0	1018	31
Total	1104	41	11	0	1156	38
Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service.						
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry - Maine Forest Service						
We help you make informed decisions about Maine's forests						
To protect confidential landowner information, data is reported only where three or more landowner reports reported harvesting in the town.						

Maine Forest Service data compiled from confidential landowner reports show that timber harvesting in Roque Bluffs has occurred primarily through selection and shelterwood methods. Before 2012, reported harvest activity included 972 acres of selection harvest, 35 acres of shelterwood harvest, and 11 acres associated with land use change, for a total of 1,018 acres across 31 reports. After 2011, reported harvest activity declined to 132 acres of selection harvest and 6

acres of shelterwood harvest, for a total of 138 acres across 7 reports. No clearcutting was reported in either period.

The reported acreage indicates less harvesting activity in the more recent period, but it does not by itself establish a decline in the Town’s forest resource. Changes may reflect landowner decisions, timber markets, reporting, access, or regional forestry conditions.

In addition to commercial harvesting, local woodlots are used for firewood, small-scale wood products, balsam fir tip harvesting, and other household or seasonal uses. Most forest land is privately owned, so continued management depends largely on landowner decisions and access to forestry assistance.

Forest health concerns include drought stress, wind damage, insects, invasive species, and changing stand conditions. The Maine Forest Service district forester and University of Maine Cooperative Extension provide technical assistance to landowners.

Current Use Taxation Programs

Maine’s current use taxation programs allow qualifying farm, forest, open space, and working waterfront land to be assessed according to its current use rather than full market value. These programs can help reduce pressure to convert resource land to other uses.

Roque Bluffs has land enrolled in the Tree Growth, Open Space, and Working Waterfront programs. No land was enrolled in the Farmland program between 2015 and 2024.

Table 2. Current Use Taxation Enrollment in Roque Bluffs, 2015-2024								
Year	Tree Growth Parcels	Tree Growth Acres	Farmland Parcels	Farmland Acres	Open Space Parcels	Open Space Acres	Working Waterfront Parcels	Working Waterfront Acres
2015	10	968	0	0	1	15	4	5.3
2016	9	871	0	0	1	15	N/R	5.25
2017	9	871	0	0	1	15	4	5.3
2018	9	870	0	0	3	141	2	4.1
2019	10	1,008	0	0	3	116	2	4.6
2020	10	932	0	0	4	242	2	4.6
2021	9	863	0	0	4	242	4	4.6
2022	9	863	0	0	4	242	2	4.6
2023	8	806	0	0	3	143	2	4
2024	9	806	0	0	3	145	2	4.1

Source: Maine Revenue Services. Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary: Tree Growth, Farmland, Open Space, and Working Waterfront data for Roque Bluffs, 2015-2024. Compiled from annual Municipal Valuation Return statistical summaries.

Note: The 2016 Municipal Valuation Return reports 5.25 acres enrolled in Working Waterfront in Roque Bluffs but lists 0 parcels. The parcel count is shown as “N/R” due to this inconsistency. Working Waterfront enrollment is included in this table for current use taxation context and is discussed further in the Marine Resources chapter.

Tree Growth was the largest current use category throughout the period. Enrollment ranged from 806 to 1,008 acres and totaled 9 parcels and 806 acres in 2024. Open Space enrollment increased from 15 acres in 2015 to 145 acres in 2024, with a peak of 242 acres from 2020 through 2022. Working Waterfront enrollment remained limited, totaling 2 parcels and 4.1 acres in 2024.

Current use programs can help landowners retain forest, open space, and working waterfront property. Tree Growth does not create the same local fiscal concern because the State provides municipal reimbursement for eligible tax loss. The Open Space program does not provide comparable reimbursement. The Town has identified this as a concern because increased Open Space enrollment can reduce taxable valuation and shift a greater share of the property tax burden to other taxpayers.

Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary data for 2025 had not yet been published by Maine Revenue Services at the time this chapter was prepared. Current use enrollment figures for 2025 are therefore drawn from the Town of Roque Bluffs 2025 Commitment Book. The 2025 Commitment Book records nine Tree Growth parcels totaling 820.8 acres, three Open Space parcels totaling 235.8 acres, and two Working Waterfront parcels totaling 4.1 acres.

Agricultural and Forestland Soils

Soil conditions influence the suitability of land for agriculture, forestry, roads, and development. In Roque Bluffs, shallow glacial soils, wet soils, and variable drainage limit the amount of land suitable for conventional row-crop agriculture. These conditions help explain why agricultural use is concentrated mainly in wild blueberry production rather than extensive cropland or pasture.

Mapped agricultural soils include limited areas of prime farmland and larger areas classified as farmland of statewide importance. These soils occur in scattered locations rather than in one continuous block. Land that is not classified as prime farmland may still support blueberry production, forestry, open space, or habitat.

Forestland soils are more widespread. Drainage conditions range from moderately well drained to poorly and very poorly drained. These differences affect timber productivity, equipment access, road construction, erosion risk, and the timing of harvest activities.

Soil maps are useful for general planning, but site-specific soil evaluation may be necessary where development, forestry, or agricultural management depends on detailed conditions.

Threats to Farm and Forest Land

The primary land use threat to agricultural and forest resources is the potential conversion or fragmentation of large undeveloped parcels through subdivision or other non-resource-based development. Even where overall development pressure is limited, the division of a few large parcels could reduce the land available for forestry, blueberry production, and other working-land uses.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee identified several larger parcels, including land in the Duck Cove area and behind existing subdivisions, that could become available for development during the planning period. Potential uses may include residential subdivision, energy facilities, telecommunications infrastructure, or other non-residential development. These uses may be appropriate in some locations, but their effects on productive soils, forestland, access, drainage, habitat, and nearby working lands should be considered during review.

The continued viability of wild blueberry production is also a concern. Economic and environmental pressures may affect whether existing fields remain actively managed. Fields that are no longer maintained may gradually revert to shrub or forest cover.

Forestry depends largely on private landowner decisions, timber markets, forest health, and access. New residential development near active farm or forest operations could also create conflicts involving noise, equipment, trucks, pesticide use, harvesting, and other normal management activities, although no significant local conflicts have been identified to date.

Analysis

Agriculture and forestry remain important land uses in Roque Bluffs. Wild blueberry production, selective timber harvesting, firewood cutting, balsam fir tip harvesting, and private woodlot management help keep land in productive use and contribute to the local economy.

Wild blueberry fields, particularly along Roque Bluffs Road and Great Cove Road, are the Town's principal agricultural resource. Forests remain the dominant land cover, although reported harvesting activity was lower after 2011. The continued use of these lands will depend largely on economic conditions, landowner decisions, access, and resource health.

The primary land use concern is the possible fragmentation or conversion of larger farm and forest parcels. Subdivision, roads, and incompatible development can reduce the land available for resource-based uses and may create conflicts with normal farming and forestry activities. Development review should therefore consider productive soils, parcel configuration, access, and nearby working-land uses.

Current use taxation can help retain resource land, but the programs have different fiscal effects for the Town. Tree Growth receives State reimbursement for eligible municipal tax loss, while Open Space does not provide comparable reimbursement. This limits the Town's ability to actively

promote additional Open Space enrollment without considering the effect on taxable valuation and other taxpayers.

The Town's most practical role is to maintain land use standards that allow farming and forestry, reduce unnecessary conflicts with working lands, provide accurate information on current use programs, and connect landowners with technical assistance. Any ordinance changes affecting agricultural or forestry practices should be developed with appropriate technical input.

Climate Considerations

Agriculture and forestry in Roque Bluffs may be affected by heavier rainfall, drought, warmer temperatures, changing growing seasons, insect pressure, invasive species, wildfire risk, and stronger storms.

Wild blueberry production is particularly sensitive to changes in spring frost, pollination timing, summer moisture, and extreme weather. Forest resources may be affected by drought stress, wind damage, pests, and changing stand conditions.

The Town's practical role is to connect landowners with available technical assistance and consider agriculture and forestry concerns in future vulnerability assessments and land use decisions where working lands may be affected.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Safeguard productive agricultural and forest land from incompatible development.

Strategy 1.1: During future ordinance reviews, consider whether standards for subdivisions and non-residential development adequately protect productive agricultural soils, forestland, blueberry fields, and larger resource parcels from unnecessary fragmentation.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Medium term

Strategy 1.2: Continue to allow farming, forestry, firewood operations, balsam fir tip harvesting, roadside stands, small-scale processing, and other compatible resource-based uses where appropriate under local ordinances.

Responsibility: Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: Consider normal farming and forestry activities when reviewing development near working lands, including access, equipment use, truck traffic, harvesting, noise, and seasonal operations.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.4: Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester and the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District before adopting local regulations that may affect forestry or agricultural management practices.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: As needed

Policy 2: Support the continued economic use and stewardship of farm and forest resources.

Strategy 2.1: Make information available to landowners about Tree Growth, Farmland, and Working Waterfront current use taxation programs, including qualifications, benefits, and withdrawal provisions.

Responsibility: Town Office, Assessor, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Provide information about the Open Space program upon request while recognizing that the lack of comparable State reimbursement may affect the Town's ability to actively encourage additional enrollment.

Responsibility: Town Office, Assessor, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Connect landowners with the Maine Forest Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District for assistance with forest management, blueberry production, soil conservation, pests, invasive species, climate adaptation, and other stewardship needs.

Responsibility: Town Office, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.4: Include agriculture, forestry, and other resource-based activities in local and regional economic development discussions where relevant.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Maintain productive soils and larger working-land parcels where practical.

Strategy 3.1: Use available soils and land-cover information when reviewing subdivisions and other applicable development proposals that may affect blueberry fields, productive forest soils, or larger undeveloped parcels.

Responsibility: Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Encourage site designs that reduce unnecessary fragmentation of farm and forest land through appropriate road placement, lot layout, retained open areas, and continued access to working land.

Responsibility: Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.3: Whether or not the Town designates a formal growth area, consider productive agricultural and forest resources when evaluating where future development is most suitable.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Support the resilience of agricultural and forest resources to changing conditions.

Strategy 4.1: Include agriculture and forestry concerns in future vulnerability assessments, with attention to drought, heavier rainfall, changing growing seasons, frost, pests, invasive species, wildfire risk, and storm damage.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time frame: Short to medium term

Strategy 4.2: Encourage land-management practices that maintain soil health, reduce erosion, protect water resources, and support the long-term productivity of blueberry fields and woodlots.

Responsibility: Town Office, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

Town of Roque Bluffs. Comprehensive Planning Committee input, Comprehensive Public Survey, annual municipal records, local assessing information, and municipal information concerning agricultural activities, forestry, current use taxation, large parcels, blueberry fields, forestland, and working-land concerns, 2024-2026.

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National Land Cover Database (NLCD), Cultivated Crops and Pasture/Hay classifications for Roque Bluffs; locations correspond to wild blueberry production areas identified by the Comprehensive Planning Committee.

Town of Roque Bluffs. 2025 Commitment Book. Current use enrollment by parcel (Tree Growth, Open Space, Working Waterfront).

FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- 56. Describe recent trends in municipal revenues, expenditures, property valuation, and debt capacity;
- 57. Assess the Town's ability to finance existing services and anticipated capital needs;
- 58. Identify and prioritize major capital investments expected during the planning period; and
- 59. Establish practical policies and strategies for responsible fiscal management, capital planning, and use of outside funding.

State Goal

To plan for, finance, and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs carries no municipal debt and generally relies on annual appropriations, available fund balance, grants, reimbursements, and cost sharing rather than long-term borrowing. Municipal costs have remained relatively stable over time, although storms, revaluation, snow plowing, county taxes, and school costs can cause substantial year-to-year changes. The 2025 revaluation more than doubled local assessed valuation and reduced the mil rate from \$11.75 to \$6.00 per \$1,000, with tax impacts varying by property. The Capital Investment Plan focuses on maintaining and improving existing infrastructure, and no growth-related capital investments are currently identified.

Municipal Valuation and Mil Rate

Property taxes are Roque Bluffs' principal source of local revenue. The Town establishes local assessed values, while Maine Revenue Services determines the State valuation used for purposes such as county taxes and education funding. The certified ratio indicates how closely local assessments reflect current market value.

Table 1. Local and State Valuation, Certified Ratio, and Mil Rate, FY 2021-22 through FY 2025-26				
Fiscal Year	Local Valuation (\$)	State Mandated Valuation (\$)	Certified Ratio	Mil Rate (\$/\$1,000)
FY 2021-22	\$71,102,600	\$74,150,000	100%	\$10.00
FY 2022-23	\$72,006,200	\$80,700,000	100%	\$11.25
FY 2023-24	\$72,144,280	\$102,250,000	78%	\$11.25
FY 2024-25	\$72,999,800	\$121,550,000	60%	\$11.75
FY 2025-26	\$148,314,900	\$138,950,000	100%	\$6.00

Source: Maine Revenue Services, Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

Rapidly rising property values caused the certified ratio to decline before the Town completed its 2025 revaluation. The revaluation increased local assessed valuation from approximately \$73.0 million to \$148.3 million and reduced the mil rate from \$11.75 to \$6.00 per \$1,000.

The lower mil rate did not produce the same result for every taxpayer because property values changed by different amounts. According to local review, roughly half of tax bills increased and half decreased, with many of the larger increases occurring on waterfront properties.

The revaluation did not itself double municipal spending. The annual budget and recorded property tax revenue are better measures of changes in the total amount raised from property owners than assessed valuation or the mil rate considered separately.

Municipal Expenditures

Municipal expenditures include the cost of Town administration, roads, snow removal, fire and emergency services, solid waste, assessing, municipal buildings, education, county taxes, and other local responsibilities. Expenditures vary from year to year because of capital work, emergency repairs, revaluation, contractual costs, and changes in education and county assessments.

Table 2. Municipal Department Expenditures, FY 2020-21 through FY 2024-25					
Department	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25
Employee Benefits	\$9,248	\$15,699	\$17,086	\$988	\$0
Administration	\$11,378	\$39,404	\$74,336	\$36,934	\$27,631
Insurance	\$7,088	\$3,703	\$3,964	\$12,581	\$10,556
Municipal Buildings	\$1,607	\$30,625	\$10,537	\$20,558	\$2,094
Assessing/Revaluation	\$20,634	\$21,769	\$18,871	\$15,094	\$47,632
Fire Department	\$7,446	\$10,137	\$11,122	\$11,910	\$15,349
Code Enforcement Officer	\$2,768	\$2,000	\$1,875	\$6,157	\$2,816
Animal Control	\$1,021	\$0	\$103	\$994	\$853
Ambulance/EMS	\$3,311	\$0	\$7,074	\$15,150	\$15,150
Road Maintenance	\$11,819	\$15,370	\$2,139	\$188,791	\$10,298
Snow Plowing	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$113,284	\$93,445	\$110,298
Social Service Donations	\$600	\$0	\$1,200	\$3,771	\$1,496
Solid Waste	\$31,455	\$34,706	\$36,657	\$35,447	\$37,494
Cemeteries	\$444	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$212
Shellfish Warden	\$4,800	\$7,800	\$7,617	\$10,674	\$11,226
Boat Launch Maintenance	\$4,000	\$450	\$0	\$11,685	\$11,000
General Assistance	\$902	\$360	\$0	\$200	\$0
Municipal Subtotal	\$183,521	\$257,023	\$305,865	\$464,679	\$304,105
Education/School Costs	\$407,407	\$422,710	\$362,258	\$360,873	\$309,164
County Tax	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$168,687	\$195,570
Total Expenditures	\$720,928	\$809,733	\$798,123	\$994,239	\$808,839

Source: Town of Roque Bluffs Fiscal Compliance Workbook, FY 2020-21 through FY 2024-25.

Total expenditures ranged from approximately \$721,000 in FY 2020-2021 to \$994,000 in FY 2023-2024. The FY 20230-2024 increase was driven largely by emergency repairs to Schoppee Point Road following the January 10 storm. Much of that expense was later reimbursed by FEMA, so the expenditure table reflects the Town's initial cash outlay rather than the final local cost.

Other notable changes include increases in snow plowing, ambulance, fire protection, revaluation, and county tax expenses. Education costs declined over the five-year period, although school expenses can vary considerably when individual student needs change.

Some categories fluctuate because expenses were recorded differently from year to year or because costs were concentrated in a particular project year. For that reason, total expenditures provide a more reliable indication of overall spending trends than any single departmental line.

Municipal Revenues

Property taxes provide most of the revenue needed to support municipal, education, and county expenditures. The available five-year figures are summarized below. Revenue figures for FY 2024-2025 and FY 2025-2026 are reported on a cash basis, while FY 2023-2024 figures are reported on an accrual basis, consistent with the Town's available financial records. This distinction primarily affects property tax and interest income and should be considered when comparing year-to-year totals.

Table 3. Municipal Revenues, FY 2021-2022 through FY 2025-2026					
Revenue Category	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26
Property Tax Revenue (recorded)	\$711,026	\$809,809	\$799,670	\$840,025	\$975,288
Municipal Revenue Sharing	\$30,374	\$18,348	\$18,613	\$2,479	\$0
Motor-vehicle excise tax	\$69,685	\$62,005	\$64,896	\$72,018	\$73,714
State Park Share	\$21,385	\$28,136	\$23,004	\$22,702	\$24,482
MaineDOT Highway Block Grant / Local Road Assistance	\$10,988	\$0	\$12,604	\$12,764	\$36,057
Homestead Reimbursement	\$11,459	\$18,717	\$19,075	\$3,501	\$16,074
Tree Growth Reimbursement	\$1,789	\$1,794	\$1,731	\$1,180	\$0
Veterans Exemption Reimbursement	\$0	\$240	\$315	\$228	\$204
State Education Subsidy	\$53,000	\$23,846	\$12,522	\$7,355	\$8,783
Interest Income	\$1,047	\$10,513	\$18,379	\$16,819	\$12,033
Grants and Disaster Reimbursements	No data	No data	No data	No data	\$152,604
Total Income	\$1,382,693	\$1,111,285	\$1,021,728	\$1,068,520	\$1,345,135

Source: Town of Roque Bluffs, Profit & Loss Budget Performance Report (FY 2021-22, accrual basis) and Profit & Loss Prev Year Comparison Reports (FY 2023-24, accrual basis; FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26, cash basis).

Note: Interest Income for FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23 is not directly comparable to later years. The FY 2021-22 figure is drawn from the Town's Fiscal Compliance Workbook; no equivalent workbook figure was available for FY 2022-23, so that year's amount was calculated by summing Checking Account Interest, Sweep Account Interest, and Property Tax Interest from the Profit & Loss report. Differences in bookkeeping categorization between these sources may affect year-to-year comparisons.

Property Tax Exemptions and Current Use Valuation

Property tax exemptions and current use programs reduce the taxable valuation available to support municipal services. The largest exemptions in Roque Bluffs are associated with Roque Bluffs State Park and the homestead exemption. Other exemptions apply to Town-owned property, the Community Center, the community chapel, and qualifying veterans.

Table 4. Property Tax Exemptions and Current Use Valuation Reductions, 2023-2024		
Exemption Type	2023 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Homestead	\$1,872,000	\$1,440,000
Veterans	\$65,520	\$54,000
State of Maine (Roque Bluffs State Park)	\$2,004,200	\$1,985,400
Town of Roque Bluffs	\$425,400	\$425,400
Benevolent & Charitable (Community Center)	\$64,600	\$64,600
Churches & Parsonages (community chapel)	\$60,200	\$60,200
Tree Growth	\$90,254	\$69,980
Open Space	\$156,422	\$160,522
Working Waterfront	\$40,583	\$40,600

Source: Maine Revenue Services annual Property Tax Exemptions report; Maine Revenue Services Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

Current use valuation reductions also affect the local tax base. Tree Growth receives State reimbursement for eligible municipal tax loss, while Open Space does not provide comparable reimbursement. The Town therefore considers the different fiscal effects of these programs when evaluating changes in taxable valuation. Detailed enrollment trends are provided in the Agriculture and Forest Resources chapter.

Municipal Debt and Borrowing Capacity

Roque Bluffs currently carries no municipal long-term debt and has generally avoided borrowing for municipal projects.

The Town is not responsible for municipal water or sewer debt and has no identified local school debt obligation. Its annual county tax and education costs are operating assessments rather than outstanding municipal debt.

Based on the Town's current State valuation, Roque Bluffs retains substantial statutory borrowing capacity. Legal borrowing capacity does not, however, establish that debt would be affordable or appropriate. Any future borrowing decision should consider annual debt service, available fund balance, operating expenses, project urgency, outside funding, and the effect on property taxpayers.

No borrowing is currently planned for the projects in the Capital Investment Plan. Borrowing may remain an option for a major future project if other funding is insufficient and the resulting debt service is affordable.

Capital Financing and Outside Funding Sources

Roque Bluffs generally finances capital needs through annual appropriations, available fund balance, grants, reimbursements, and cost sharing rather than long-term debt. The Town's undesignated fund balance serves as its principal financial reserve and provides cash flow when emergency work must be completed before State or federal reimbursement is received.

Grant funding is important for larger projects that would be difficult to finance through property taxes alone. Depending on the project, potential sources may include FEMA, MaineDOT, USDA Rural Development, the Northern Border Regional Commission, coastal resilience programs, congressionally directed spending, and other State, federal, or foundation programs.

The Town may also use local matching funds, phased appropriations, regional cost sharing, and partnerships. Long-term borrowing remains available for a necessary major project, but the Town expects to evaluate these other options first.

Regional Coordination and Shared Investments

Roque Bluffs cooperates with neighboring communities where shared services or facilities can reduce costs or improve service. Existing arrangements include shared fire protection with Jonesboro and shared responsibility for the sand and salt shed.

Additional regional approaches may be considered where they provide a clear local benefit. Potential opportunities include shared equipment, joint grant applications, coordinated capital projects, and specialized administrative or professional services that may be difficult or costly for one municipality to provide independently.

Any arrangement should clearly define responsibilities, costs, ownership, maintenance, and decision-making authority. Roque Bluffs should consider regional cooperation when it can lower local costs, improve access to funding, or provide a more efficient service.

Capital Investment Plan

This Capital Investment Plan identifies the major municipal facilities, infrastructure, and equipment needs expected during the planning period. It was developed from needs identified throughout the Comprehensive Plan and reviewed with the Select Board.

Priority ratings are:

- 60. **A:** Immediate or high-priority need affecting public health, safety, access, or essential municipal services
- 61. **B:** Necessary improvement generally expected within two to five years
- 62. **C:** Desirable or longer-term improvement generally expected within five to ten years
- 63. **D:** Identified need that is not currently expected to be feasible within the planning period

Costs are planning-level estimates and should be updated as project scopes, engineering information, bids, and funding opportunities become available.

The Town does not anticipate significant population or development growth during the planning period. The projects listed below address the maintenance, replacement, accessibility, public safety, and resilience of existing municipal facilities and infrastructure. None are currently identified as growth-related. This determination should be revisited if future development conditions or the Future Land Use Plan change substantially.

Table 5. Capital Investment Plan

Project / Description	Est. Cost	Growth Related	Priority	Time-frame	Funding Source(s)	Responsibility
Major road paving, drainage, and culvert improvements	Approximately \$1 million over ten years	No	A	Ongoing	Town appropriations, MaineDOT assistance, grants, FEMA when storm-related	Select Board, Road Commissioner
Schoppee Point boat launch, parking, access, drainage, mooring area, and shoreline-resilience improvements	\$250,000 initial phase; future phases will depend upon use and funding	No	A	1-5 years	Northern Border Regional Commission, MaineDOT, grants, Town funds, congressionally directed spending	Select Board, Harbormaster
Fire Department apparatus, protective equipment, and other major equipment replacement	\$20,000 initial equipment need; future apparatus cost is difficult to predict	No	A	1-10 years	Town funds, reserves, FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants, other grants	Select Board, Fire Chief
Town Office accessibility, roof, and other major building improvements	Approximately \$18,000 for accessibility improvements and \$40,000 for roof or major repairs	No	B	1-5 years	Town funds, accessibility grants, community development grants	Select Board
Sand and salt shed maintenance (shared with Town of Jonesboro)	Less than \$10,000	No	B/C	5-10 years	Roque Bluffs and Jonesboro cost share, grants	Select Board
Cemetery expansion or major restoration	Less than \$5,000	No	C	5-10 years	Town funds, grants, donations	Select Board, Cemetery Committee
Site-specific resilience improvements protecting municipal roads, drainage systems, buildings, or public access not otherwise listed	Approximately \$200,000; project-specific and highly dependent on scope and funding opportunities	No	B/C	5-10 years	FEMA; MaineDOT; coastal-resilience grants, federal and foundation funding	Select Board, Road Commissioner, Planning Board

Note: Costs are planning-level estimates and should be updated as project scopes, engineering information, and funding opportunities become available.

Growth-related capital investments: None identified. This classification should be reviewed when the Capital Investment Plan is updated or if future development conditions change.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs has generally been able to support existing municipal services without long-term debt. Municipal spending has remained relatively stable over the longer term when unusual costs are set aside, although storm repairs, revaluation, snow plowing, county taxes, ambulance costs, and education expenses can produce substantial year-to-year changes.

The 2025 revaluation restored local assessments closer to current market value and reduced the mil rate, but it did not itself reduce municipal spending or affect all taxpayers equally. The annual budget and recorded property tax revenue remain better measures of overall changes in the property-tax burden than the mil rate alone.

The Town's undesignated fund balance is central to its fiscal approach because it supports routine cash flow and allows emergency work to proceed before reimbursements are received. Decisions to use those funds for capital projects or tax reduction should therefore consider future emergencies and other municipal obligations. In recent years, the Town has drawn on its undesignated fund balance to help moderate the tax rate, using approximately \$22,000 in FY 2023 and \$20,000 in FY 2024, with a further \$15,000 anticipated for FY 2025, leaving a projected carryover of approximately \$17,000 by the end of that period. This pattern illustrates both the fund balance's usefulness as a budgeting tool and the importance of monitoring its level over time.

The capital needs identified in this plan involve existing roads, public access, equipment, buildings, and resilience rather than expansion for anticipated growth. Larger projects may exceed what can reasonably be supported through annual property taxation and will require outside funding, phased implementation, or cost sharing. Borrowing remains available but should be considered only when a project is necessary and the resulting debt service is affordable.

Climate Considerations

Severe storms can create significant short-term fiscal demands for Roque Bluffs because emergency road, drainage, and public-access repairs may need to be paid for before FEMA or other reimbursements are received. The January 10 storm damage to Schoppee Point Road illustrates why the Town's undesignated fund balance is an important fiscal resilience tool.

Future climate-related capital needs are expected to involve existing roads, culverts, drainage systems, the Schoppee Point boat launch, shoreline access, and other exposed municipal facilities. Projects of this scale may not be affordable through local property taxes alone and will likely require grants, reimbursements, phased implementation, and outside technical assistance.

The Town should continue considering storm exposure, emergency cash-flow needs, and the availability of outside funding when reviewing the Capital Investment Plan and annual budget.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Finance municipal services and facilities in a fiscally responsible manner.

Strategy 1.1: Continue to review annual revenues, expenditures, valuation, net tax commitment, available fund balance, and major cost changes using the Town's professionally reconciled financial records.

Responsibility: Select Board, Treasurer, Assessor

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Maintain an adequate undesignated fund balance to support municipal cash flow, emergency response, and necessary expenditures that may occur before State or federal reimbursements are received.

Responsibility: Select Board, Treasurer

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.3: Evaluate the affordability and taxpayer impact of major expenditures before committing local funds or taking on long-term debt.

Responsibility: Select Board, Treasurer

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Maintain and implement a practical Capital Investment Plan for major municipal needs.

Strategy 2.1: Review the Capital Investment Plan at least every two years and update project priorities, estimated costs, timing, funding sources, responsibilities, and growth-related classifications as conditions change.

Responsibility: Select Board, Treasurer, Road Commissioner, Fire Chief, Harbormaster

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Continue to pursue grants, reimbursements, cost sharing, and phased funding for major road, drainage, public-access, fire-equipment, municipal-building, and resilience projects.

Responsibility: Select Board and appropriate municipal officials

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.3: Use annual appropriations, available fund balance, grants, reimbursements, and phased implementation before considering long-term borrowing, while retaining borrowing as an option when a major project is necessary and affordable.

Responsibility: Select Board, Treasurer

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Pursue regional cooperation when it can reduce costs or improve municipal services.

Strategy 3.1: Continue existing cooperation with Jonesboro on fire protection and the shared sand and salt shed.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Consider shared equipment, professional services, grant applications, or capital projects with neighboring municipalities when responsibilities, costs, and benefits are clearly defined and the arrangement benefits Roque Bluffs.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: As opportunities arise

Sources

Town of Roque Bluffs. *Fiscal Workbook*, fiscal years 2020-2021 through 2025-2026.

Town of Roque Bluffs. *Annual Municipal Reports*, 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026, including Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Treasurer, school budget, annual warrant, and municipal financial information.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Select Board workshop, municipal official input, and local review concerning budget trends, revaluation, tax impacts, undesignated fund balance, emergency cash flow, debt practices, regional cooperation, and capital priorities, 2025-2026.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Property tax commitments, assessing records, and municipal valuation information, fiscal years 2021-2022 through 2025-2026.

Maine Revenue Services. State Valuation reports for the Town of Roque Bluffs, fiscal years 2021-2022 through 2025-2026.

Maine Revenue Services. Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summaries for the Town of Roque Bluffs, including commitment, tax rate, certified ratio, current use valuation, and reimbursement information.

EXISTING LAND USE

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

64. Describe Roque Bluffs' existing development pattern and major land uses;
65. Identify the location and character of recent residential, commercial, institutional, and other development;
66. Summarize the Town's current land use regulations and dimensional standards;
67. Assess development constraints, hazard exposure, and the Town's capacity to administer its land use program; and
68. Estimate the amount of land needed to accommodate anticipated development during the planning period.

State Goal

The State of Maine establishes no separate goal for Existing Land Use. This chapter provides the existing conditions and analysis needed to support the Future Land Use Plan and other land use decisions.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs is predominantly forested and lightly developed. Residential development is concentrated along existing public roads and the shoreline, with a small civic center near the intersection of Roque Bluffs Road, Johnson Cove Road, and Schoppee Point Road. Agricultural land, particularly blueberry fields, is concentrated mainly along Great Cove Road, while public and conserved lands include Roque Bluffs State Park and other protected properties.

Recent development has occurred primarily lot by lot rather than through subdivisions or planned developments. New homes generally rely on existing roads, private wells, and private septic systems. The Town has no public water or sewer system, no three-phase electric service, and does not anticipate major commercial or industrial development during the planning period.

The Town's existing zoning and subdivision review provide a basic framework for managing development. The principal land-use concerns are maintaining clear and current regulations and considering flood hazards, natural resources, working lands, road access, and private utility capacity during development review.

Projected population growth is modest, and Roque Bluffs appears to have sufficient developable land to accommodate anticipated residential and limited non-residential development without major infrastructure expansion or a substantial change in its existing development pattern.

Existing Land Use



Data Sources: Town of Roque Bluffs, 2025 Commitment Book, land and building valuation by parcel (2025); Town of Roque Bluffs, building permit records, residential construction 2016–2025; Town of Roque Bluffs institutional points and public water access locations; National Land Cover Database (NLCD), Cultivated Crops and Pasture/Hay classifications; Maine DACF Bureau of Parks and Lands, Roque Bluffs State Park boundary and Conserved Lands dataset; Maine Department of Transportation (MDOTJURIS) roads; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Maine Office of GIS parcel base and town boundary; Esri World Hillshade.

Community Development Pattern

Roque Bluffs has a dispersed development pattern shaped by its road network, shoreline, working lands, and peninsula geography. Most homes and other developed properties are located along Roque Bluffs Road, Johnson Cove Road, Schoppee Point Road, Great Cove Road, and smaller local and private roads extending from these corridors.

The village center is located near the intersection of Roque Bluffs Road, Johnson Cove Road, and Schoppee Point Road. It contains the Town Hall, fire station, Community Center, Chapel, and nearby residences. This area remains the Town's principal civic and community center, although it does not contain a dense concentration of stores, public utilities, or other urban services.

Residential development is the predominant developed land use. It consists mainly of detached year-round and seasonal homes on individual lots. Shorefront development occurs along Englishman Bay, Little Kennebec Bay, Johnson Cove, Pond Cove, and other coastal areas, while additional homes are distributed along inland roads and private access ways. Development has generally occurred incrementally rather than through large subdivisions or planned developments.

Agricultural and resource-based uses remain visible in the landscape. Wild blueberry fields and other working lands are found primarily in the western and inland portions of Town, including areas along Great Cove Road and Roque Bluffs Road. Forest land, wetlands, undeveloped shoreland, and larger rural parcels occupy much of the remaining land area. Marine-related activity is concentrated around the Schoppee Point boat launch, private shorefront facilities, and coastal access points.

Public and conservation lands also shape the development pattern. Roque Bluffs State Park occupies a substantial area on Schoppee Point and includes the beach, Simpson Pond, trails, and undeveloped land. Other State-owned, conserved, and island properties contribute to the amount of open and undeveloped land in Town.

Roque Bluffs has no public water or sewer system. Homes and businesses rely on private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal systems. As a result, development location and density are influenced by soil conditions, groundwater availability, road access, wetlands, shoreland constraints, and the ability of individual lots to support private utilities.

Existing Land Uses

Roque Bluffs' existing land uses are predominantly residential, forested, agricultural, recreational, and undeveloped. Commercial, institutional, and marine-related uses occupy comparatively small areas and are generally dispersed rather than concentrated in a separate business district.

Residential Land

Residential use is the Town's most common developed land use. Housing consists primarily of detached single-family homes on individual lots, including both year-round and seasonal

residences. Homes are located along the principal public roads, smaller local roads, private roads, and the shoreline.

Seasonal housing remains a substantial part of the housing stock. Approximately 34.7 percent of the Town's housing units were classified as seasonally vacant in 2024. Some former seasonal homes have been converted to year-round occupancy, but seasonal residences continue to influence land use, traffic, municipal service demand, and shoreline development.

Commercial and Home-Based Uses

Roque Bluffs has limited conventional commercial development and no concentrated commercial center. Existing economic activity includes home-based businesses, self-employment, construction and property services, natural resource-related work, and a small number of other locally operated businesses.

Commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, blueberry production, forestry, wreath-related activity, and seasonal services also contribute to local land use and employment. A retail seafood license was recorded in Town in 2025, indicating a limited shore-based seafood business presence.

Agricultural and Forest Land

Forests are the dominant land cover in Roque Bluffs, occupying approximately 85 percent of the Town's land area. Forested parcels support wildlife habitat, water quality, open space, private woodlots, firewood cutting, timber harvesting, and balsam fir tip harvesting for wreath production.

Wild blueberry fields are the Town's principal agricultural land use. They are concentrated mainly in the western portion of Town, particularly along Great Cove Road and portions of Roque Bluffs Road. Welch Farm is the largest identified agricultural operation, with several smaller blueberry fields and agricultural uses located elsewhere in Town.

Marine and Waterfront Uses

Marine-related land uses include the municipal harbor and boat ramp at Pond Cove, private shore access points, moorings, commercial fishing access, shellfish harvesting areas, and recreational boating facilities. The municipal boat ramp at the end of Schoppee Point Road is the Town's primary public working-waterfront and boating access facility.

The harbor contained 14 registered moorings when the Marine Resources chapter was prepared. Although the working waterfront is modest in scale, it remains important to commercial fishermen, shellfish harvesters, recreational boaters, and emergency access.

Public and Institutional Land

Public and institutional land uses are concentrated primarily in the village center and at Roque Bluffs State Park. Village facilities include the Town Hall, fire station, Community Center, Chapel, and associated parking and grounds.

Roque Bluffs State Park is the Town's largest developed public recreation property. It occupies approximately 274 acres on Schoppee Point and includes the ocean beach, Simpson Pond, trails, picnic areas, parking, and other seasonal day-use facilities.

Other public lands include the municipal boat launch and limited public shore access properties. The Town does not operate a school, public water system, public sewer system, municipal recreation department, or large public works complex.

Conserved and Undeveloped Land

State-owned, conservation-owned, and privately conserved properties protect portions of the shoreline, islands, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and open space. These include Pond Cove Island, Schoppee Island properties, Englishman River-area resources, and other conserved parcels identified in the Natural Resources and Recreation chapters.

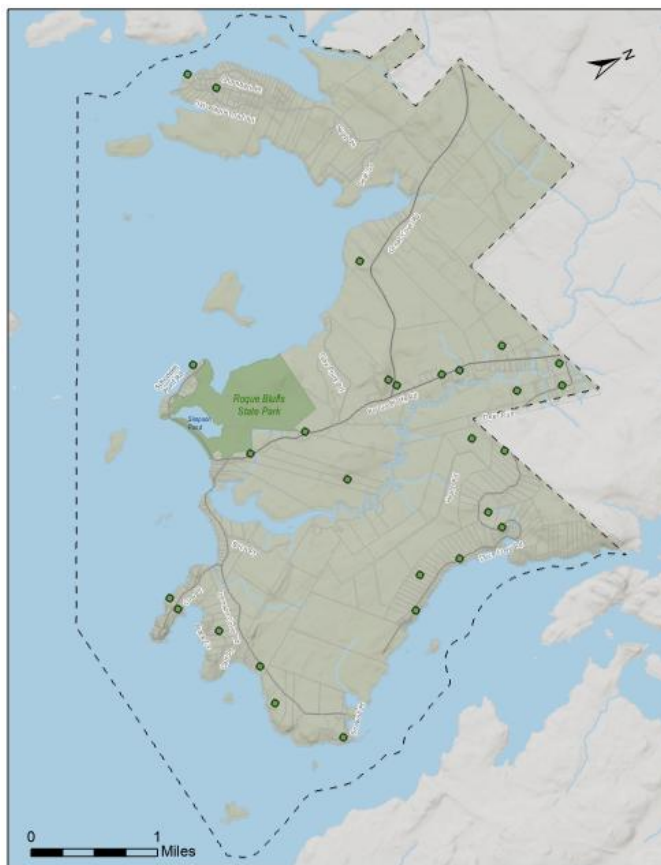
Much of the remaining land consists of privately owned forest, wetlands, undeveloped shoreland, blueberry fields, and larger residential or resource parcels. Some of these lands are used informally for hunting, walking, forestry, or other traditional activities with landowner permission.

Recent Development

Town permit records show that 33 permits for new residential units were issued between 2016 and 2025, consisting of 26 houses, five mobile homes, and two accessory dwelling units. Permit activity was uneven and concentrated within a relatively short period, with 16 of the 33 permits issued from 2020 through 2022, a temporary increase that coincided with the broader pandemic-era rise in demand for homes and property in rural and coastal communities throughout the region. Residential permitting declined sharply after 2022, falling to two permits in each of 2023 and 2024 and one permit in 2025.

These permits were distributed among individual lots on at least 12 different Town roads, including Duck Cove Road, Roque Bluffs Road, Great Cove Road, Cow Point Road, Johnson Cove Road, and several smaller roads, rather than concentrated within a subdivision or a single area of Town. This pattern is consistent with the Town's established lot-by-lot development pattern and does not indicate the emergence of a new growth center or concentrated development area.

Figure 1. Location of Residential Development, 2016-2025



Source: Roque Bluffs Town building permits. 2026

No new institutional, commercial, or industrial structures were built in Roque Bluffs during this period. All permitted new construction consisted of residential dwellings, consistent with the Town's existing land use pattern and its lack of a commercial district, industrial zoning, or public utilities capable of supporting non-residential development at scale.

Existing Land Use Regulations

Roque Bluffs regulates development primarily through its Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, including shoreland zoning provisions, subdivision review, building and land use permits, and State-required plumbing and wastewater standards.

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance establishes districts, permitted and conditional uses, dimensional requirements, and performance standards for development. It also includes standards addressing road access, stormwater, erosion and sedimentation, wetlands, shoreland vegetation, historic resources, and the siting of structures and uses.

Shoreland zoning applies near coastal waters, Simpson Pond, the Englishman River, streams, and mapped wetlands. The ordinance includes Resource Protection, Limited Residential, and

Stream/Freshwater Wetland Protection districts, along with other applicable shoreland classifications. These districts regulate setbacks, vegetation removal, soil disturbance, structures, and other activities that could affect water quality, habitat, erosion, or shoreline conditions.

Subdivision proposals are reviewed under local ordinance standards and applicable State law. Review may consider access, road design, stormwater, sewage disposal, water supply, natural resources, historic and archaeological resources, and the capacity of the site to support the proposed development.

Most construction, changes of use, and land development require review by the Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board, or both, depending on the type and location of the proposal. The Town relies on the Code Enforcement Officer for routine administration and enforcement, while the Planning Board reviews subdivisions, conditional uses, site plan considerations, and other applications assigned to it by ordinance. Roque Bluffs does not maintain a separate site plan review ordinance; site design and layout are evaluated as part of the Planning Board's subdivision and conditional use review process under the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

Additional local ordinances affecting land use include the Addressing Ordinance, Harbor Ordinance, and ordinances governing shellfish conservation and related municipal activities. State and federal laws may also apply to wetlands, shoreland alteration, wastewater disposal, flood hazards, and larger development projects.

The Town does not operate public water or sewer systems, so new development must generally demonstrate that individual lots can support private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal. Site conditions, including soils, groundwater, wetlands, slopes, shoreland setbacks, road access, and flood exposure, therefore play an important role in determining whether and how land can be developed.

Roque Bluffs administers its land use regulation program through a Code Enforcement Officer and a Planning Board, an approach well suited to a small community with a modest and predictable level of development activity. Continued Planning Board training on subdivision and conditional use review, together with ongoing certification support for the Code Enforcement Officer under 30-A M.R.S.A. § 4451, would support consistent administration during the planning period.

Current Lot Dimensional Standards

Roque Bluffs' dimensional standards differ between Area One, which includes shoreland districts, and Area Two, which includes the inland Village Residential, Growth Residential, and Rural Residential districts. The standards regulate minimum lot area, shore frontage, setbacks, lot coverage, and structure height.

Table 1. Principal Dimensional Standards

District or Use	Minimum Lot Area	Minimum Shore Frontage	Water or Wetland Setback	Side Setback	Street Setback	Maximum Building Height
Village Residential, inland	20,000 sq. ft.	N/A	75 ft. from tributary streams, streams, and freshwater wetlands where applicable	15 ft.	20 ft.	35 ft.
Growth Residential, inland	20,000 sq. ft.	N/A	75 ft. from tributary streams, streams, and freshwater wetlands where applicable	15 ft.	20 ft.	35 ft.
Rural Residential, inland	42,000 sq. ft.	N/A	75 ft. from tributary streams, streams, and freshwater wetlands where applicable	15 ft.	20 ft.	35 ft.
Resource Protection	Depends on proposed use	Depends on proposed use	250 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	35 ft.
Limited Residential, tidal and coastal shoreland	30,000 sq. ft. for residential lots adjacent to tidal waters	150 ft.	100 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	35 ft.
Stream/Freshwater Wetland Protection	40,000 sq. ft. for residential lots adjacent to non-tidal waters	200 ft.	75 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	35 ft.
Commercial Fisheries / Maritime Activities, non-residential use	No minimum lot area or shore frontage where specifically allowed by the ordinance	None	0 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	Not Specified
Commercial Fisheries/ Maritime Activities, residential use	30,000 sq. ft. adjacent to tidal waters	150 ft.	100 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	Not Specified

Source: Town of Roque Bluffs, Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, Section 15, Tables 2A, 2B, and 3.

For governmental, institutional, or commercial uses adjacent to tidal waters outside the Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District, the minimum lot area is 40,000 square feet with 200 feet of shore frontage. Comparable uses adjacent to non-tidal waters require 60,000 square feet and 300 feet of shore frontage. Public and private recreational facilities adjacent to tidal or non-tidal waters require 40,000 square feet and 200 feet of shore frontage.

Within Area One, land below the normal high-water line or below the upland edge of a wetland may not be counted toward minimum lot area. Land beneath roads serving more than two lots is also excluded from the lot-area calculation.

The street setback is measured from the road centerline. Where the right-of-way width is documented, the setback equals one-half of the right-of-way width plus 20 feet. Where it is unknown, the ordinance uses one-half of 33 feet plus 20 feet.

The maximum height for principal and accessory buildings is generally 35 feet. Chimneys, flagpoles, household antennas, transmission towers, windmills, and similar structures without floor area are treated separately. The ordinance also establishes separate height limits for non-exempt wireless communications facilities.

Lot Coverage

Within Area One, the combined footprint of structures, parking areas, and other non-vegetated surfaces generally may not exceed 20 percent of the portion of the lot located within the shoreland area.

In the Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District and certain General Development areas, developed area may occupy as much as 70 percent of the applicable shoreland portion of the lot.

Important Note

This table summarizes the principal standards and should not replace consultation of the ordinance. Some uses are prohibited or require Planning Board approval regardless of whether dimensional standards could be met. Additional standards also apply to nonconforming lots, multiple dwelling units, flood-prone areas, unstable coastal bluffs, septic systems, vegetation clearing, and structures requiring direct access to the water.

Development Constraints and Hazard Exposure

Development in Roque Bluffs is influenced by wetlands, shoreland areas, flood exposure, soils, groundwater conditions, road access, and the ability of individual lots to support private wells and subsurface wastewater disposal systems.

Wetlands occupy a substantial portion of the Town, including freshwater forested and shrub wetlands, smaller inland wetlands, salt marshes, and extensive estuarine areas along the Englishman River and coastal coves. Based on Beginning with Habitat and National Wetlands

Inventory data, wetlands account for roughly one-fifth of the Town's land area. These areas may limit development directly or require additional review, buffers, permits, or site-design measures.

Shoreland areas are subject to local zoning standards and, in some cases, State permitting requirements. Development near tidal waters, Simpson Pond, the Englishman River, streams, and wetlands may be constrained by setbacks, vegetation standards, erosion controls, lot coverage limits, and resource-protection districts.

Coastal flooding, storm surge, erosion, and sea level rise affect portions of the shoreline and low-lying coastal areas. Flood exposure is not uniform throughout Town, but development and infrastructure near coves, tidal wetlands, shore roads, and other low elevations may face greater risk. Roque Bluffs participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, allowing property owners in mapped flood hazard areas to obtain federally backed flood insurance. The Town does not maintain a separate floodplain management ordinance; flood-related standards are addressed through the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance and other applicable local and State requirements. The Town should periodically confirm that its regulations remain consistent with current NFIP requirements.

Because Roque Bluffs has no public sewer system, development depends on suitable soils, adequate lot area, and approval of private subsurface wastewater disposal systems. Poorly drained soils, shallow bedrock, wetlands, high groundwater, small lots, and proximity to water resources may limit the placement of new or replacement septic systems.

Private wells are the sole source of drinking water. Mapped sand and gravel aquifers provide moderate groundwater potential in several parts of Town, while most other properties depend on bedrock wells. Well yield, water quality, saltwater influence near the coast, and separation from septic systems may affect development feasibility on individual sites.

Road access is another practical constraint. Most development relies on the existing road network, private roads, and driveways. New development on long private roads or poorly connected parcels may increase maintenance, emergency access, drainage, and road-standard concerns. Wetlands, streams, and uneven terrain can also increase the cost and environmental impact of new roads and driveways.

Critical natural resources, historic and archaeological sensitivity, conserved land, working blueberry fields, and forested parcels do not necessarily prohibit development, but they may influence where and how it occurs. Site-specific review is therefore more useful than assuming that all undeveloped land is equally suitable for development.

Roque Bluffs has adequate land to accommodate modest anticipated growth, but the amount of land that is both available and readily developable is smaller than the total amount of vacant land.

Land Needed for Anticipated Development

Roque Bluffs is expected to experience modest population growth during the planning period. The Maine Office of the State Economist projects an increase from approximately 316 residents in 2025 to about 346 residents by 2037, or roughly 30 additional year-round residents.

The number of additional housing units needed will depend on household size, seasonal-to-year-round conversions, replacement of older homes, and the type of housing constructed. Based on the projected population increase and the Town’s current household pattern, approximately 12 to 18 additional year-round housing units may be needed by 2037. This estimate is a planning range rather than a fixed forecast.

At the Town’s current minimum lot standards, those units would require approximately:

Assumed Development Pattern	Approximate Land Needed
12 units on 20,000 sq. ft. lots	About 14 acres
18 units on 20,000 sq. ft. lots	About 21 acres
12 units on 42,000 sq. ft. lots	About 26 acres
18 units on 42,000 sq. ft. lots	About 36 acres

These figures include a general allowance for driveways, access, drainage, and land that may not be usable within individual parcels. They do not assume construction of a major subdivision or extension of public water or sewer service.

Additional land may also be used for seasonal homes, accessory dwelling units, home-based businesses, replacement structures, limited commercial activity, and public or recreational improvements. No substantial industrial, institutional, or large-scale commercial land demand is anticipated.

The Town contains considerably more undeveloped land than would be required for this level of development. Not all vacant land is equally suitable because of wetlands, shoreland restrictions, flood exposure, conserved ownership, poor soils, private-road access, and other site limitations. Even after accounting for these constraints, Roque Bluffs appears to have sufficient land to accommodate projected residential and limited non-residential development during the planning period.

Analysis

Roque Bluffs’ existing land use pattern is predominantly residential, forested, agricultural, recreational, and undeveloped. Development has occurred gradually along existing roads and the shoreline rather than through large subdivisions or concentrated commercial growth. This pattern

is consistent with the Town's limited infrastructure and reliance on private wells, septic systems, local roads, and regional services.

The village center remains the Town's principal civic area, but it does not function as a conventional growth center with public utilities, concentrated businesses, or higher-density development. Recent building-permit activity confirms that new residential development has remained dispersed among individual lots on multiple Town roads rather than concentrated in a single area or new growth center.

Roque Bluffs has sufficient land to accommodate projected growth during the planning period. The greater concern is not the overall supply of land, but whether individual sites have suitable soils, road access, groundwater, and adequate separation from wetlands, shoreland areas, flood hazards, and other constrained resources. Continued site-specific review is therefore more appropriate than assuming all undeveloped land is equally suitable for development.

Existing zoning provides a basic framework for managing development, including larger minimum lots in the Rural Residential District and additional standards within shoreland areas. The Town should periodically review dimensional standards, permitted uses, review procedures, and district boundaries to ensure that they remain clear, consistent with State requirements, and practical to administer.

The Town's limited commercial and industrial development is not expected to change substantially. Home-based businesses, resource-based activities, seasonal services, small local enterprises, and limited marine uses are more likely than major commercial or industrial projects. Land use regulations should continue to allow these activities at an appropriate scale while protecting nearby residences, roads, water resources, and working lands.

Climate Considerations

Climate impacts may affect where and how future development occurs in Roque Bluffs, particularly near the shoreline, tidal wetlands, low-lying roads, and other flood-prone areas. Coastal flooding, erosion, storm damage, and changing drainage conditions may increase risks to buildings, septic systems, roads, and access.

Because the Town relies on private wells and septic systems, site review should continue to account for groundwater conditions, flood exposure, erosion, and adequate setbacks from wetlands and water resources. Current flood and coastal hazard information should also be used when reviewing development and planning public improvements.

The Town's most practical approach is to incorporate climate risk into existing land use review and infrastructure decisions rather than create a separate land use program.

Climate Strategy: Use current flood, coastal hazard, wetland, drainage, and groundwater information when reviewing development and planning municipal road, drainage, shore-access, and other public improvements, and encourage site designs that reduce exposure to flooding, erosion, storm damage, and impacts to private wells and septic systems.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time frame: Ongoing

Sources

Maine Office of the State Economist. *Population Projections for Maine Municipalities*, including projections for Roque Bluffs through 2037.

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Maine Department of Transportation. *Public Road Inventory, Traffic Data, and Transportation Mapping for Roque Bluffs.*

Maine Revenue Services and Town of Roque Bluffs assessing records. Parcel ownership, current-use enrollment, valuation, and land-use information.

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FUTURE LAND USE

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

69. Establish the Town's Future Land Use Plan consistent with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326 and 07-105 CMR Chapter 208;
70. Document the basis for a growth area exemption under 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326(3-A) and Section 4.5(B) of Chapter 208; and
71. Establish policies and implementation strategies that maintain the Town's existing development pattern and land use regulations during the planning period.

State Goal

To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state's rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs has experienced minimal residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial development over the past decade, and this pattern is expected to continue through the planning period. The Town has no public water, sewer, or three-phase electric service, no industrial park, no commercial district, and no rate-of-growth or growth-cap ordinance. Based on these conditions, this Future Land Use Plan does not designate a growth area and relies on the minimal-or-no-growth exemption in Section 4.5(B) of Chapter 208.

Development will continue to be managed through the Town's existing Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, including shoreland zoning and subdivision review. Recent development has occurred primarily lot by lot on individual parcels rather than through subdivisions, planned developments, or concentrated growth. This dispersed pattern is consistent with the Town's existing infrastructure, private well and septic requirements, road network, and development history.

Growth Area Exemption

Basis for Exemption

This Future Land Use Plan claims a growth area exemption under the minimal-or-no-growth criterion of 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326(3-A) and Section 4.5(B) of Chapter 208. Roque Bluffs has not adopted a growth cap or rate-of-growth ordinance and is therefore eligible to rely on this exemption if recent and anticipated development remains minimal.

Residential development. Roque Bluffs grew from 264 residents in 2000 to 303 in 2010, declined slightly to 296 in 2020, and is estimated at 316 residents in 2025. The number of occupied housing units has remained relatively stable at approximately 140 under the 2020-2024 American Community Survey estimate, with average household size in the low-to-mid two-person range. The Maine Office of the State Economist projects the population will reach approximately 346 residents by 2037, representing roughly 30 additional year-round residents, or an estimated 12 to 18 additional year-round housing units, during the planning period.

Town building-permit records show that 33 permits for new residential units were issued between 2016 and 2025, consisting of 26 houses, five mobile homes, and two accessory dwelling units. Permit activity was uneven, with 16 of the 33 permits issued from 2020 through 2022, including a peak of six permits in 2022. Residential permitting declined sharply after 2022, falling to two permits in each of 2023 and 2024 and one permit in 2025. Viewed across the full ten-year period, the record shows modest and episodic residential activity with no pattern of sustained increase. The location of this development is shown in Figure 1 of the Existing Land Use chapter.

Not all building permits represent a net increase in year-round housing units. The permit total includes mobile home replacements, accessory dwelling units, and seasonal or occasional-use construction that does not necessarily add to the Town's year-round population. Mailing-address records associated with these permits show that 15 of 33 were issued to owners with a Roque Bluffs mailing address, while the remainder were issued to owners with out-of-town or out-of-state addresses, consistent with the Town's broader seasonal and non-resident ownership pattern described in the Housing chapter. This level of activity is consistent with the Town's projected modest increase in year-round population and housing demand.

Commercial and institutional development. Roque Bluffs has no commercial district, no public water or sewer system, and no three-phase electric service. As described in the Economy chapter, existing commercial activity consists primarily of home-based businesses, self-employment, resource-based work, and a small number of locally operated enterprises. No significant new commercial or institutional development has occurred over the past decade, and none is anticipated beyond continuation of this dispersed pattern.

Industrial development. Roque Bluffs has no industrial park, no industrial zoning district, and no industrial development has occurred in Town during the past decade. None is anticipated during the planning period.

Based on these conditions, Roque Bluffs has experienced minimal residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial development over the past decade and expects this pattern to continue. This Future Land Use Plan therefore does not designate a growth area.

Continued Management Through Existing Zoning

Although no growth area is designated, development in Roque Bluffs will continue to be managed through the Town's existing Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, as described in the Existing Land Use chapter. These ordinances establish the Village Residential,

Growth Residential, and Rural Residential districts inland, and the Resource Protection, Limited Residential, Stream/Freshwater Wetland Protection, and Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities districts within the shoreland zone. Together with subdivision review standards, these districts continue to govern where and how new development occurs.

The Existing Land Use chapter identifies development constraints, hazard exposure, and the amount of land needed to accommodate anticipated development. Roque Bluffs has sufficient land under its existing zoning to accommodate projected growth without designating an additional growth area or amending district boundaries for that purpose.

Critical natural resources, including wetlands, wildlife habitat, coastal barrier resources, and Atlantic salmon critical habitat, are identified and mapped in the Natural Resources and Water Resources chapters. Development will continue to be reviewed in relation to these resources through the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance and applicable State and federal permitting requirements.

Climate Considerations

Because this Plan does not designate a growth area, climate-related development risk will continue to be addressed through existing land use review rather than through growth-area siting decisions. Coastal flooding, erosion, storm surge, sea level rise, wetlands, and changing drainage conditions should continue to be considered when reviewing individual development proposals.

Climate Strategy: Continue to use current flood, coastal hazard, wetland, and drainage information when reviewing development under the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer

Time frame: Ongoing

Policies and Implementation Strategies

Policy 1: Maintain the Town's existing land use regulations as the primary means of managing development in the absence of a designated growth area.

Strategy 1.1: Assign responsibility for implementing this Future Land Use Plan to the Planning Board, with support from the Select Board.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Immediate

Strategy 1.2: Periodically review the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to confirm they remain consistent with State requirements and continue to reflect the Town's existing development pattern.

Responsibility: Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Coordinate the Town's land use approach with regional planning efforts.

Strategy 2.1: Coordinate with SCEC and neighboring municipalities on shared land use, resource protection, or infrastructure matters as they arise.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

I would shorten the current list of Machias, Machiasport, Jonesboro, and Whitneyville unless the committee specifically wants those towns named. "Neighboring municipalities" is cleaner and avoids having to update the list later.

Policy 3: Support consistent and efficient permitting under the Town's existing land use regulations.

Strategy 3.1: Ensure the Code Enforcement Officer has the tools, training, and certification required under 30-A M.R.S.A. § 4451 to administer the Town's land use ordinances.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Policy 4: Confirm that the minimal-or-no-growth exemption remains appropriate over time.

Strategy 4.1: Maintain a record of building permits issued each year by general type to confirm that residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial development continues at a minimal level consistent with the exemption.

Responsibility: Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board

Time frame: Ongoing

Strategy 4.2: Evaluate the Future Land Use Plan and growth area exemption at least every five years and revisit the exemption if development trends change materially.

Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Time frame: Every five years

Sources

Town of Roque Bluffs. *Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance*.

Town of Roque Bluffs. *Shoreland Zoning Ordinance*.

Town of Roque Bluffs. *Comprehensive Plan*. 2001.

Title 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326. Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act.

07-105 CMR Chapter 208. Standards for Municipal and Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans.

Maine Office of the State Economist. *Population Projections for Maine Municipalities*, including projections for Roque Bluffs through 2037.

U.S. Census Bureau. *2020 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024*.

Town of Roque Bluffs. Building permit records, as referenced in the Housing chapter, complete through December 2025.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the services, facilities, and natural resources Roque Bluffs shares with neighboring communities and regional partners; identify how the Town currently coordinates on those interests; assess consistency with neighboring communities; and establish policies for continued regional cooperation.

State Goal

To encourage coordination between the Town's local planning activities and municipal, regional, and state planning activities.

Key Findings

Roque Bluffs is a small coastal community with limited municipal staffing and infrastructure. The Town has no public water or sewer system, no three-phase electric service, no municipal school, no municipal police department, and no municipal ambulance department. Many essential services are therefore provided through contracts, shared facilities, mutual aid, county systems, and regional organizations.

Existing regional arrangements support fire protection, emergency medical service, dispatch, emergency management, law enforcement, education, solid-waste disposal, transportation planning, health care access, natural-resource protection, and technical assistance. These arrangements allow the Town to meet local needs without duplicating facilities and services available nearby.

Shared Services, Facilities, and Resources

Fire Protection. Fire protection is provided through a regional arrangement with the Jonesboro Fire Department. Jonesboro provides primary response, while the Roque Bluffs fire station, local equipment, and Roque Bluffs volunteers support response within the Town as available. Mutual-aid departments provide additional personnel and apparatus when needed.

Emergency Medical Services. The Town receives emergency medical service through a contracted regional ambulance provider based in Machias. Roque Bluffs does not maintain a municipal ambulance department.

Emergency Dispatch and Management. Fire, police, and ambulance dispatch is provided through the county regional communications system. The Washington County Emergency Management Agency coordinates countywide emergency preparedness and supports local planning and response.

Law Enforcement. The Washington County Sheriff's Office provides law-enforcement coverage. Roque Bluffs has no municipal police department and may also receive assistance from the Machias Police Department during certain emergency or enforcement situations.

Education. Roque Bluffs is part of AOS 96 and does not operate a municipal school building. Students attend schools outside the Town through the regional school administrative structure, and most school staffing, facility planning, and administrative functions occur through AOS 96.

Transportation. Roque Bluffs Road connects the Town toward Machias by way of Kennebec Road, while Great Cove Road provides access toward Jonesboro. The Town coordinates with MaineDOT on roads, bridges, drainage, safety, and access needs. Regional transportation services outside the Town provide access to employment, education, health care, and commercial services.

Solid Waste. The Town contracts for curbside household solid-waste collection, with collected material transported to the Casella Jonesboro Transfer Station. Residents may also use the Machias Bay Area Transfer and Recycling Center and the Pleasant River Transfer Station in accordance with each facility's current rules and fees.

Shared Municipal Facilities. Roque Bluffs and Jonesboro share responsibility for a sand-and-salt shed. This arrangement supports winter road maintenance while avoiding duplication of municipal facilities.

Health Care and Other Services. Roque Bluffs is not a regional service center. Residents rely primarily on nearby communities, particularly Machias, for health care, employment, shopping, libraries, and other services not available within the Town.

Planning and Technical Assistance. Sunrise County Economic Council provides regional planning, economic-development, mapping, grant, and technical assistance. The Town also coordinates with MaineDOT, Washington County, state resource agencies, the Maine Municipal Association, and other organizations according to the issue involved.

Shared Natural Resources. The Englishman River watershed, Englishman Bay Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance, coastal waters, wetlands, wildlife habitat, fisheries resources, and aquifers extend beyond municipal boundaries. The Town relies on local shoreland zoning together with state and regional programs to protect these resources. Regional coordination remains important for water quality, habitat protection, shellfish management, and climate resilience.

Consistency with Neighboring Communities' Plans

No conflict has been identified between this Plan's policies and the known development patterns of neighboring communities. Roque Bluffs does not propose a shared growth area or a new municipal growth center. The Future Land Use Plan continues the Town's dispersed, low-intensity development pattern and relies on existing zoning, shoreland protection, private wells and septic systems, and existing roads and services. Continued communication with neighboring municipalities will help identify and address future land-use decisions, infrastructure needs, or resource issues affecting shared boundaries and regional systems.

Climate Considerations

Regional coordination is important to storm response, road access, emergency communications, power restoration, and protection of resources that cross municipal boundaries. Roque Bluffs depends on neighboring fire departments, regional emergency medical service, county dispatch, Washington County Emergency Management Agency, MaineDOT, utilities, and other partners during and after severe weather events. Continued coordination will strengthen the Town's ability to prepare for flooding, road washouts, extended outages, coastal hazards, and other climate-related risks identified throughout this Plan.

Goal

Maintain and strengthen coordination with neighboring communities and regional, county, and state partners to manage shared resources and provide necessary services efficiently and affordably.

Policies and Strategies

Policy 1: Continue to meet essential service needs through regional and interlocal arrangements.

Strategy 1.1: Continue coordinating with Jonesboro, neighboring municipalities, Washington County, AOS 96, MaineDOT, Sunrise County Economic Council, and other regional partners on shared services, facilities, and technical assistance.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time Frame: Ongoing

Strategy 1.2: Periodically review contracts and service arrangements for fire protection, emergency medical service, solid waste, education, shared facilities, and other regional services to ensure that they remain effective and affordable.

Responsibility: Select Board

Time Frame: Ongoing

Policy 2: Coordinate with neighboring communities and resource agencies on shared land-use and natural-resource concerns.

Strategy 2.1: Communicate with neighboring municipalities when proposed land-use decisions, infrastructure projects, or ordinance changes could affect shared boundaries, roads, services, or resources.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time Frame: Ongoing

Strategy 2.2: Participate in interlocal or regional planning, management, monitoring, and protection efforts concerning shared critical natural resources, coastal waters, watersheds, habitat, and fisheries when opportunities arise.

Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Time Frame: Ongoing

Policy 3: Continue participating in regional transportation, emergency-management, and climate-resilience planning.

Strategy 3.1: Coordinate with MaineDOT and regional partners on road, bridge, drainage, safety, and transportation needs affecting Roque Bluffs Road, Great Cove Road, and regional connections.

Responsibility: Select Board, Road Commissioner

Time Frame: Ongoing

Strategy 3.2: Maintain coordination with emergency service providers, mutual-aid partners, the county regional communications system, Washington County Emergency Management Agency, and utilities for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Responsibility: Select Board, Fire Chief

Time Frame: Ongoing

Sources

Town of Roque Bluffs. Municipal budgets, service contracts, and capital planning information, 2021-2026.

Maine Department of Transportation. Bridge, culvert, traffic, and transportation planning information.

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Beginning with Habitat. Natural-resource and regional habitat information.

Maine Department of Marine Resources. Shellfish growing-area classifications and marine-resource information.

Washington County Emergency Management Agency and Washington County regional communications information.

AOS 96 and Sunrise County Economic Council regional service and planning information.

EVALUATION MEASURES

Purpose

This section describes how the Town will periodically evaluate implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, determine whether its policies and strategies remain effective, and identify amendments or other actions that may be needed. The Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule requires this evaluation at least once every five years.

Applicability to Roque Bluffs

The Future Land Use Plan relies on the minimal-or-no-growth exemption and does not designate formal growth, rural, or transition areas. The Town must still evaluate all measures required by the review criteria. Measures that depend on designated land-use areas will be reported as not applicable, with an explanation, and will be supplemented by a review of development patterns, municipal investments, and resource protection appropriate to Roque Bluffs.

Evaluation Measures

Implementation of Future Land Use Plan strategies. The Town will review each policy and strategy in the Future Land Use chapter and record whether it is complete, in progress, ongoing, deferred, or not started. The review will identify accomplishments, remaining work, responsible parties, and reasons for strategies that have not been implemented.

Municipal growth-related capital investments. The Town will identify municipal growth-related capital investments made since the previous evaluation and calculate the percentage directed to designated growth areas. Because Roque Bluffs has no designated growth area, that percentage will be reported as not applicable. The Town will instead determine whether investments were consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and the priorities in the Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan.

Location and amount of new development. Using building-permit, plumbing-permit, assessing, and tax records, the Town will summarize new residential, commercial, institutional, and other development by type and general location. Where practical, activity will be identified by map and lot or displayed on a working map. Because the Town has no designated growth, rural, or transition areas, the evaluation will determine whether new development remained consistent with the dispersed, low-intensity pattern described in the Future Land Use Plan and with applicable zoning and resource protections.

Protection of critical resources. The Town will document acreage of critical natural resources protected since the previous evaluation through public or conservation acquisition, conservation easements, deed restrictions, or other protective measures. Enrollment in Tree Growth, Farmland, Open Space, and Working Waterfront current-use taxation programs will be tracked separately because current-use enrollment is not necessarily permanent protection. If the Town has not designated critical rural or critical waterfront

areas, those portions of the measure will be reported as not applicable unless the Plan is amended to establish such areas.

Implementation of other plan strategies. The Town will review the policies and strategies in the topical chapters, including actions related to municipal facilities, roads, housing, natural and marine resources, recreation, regional coordination, and the Capital Investment Plan. The review will focus on high-priority and time-limited actions while recognizing that many strategies are ongoing municipal responsibilities.

Effectiveness and changed conditions. The Town will consider whether the Plan continues to reflect current conditions, community priorities, development trends, service needs, climate risks, regulatory requirements, and available financial and administrative capacity. The evaluation will identify any policies, strategies, maps, or capital priorities that should be updated.

Responsibilities and Schedule

The Select Board will initiate the evaluation at least once every five years, beginning within five years after adoption of the Plan. The Planning Board will lead review of the Future Land Use Plan, development patterns, and land-use regulations. The Code Enforcement Officer and Licensed Plumbing Inspector will provide available permitting information; the Assessor will provide tax and current-use enrollment information; the Road Commissioner and other municipal officials will assist with capital projects and service-related measures; and relevant committees may assist with subjects within their responsibilities.

The results will be summarized in a brief written report identifying progress, outstanding actions, changed conditions, and recommended revisions. The Town should provide an opportunity for public review of the findings. If the evaluation concludes that portions of the Plan or its implementation are ineffective or no longer accurate, the Select Board and Planning Board will recommend appropriate amendments, ordinance changes, capital priorities, or other corrective actions.

Sources

Maine Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule, Chapter 1, formerly 07-105 C.M.R. Chapter 208, Section 2.7.

30-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 187, Growth Management Program.

APPENDIX A

Public Participation

Community Visioning Session

Date	October 4, 2025
Location	Roque Bluffs Community Center
Format	Facilitated discussion, comment boards, and a community map activity

Purpose

The community visioning session invited residents to identify the qualities they value about Roque Bluffs, discuss emerging concerns, and describe priorities for the Town over the next decade. The discussion and written comments helped inform the vision statement, analyses, policies, and implementation strategies in the comprehensive plan.

Interpretation note. This appendix summarizes comments offered during the session. Reported conditions and suggested actions represent community input unless otherwise identified; they are not presented as independently verified findings or adopted municipal decisions.

Help Shape the Future of Roque Bluffs!

Join Us for a Community Visioning Session

Contribute your voice to the 2025 Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan

October 4, 2025 • 2:00 PM

Roque Bluffs Community Center

4 Schoppee Point Road

Your input is essential as we plan for:

Housing
Economic Development
Infrastructure
Natural Resource Protection
Preserving what is special to Roque Bluffs

What to Expect

- Group Discussions
- Comment Boards
- Community Map Activity
- Free Refreshments
- All Voices Welcome

Why Participate?

This is your opportunity to influence the direction of Roque Bluffs' future over the next 10 years. The Comprehensive Plan will guide the town decisions on land use, housing, economic development, and more.

Hosted by the Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Planning Committee

Community Visioning Session Summary

Participants discussed water quality, village safety, land-use regulation, wildfire preparedness, communications infrastructure, housing, governance, recreation, public services, natural resources, and the local economy. The following summary consolidates the facilitated discussion and written comments while avoiding duplication among the original working notes.

Well Water

Residents along Duck Cove Road and Johnson Cove Road reported concerns about low well yields and water quality, including coliform contamination, changes in odor, and the potential for saltwater intrusion near coastal properties. Participants supported continued attention to groundwater conditions, resident education, and appropriate water testing. Comments also raised concern that blasting and new construction could affect local water tables and water quality.

Village Area Safety

Participants identified the downhill approach toward the state park and nearby blind corner as significant safety concerns. Gravel near the park parking area, vegetation, limited visibility, pedestrian activity, and animal crossings were also discussed. Suggested improvements included mirrors, selective tree trimming, paving, crosswalk or sidewalk improvements, downward-facing lighting, flashing warning lights, and other traffic-calming measures. Participants expressed broad interest in pursuing practical safety improvements and using available local funds to leverage grants, but no particular improvement was adopted during the session.

Renewable Energy and Land-Use Regulation

Participants generally supported appropriately scaled private solar installations subject to local review. Concerns focused on the siting and size of larger solar facilities, impacts to ecologically valuable inland areas, electrical capacity, and the need for clear standards. The discussion favored proactive consideration of solar, wind, and telecommunications standards while retaining flexibility for project-specific review.

Wildfire Preparedness and Emergency Access

Residents discussed wildfire risk associated with overgrown vegetation, constrained road access, limited evacuation routes, and inadequate awareness of local hazards. Suggestions included defensible-space guidance, forest thinning, improved fire-lane access, evacuation planning, better distribution of emergency information, public education for new residents, and training for municipal boards and officials. Participants supported further community planning and communication, including consideration of forestry grants and resident safety materials.

Cellular Service

Residents acknowledged cellular dead zones in portions of town, although views differed on the need for additional towers. Participants noted that Roque Bluffs does not currently have locally tailored standards for telecommunications facilities and supported further study of coverage needs and appropriate regulation.

Housing, Population, and Governance

Participants recognized that limited infrastructure, vulnerable access roads, and emergency-service capacity affect the location and pace of future residential development. Discussion emphasized aging in place, accessory and smaller housing options, senior or shared living arrangements near services, and the continued preservation of wetlands and other undisturbed lands. Governance challenges were also discussed, including difficulty filling municipal leadership roles, possible shared professional management with neighboring communities, and the need to involve younger residents in community life.

Additional Community Priorities

Written comments and group discussion identified the following additional priorities. They are presented as themes rather than ranked commitments because the session was designed to gather ideas, not to conduct a formal vote.

Theme	Community Input
Natural resources and climate resilience	Protect coastal estuaries, marshes, commercial and recreational fishing access, water quality, and other resources that contribute to the Town's identity and resilience.
Public facilities and services	Continue investing in road maintenance, the fire department, emergency response, reliable communications, and safety improvements in the village center. Lighting should be carefully designed to improve safety while limiting glare and light pollution.
Recreation and community life	Explore opportunities such as improved boat-ramp parking and waterfront access, a dock or float, kayak

Theme	Community Input
Economy and work	rentals, bicycle routes, children's library space, fitness opportunities, and social gathering spaces. Support home-based businesses, arts and crafts enterprises, seasonal services, and an online community information platform that can connect residents with local businesses and resources.
Families and community continuity	Provide activities and gathering opportunities for families and younger residents while supporting older residents who wish to remain in Roque Bluffs.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

The visioning session was one component of the Town's broader public-participation process. Its themes were considered alongside available data, committee review, public surveys, and other community input. The session particularly reinforced the importance of protecting natural resources, improving village and emergency-access safety, planning for an aging population, supporting modest and appropriately located development, strengthening community connections, and maintaining the qualities that make Roque Bluffs distinctive.

Record Retention

The original working notes are retained in the project record. This consolidated summary is included in the comprehensive plan to provide a clear public account of the session without publishing personal identifiers, specific residential addresses, or repetitive working material.

APPENDIX B

Community Survey Results

Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan

Survey period	Responses	Access
April 10-September 4, 2025	39	Online and paper

Survey Distribution

An Every Door Direct Mail flyer was delivered to all taxpayers listed in the Town commitment book. The flyer included a QR code and direct web address for the online survey. Paper copies were also available at the Roque Bluffs Town Office. Together, these methods provided both online and non-digital opportunities to participate.

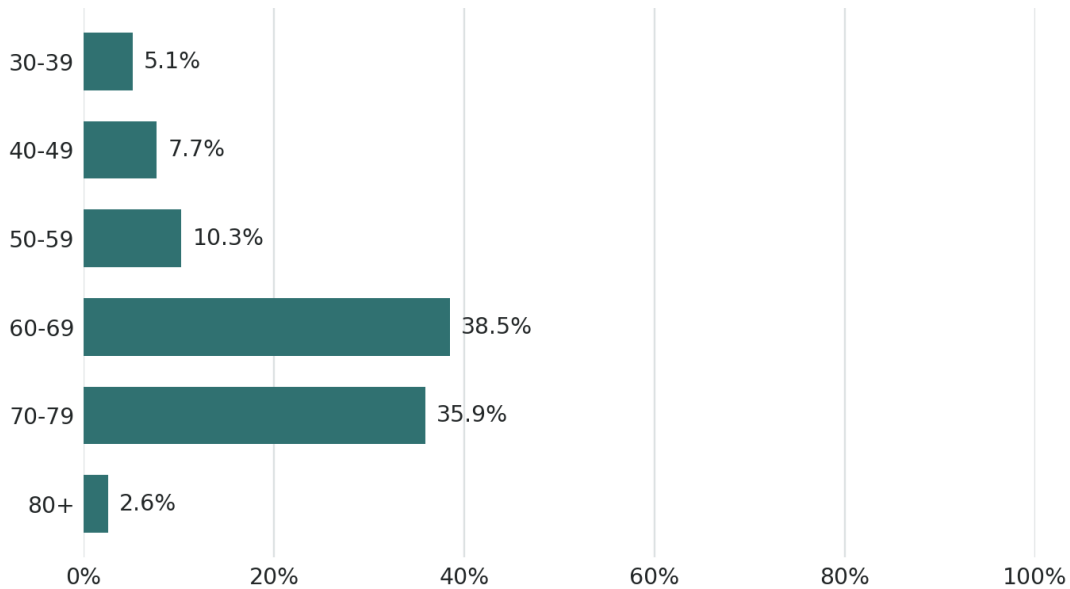
How to Read the Results

Percentages are calculated from the number of people who answered each question, which is shown as n. Totals may differ from 39 because participants could skip individual questions. For questions allowing multiple selections, percentages may total more than 100 percent. Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent because of rounding.

Important limitation. Participation was voluntary and self-selected. The results describe the views of survey participants and are not a statistically representative sample of all Roque Bluffs residents or taxpayers. Survey findings were considered together with community meetings, committee review, municipal data, and other public input.

Respondent Profile

The survey reached a mix of year-round residents, seasonal residents, and non-resident taxpayers. The respondent group was predominantly age 60 or older and included both working and retired participants.



Age of respondents (n=39). Source: Roque Bluffs Community Survey, 2025.

Measure	Result
Residency	21 year-round residents (53.85%); 13 seasonal residents (33.33%); 5 non-resident taxpayers (12.82%)
Employment status	17 retired (43.59%); 9 self-employed (23.08%); 8 private-sector employees (20.51%); 1 government employee (2.56%); 4 other (10.26%)
Work schedule	16 retired (41.03%); 12 full-time (30.77%); 8 part-time (20.51%); 3 seasonal (7.69%)
Home ownership	38 owned their home (97.44%); 1 reported a rent-to-own arrangement (2.56%)
Primary home type	30 stick-built homes (76.92%); 1 modular home; 1 log home; 7 other descriptions

Interpretation. Older residents and homeowners were strongly represented. Results concerning housing and municipal services should therefore be read in light of the respondent profile.

Water and Wastewater

Questions 14-23 asked about private wells, water quality and quantity, testing practices, and wastewater systems.

Question	Key results
Water testing (n=38)	8 annually (21.05%); 20 occasionally (52.63%); 10 never (26.32%)
Well type (n=38)	35 drilled (92.11%); 2 hand-dug (5.26%); 1 other (2.63%)
Well-water rating (n=38)	13 excellent (34.21%); 13 good (34.21%); 7 fair (18.42%); 5 poor (13.16%)
Purchased drinking water (n=37)	12 yes (32.43%); 25 no (67.57%)
Water quantity (n=39)	31 always plenty (79.49%); 4 occasionally dry (10.26%); 2 frequently dry (5.13%); 2 other (5.13%)
Wastewater system (n=39)	36 leach field (92.31%); 1 chambered; 1 holding tank; 1 composting system
System performance (n=39)	35 works well (89.74%); 1 needs replacement; 1 no system; 2 unsure

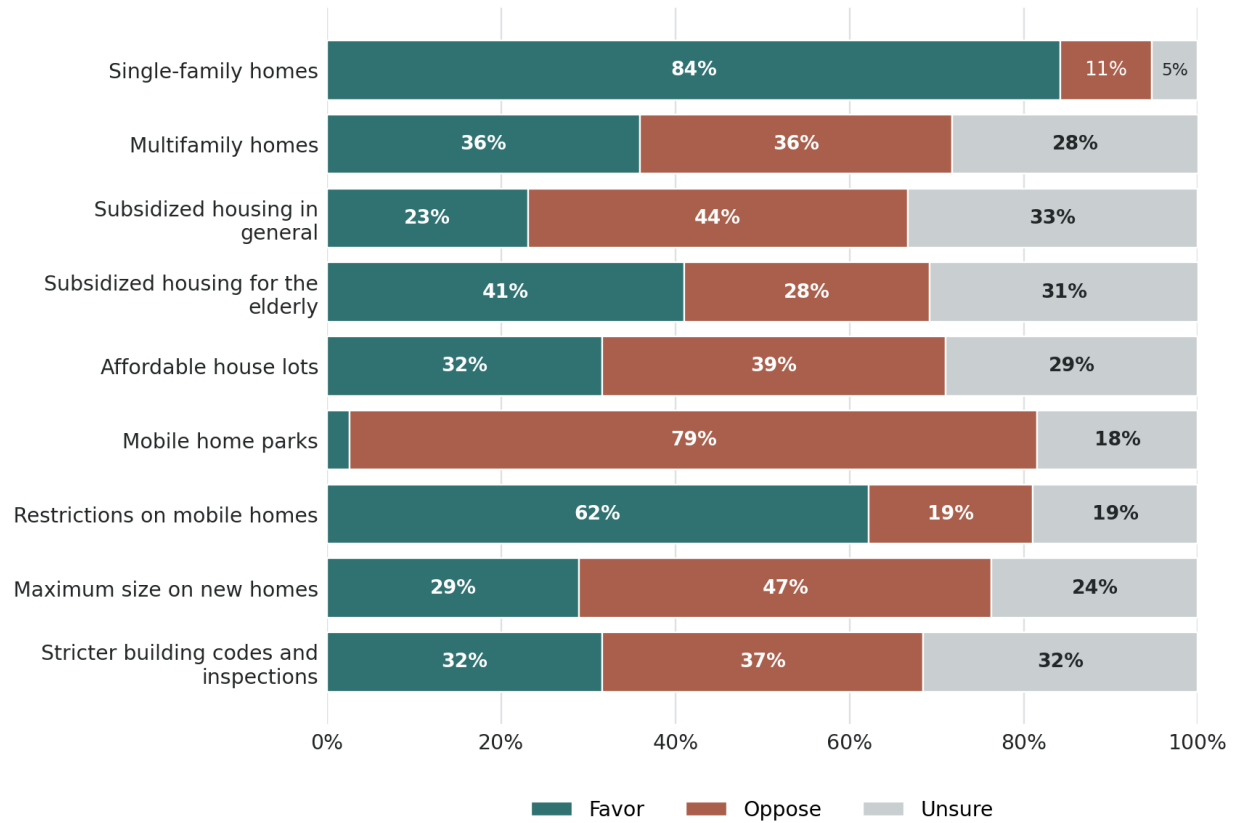
Reported Water Concerns

Eighteen of 38 respondents selected “I have no issues.” Other participants reported rust, odor, brackish water, acidity, arsenic, lead, filtration needs, or a general lack of confidence in drinking-water quality. These are self-reported conditions and were not independently verified through the survey.

Planning relevance. The responses support continued attention to groundwater protection, household testing information, saltwater intrusion, well yield, and the relationship between development and private water supplies.

Housing Preferences

Participants were asked whether they favored, opposed, or were unsure about introducing different housing types and regulatory approaches. Response totals ranged from 37 to 39.

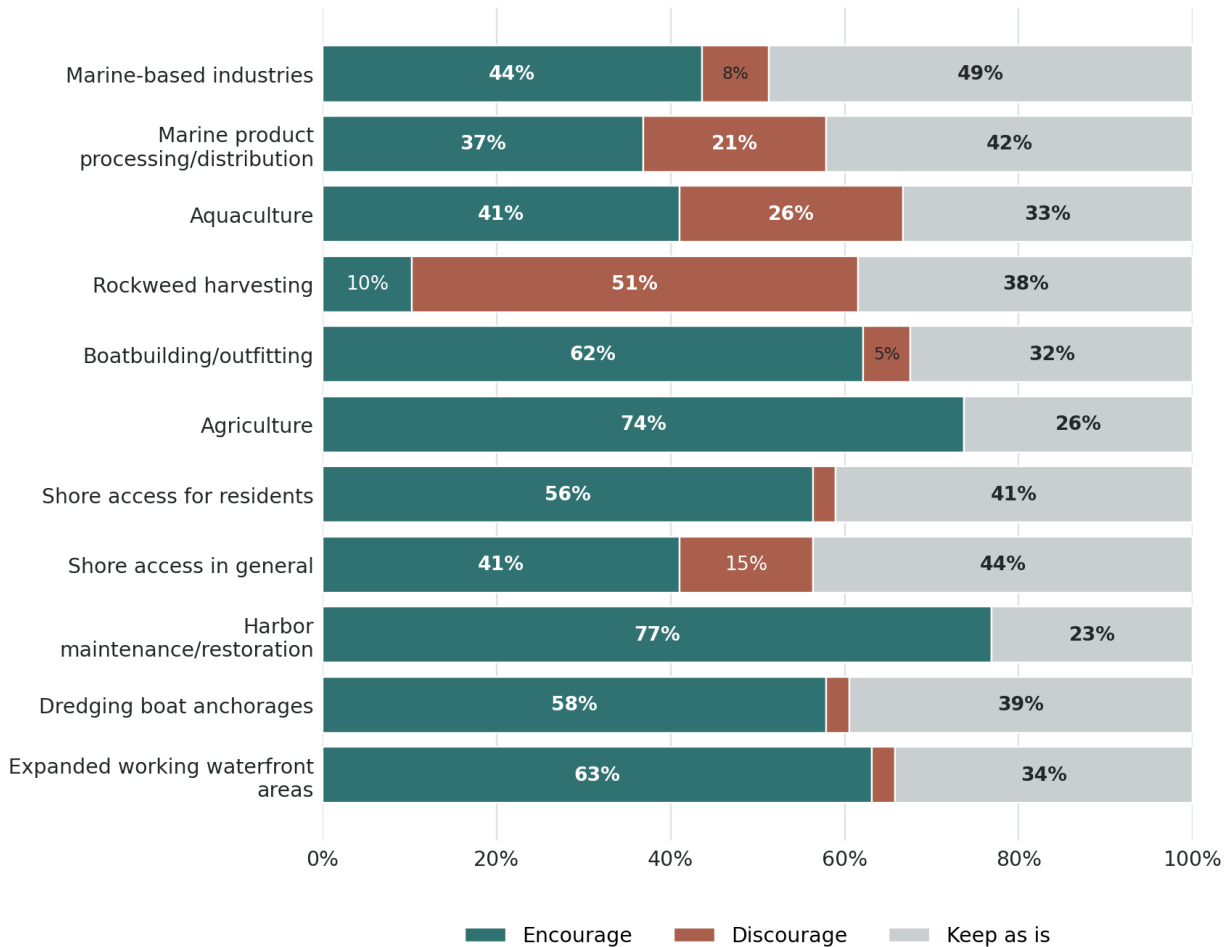


Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. Support was strongest for single-family homes. Respondents opposed mobile home parks by a wide margin and generally supported restrictions on mobile homes. Multifamily housing and stricter building standards produced divided responses, while subsidized housing and affordable lots drew substantial uncertainty as well as opposition.

Development Preferences: Marine Economy and Access

Questions 34-44 asked whether the Town should encourage, discourage, or maintain existing levels of marine, agricultural, and waterfront activities. Response totals ranged from 37 to 39.

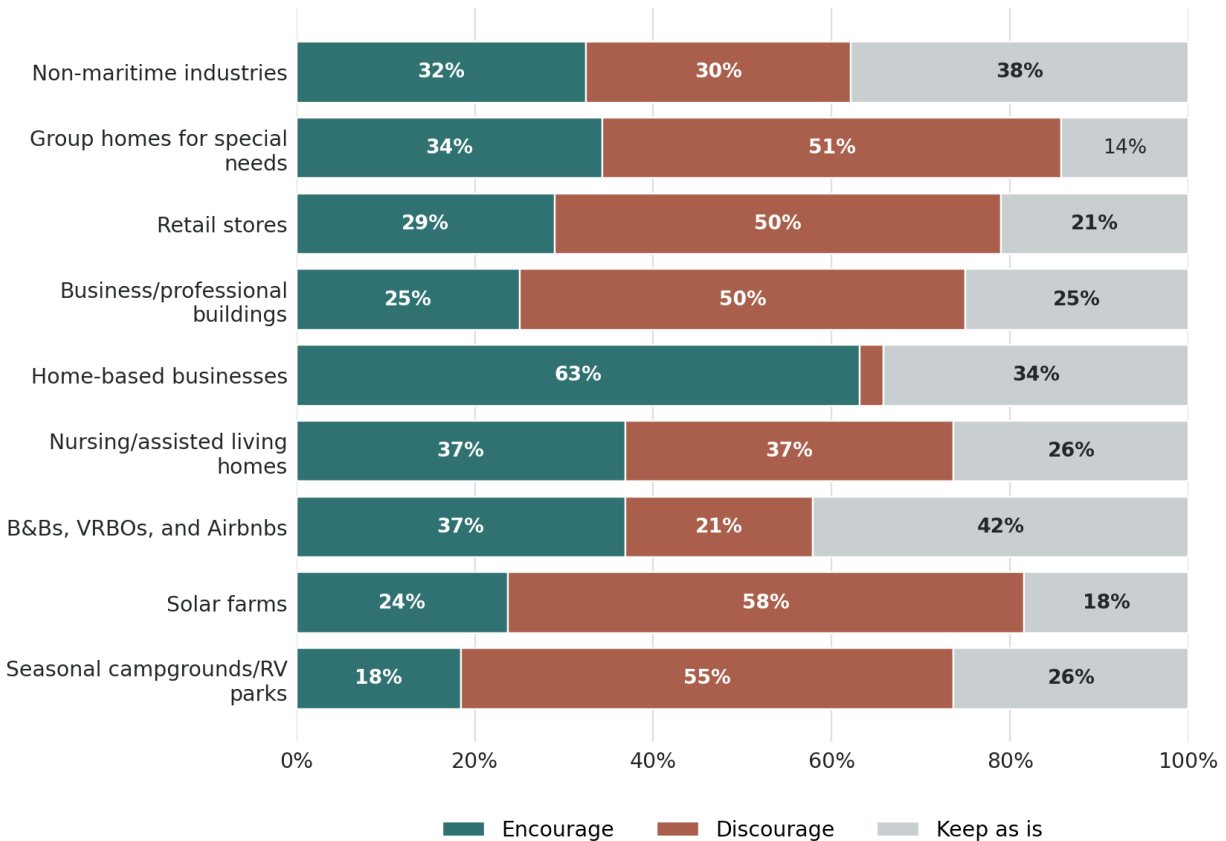


Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. Respondents most strongly encouraged harbor maintenance, agriculture, expanded working-waterfront protection, boatbuilding, dredging, and resident shore access. Rockweed harvesting was the only item in this group with a majority selecting discourage.

Development Preferences: Business and Housing

This group covered non-maritime industry, businesses, assisted living, short-term rentals, renewable energy, and campgrounds. Response totals ranged from 35 to 38.

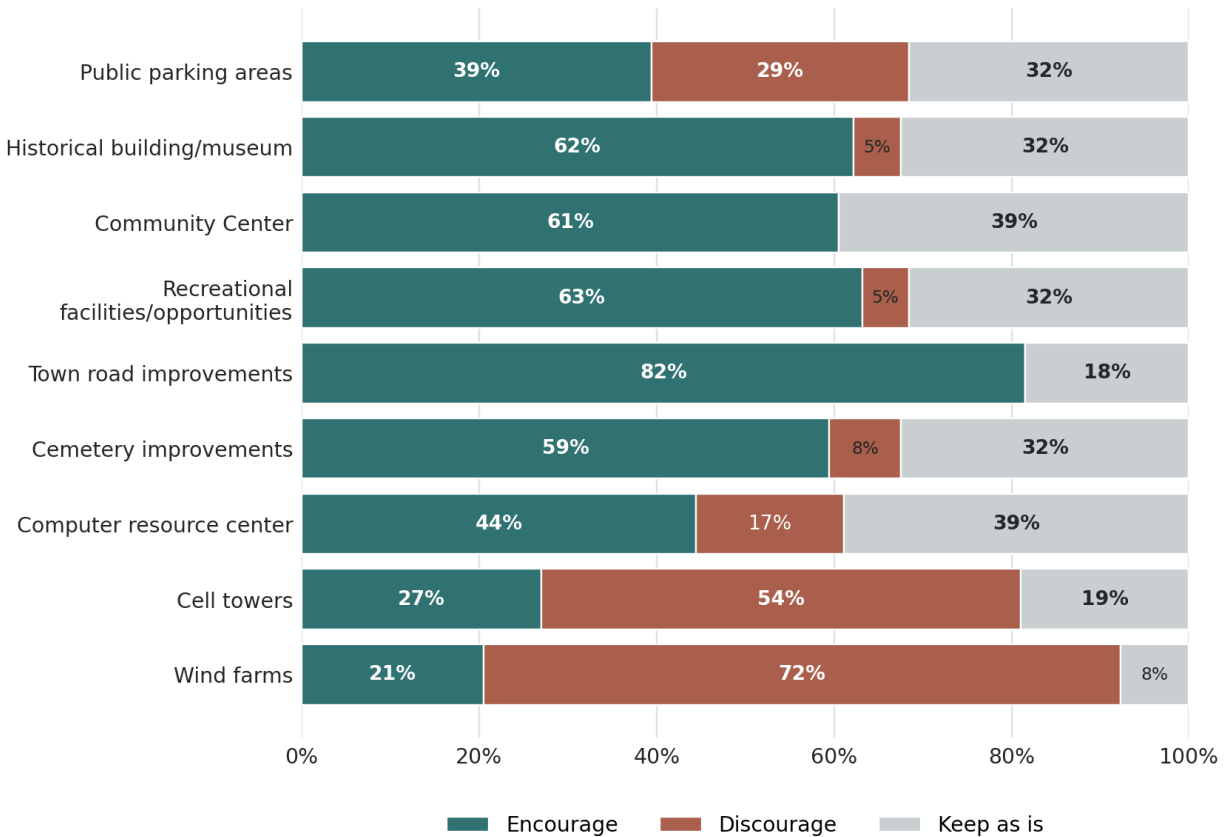


Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. Home-based businesses received the strongest support. Retail and professional buildings were generally discouraged. Views on assisted living were evenly divided, while solar farms and seasonal campgrounds received majority opposition.

Development Preferences: Facilities and Infrastructure

This group addressed public parking, historic and community facilities, roads, communications, and large-scale energy infrastructure. Response totals ranged from 36 to 39.

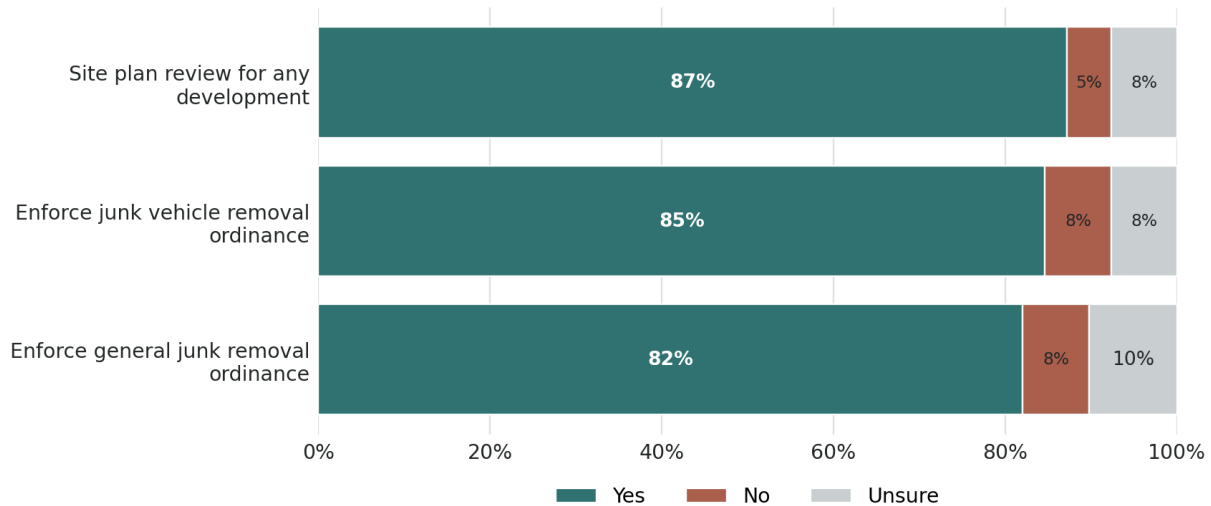


Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. Town road improvements received the strongest encouragement. Respondents also supported recreation, the Community Center, historic resources, and cemetery improvements. A majority discouraged additional cell towers and wind farms, although open-ended responses also documented cellular and internet dead zones.

Land-Use Administration and Ordinance Enforcement

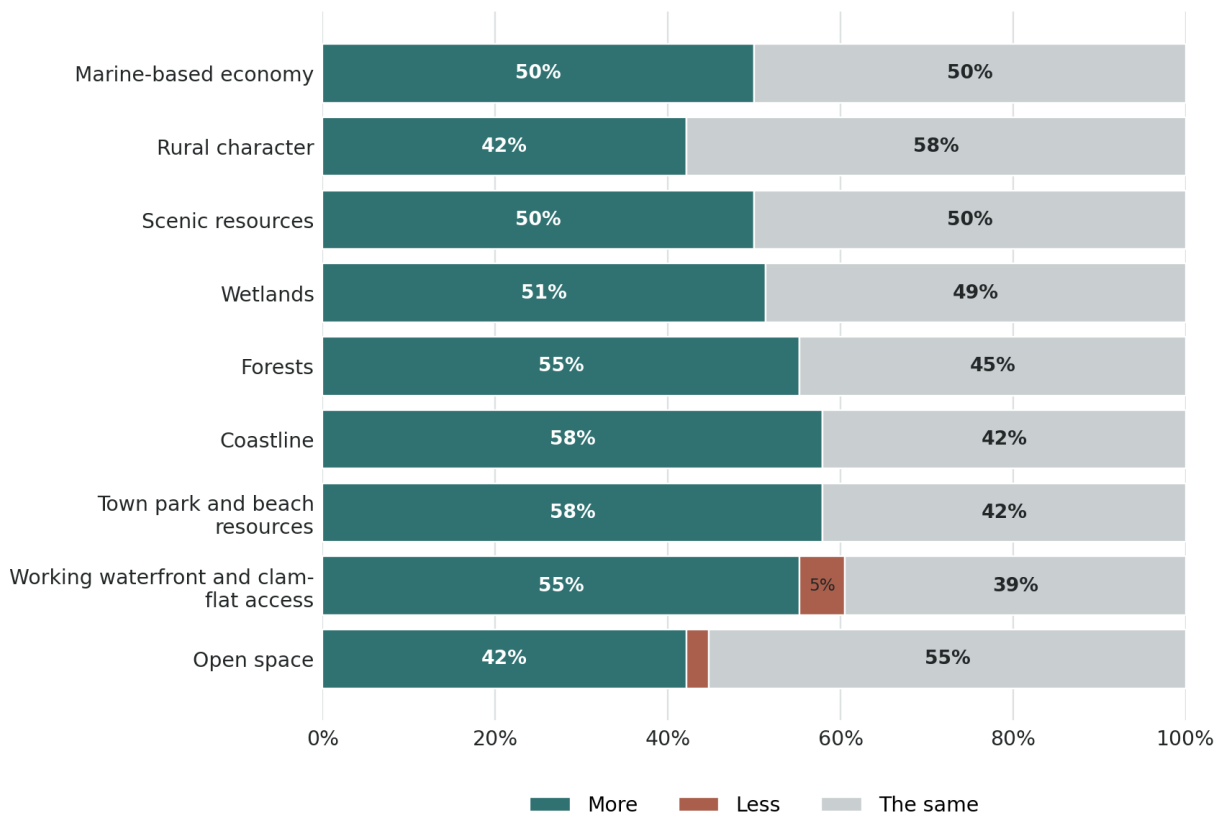
Questions 64-66 addressed site plan review and enforcement of junk-removal provisions. All three questions were answered by 39 respondents.



Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

More than four in five respondents supported site plan review for development and enforcement of both junk-vehicle and general junk-removal provisions. Written comments emphasized enforcement, clearer definitions, abutter notification, and practical options for disposal or cleanup assistance.

Preservation Priorities

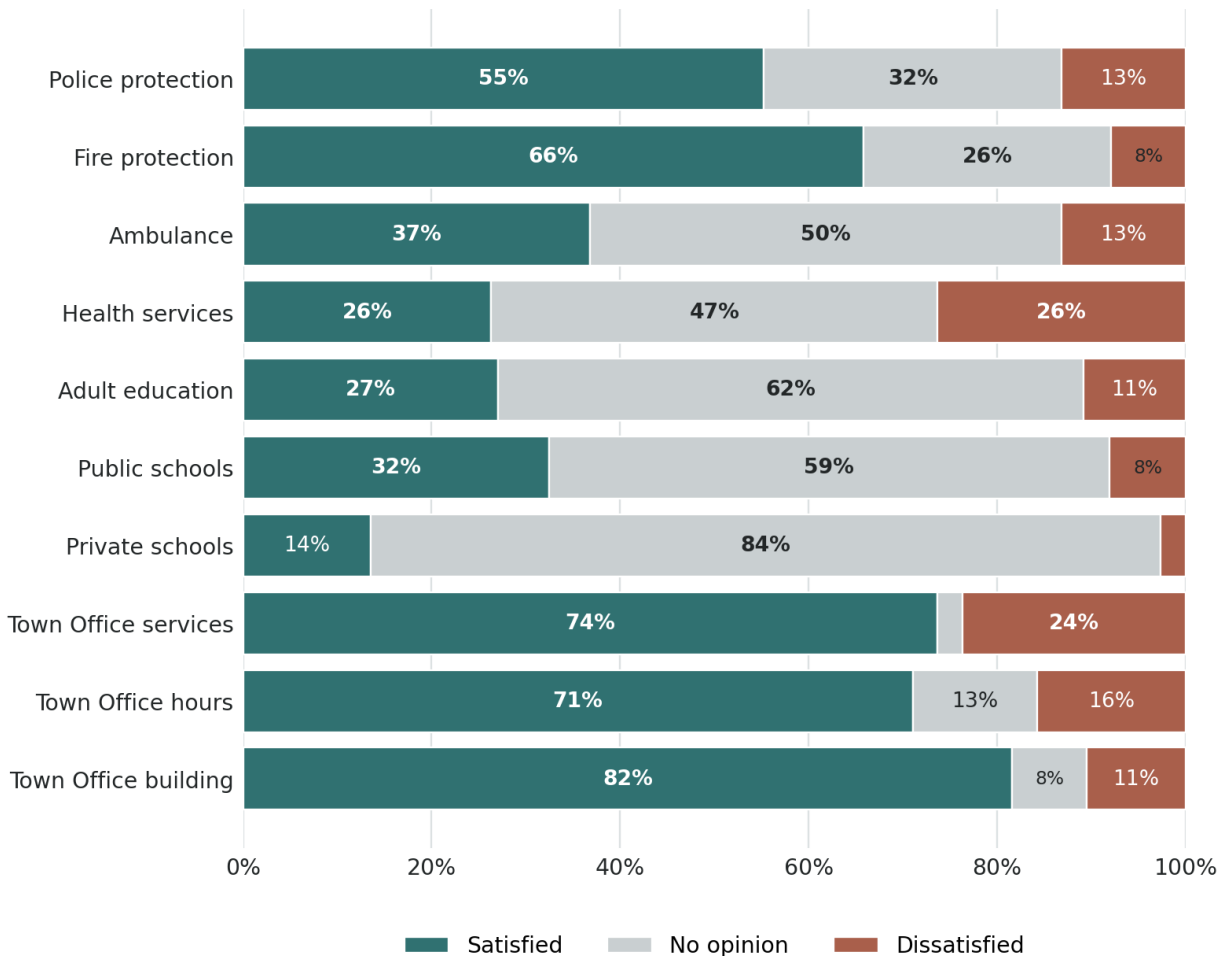


Questions 68-76; n=37-38. Source: Roque Bluffs Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. For every resource listed, respondents overwhelmingly selected either more preservation or the same level. Almost no respondents selected less preservation. The coastline and Town park and beach resources received the highest share selecting more.

Satisfaction with Facilities and Services: Public Services

Very satisfied and satisfied responses are combined as “Satisfied.” Dissatisfied and very dissatisfied responses are combined as “Dissatisfied.” No-opinion responses remain separate. Response totals ranged from 37 to 38.

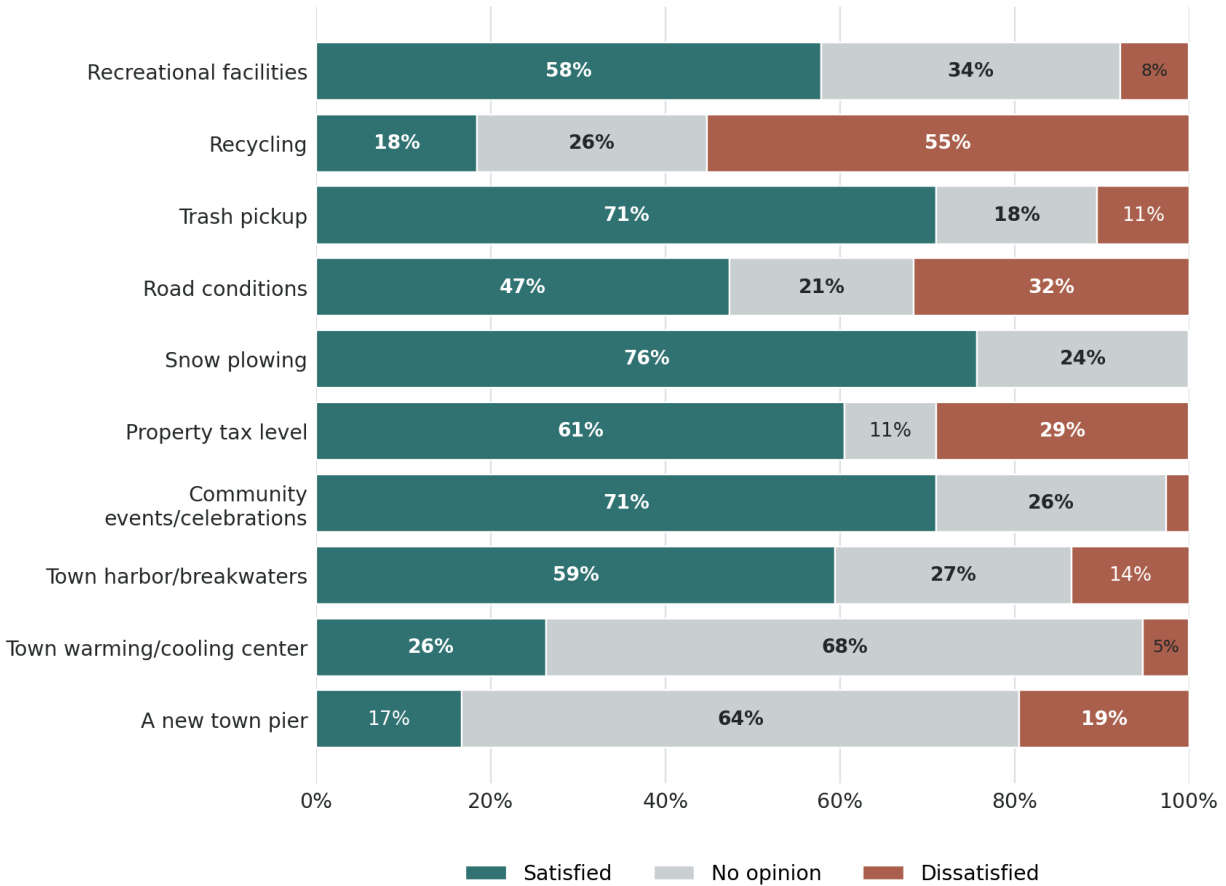


Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. Satisfaction was highest for the Town Office building, Town Office services, and Town Office hours. Many participants selected no opinion for schools, adult education, ambulance service, and health services, suggesting that some respondents lacked direct experience or information.

Satisfaction with Facilities and Services: Community Infrastructure

This chart continues the combined satisfaction results for Questions 88-97. Response totals ranged from 36 to 38.



Source: Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, 2025.

Key finding. Snow plowing, community events, and trash pickup received comparatively high satisfaction. Recycling had the highest dissatisfaction, followed by road conditions and property-tax levels. Many respondents had no opinion about a new Town pier or the warming and cooling center.

Open-Ended Responses: Community Character and Future

The final survey questions invited participants to describe what they value, what should change, and how they envision Roque Bluffs in the future. Responses were reviewed for recurring themes. A response could contribute to more than one theme, so the themes are qualitative and are not presented as mutually exclusive categories.

Recurring theme	Summary of participant comments
Rural and small-town character	Participants repeatedly valued Roque Bluffs as quiet, rural, remote, residential, and relatively undeveloped. Many wanted future change to remain modest and compatible with the Town's existing character.
Natural beauty and resources	Beaches, coastline, forests, wetlands, wildlife, night skies, open space, scenery, and the state park were repeatedly identified as defining community assets.
Marine heritage	Participants valued the fishing community, working waterfront, shellfish resources, and the Town's identity as a small coastal village.
Community connections	The Community Center, community events, friendliness, communication, and a close-knit atmosphere were identified as important to community life.
A measured future	Most future-oriented responses envisioned Roque Bluffs remaining much as it is today, while accommodating limited improvements in services, housing, communications, and locally appropriate economic activity.

Overall direction. The open-ended responses strongly support a future centered on continuity rather than transformation: maintaining the Town's rural coastal identity while addressing practical needs and improving resilience.

Open-Ended Responses: Concerns and Desired Changes

Participants identified several practical and long-term concerns. These comments represent resident perceptions and suggestions, not independently verified findings.

Theme	Issues raised
Roads, bridges, and access	Road condition, drainage, the Johnson Cove Road bridge, vulnerable access routes, state-road maintenance, and safe access near the state park.
Fire and emergency readiness	Wildfire risk, forest access, volunteer recruitment, ambulance and medical response, evacuation, and stronger emergency planning.
Climate and coastal hazards	Erosion, rising tides, storm damage, beach and dune protection, and infrastructure resilience.
Communications	Broadband completion, cellular dead zones, reliable internet, an updated Town website, and more timely municipal communication.
Land use and enforcement	A desire for clear development standards, consistent ordinance enforcement, junk cleanup, and proactive planning before larger projects are proposed.
Water resources	Well quality and quantity, private-water testing, saltwater intrusion, pollution, and possible development-related impacts.
Municipal capacity	Difficulty recruiting officials and volunteers, Town Office service concerns, professional management, public participation, and the capacity of a small town to administer programs.
Taxes and affordability	Property taxes, the cost of municipal improvements, equitable assessment, and balancing desired services with the local tax base.

Open-Ended Responses: Economy, Events, and Governance

Participants generally favored small, locally compatible economic and community activities rather than intensive commercial development.

Preferred Business Types

Suggestions included home-based and cottage businesses, fishing and marine businesses, agriculture, farmers markets, small food or grocery options, seafood sales, environmentally compatible tourism, arts and crafts, restaurants or coffee gathering spaces, and value-added natural-resource businesses. Several respondents preferred no additional business development or emphasized that any new activity should remain small, visually compatible, and environmentally responsible.

Community Events

Participants suggested public suppers and potlucks, lobster meals, seasonal celebrations, farmers markets, road and beach cleanups, yoga or fitness activities, holiday gatherings, and more frequent public meetings. The repeated interest in meals and gatherings reflects a desire for informal opportunities to strengthen community connections.

Town Manager and Municipal Service

Responses to the town-manager question were mixed. Some participants supported professional management or wanted more information, while others opposed the change or questioned whether the Town could afford it. Comments focused on leadership capacity, cost, professionalism, and the suitability of a town-manager model for a municipality of Roque Bluffs' size.

Volunteer Capacity

Responses regarding service as an official or committee member reflected limited availability, seasonal residency, uncertainty about eligibility, and existing commitments. Several respondents indicated willingness to serve or reported that they already held a municipal or committee role.

Planning relevance. These responses support strategies for regional cooperation, volunteer recruitment, public communication, community programming, home-based enterprise, marine and agricultural activities, and periodic evaluation of administrative capacity.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

The community survey was one part of a broader public-participation process. Survey findings were considered together with the community visioning session, committee meetings, municipal records, state and federal data, and public review of draft chapters.

Survey theme	How it informed the plan
Preserve rural and coastal character	Reinforced the vision statement, natural-resource policies, and the approach to future land use.
Improve roads and emergency access	Supported transportation, public-facilities, capital-investment, and climate-resilience strategies.
Protect water and coastal resources	Informed water-resource, marine-resource, land-use, and climate considerations.
Support the marine economy and home-based work	Informed economic-development and working-waterfront policies.
Plan for an aging population	Supported housing, regional-service, and aging-in-place strategies.
Strengthen communication and municipal capacity	Supported implementation, public-participation, governance, and regional-coordination strategies.

Record Retention

The original SurveyMonkey export, including complete numerical tables and verbatim comments, is retained in the comprehensive-plan project record. This appendix presents aggregate results and thematic summaries without publishing response dates, potentially identifying information, personal allegations, or repetitive “none” responses.

Source

Roque Bluffs Comprehensive Plan Community Public Survey, responses collected April 10-September 4, 2025. Survey export generated October 2, 2025.