

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS



New Hampshire Estuaries Project • 603.433.7187 • March 2001

NEW HAMPSHIRE ESTUARIES

The New Hampshire Estuaries include New Hampshire's entire coastline. Nearly 250,000 people live in this watershed. This estuary supports a significant seafood industry. Recreational shellfishers harvest oysters and clams; fishing enthusiasts pursue striped bass, bluefish, herring, and smelt; lobstering is both a commercial and recreational activity, and eels are trapped for bait and export. Birders from all over the country and the world come to view migratory birds against this picturesque backdrop.

FACTS ABOUT THE ESTUARY

- The New Hampshire coast includes over 230 miles of sensitive tidal shoreline.
- The estuaries project encompasses a watershed of 1087 square miles.
- The coastal watershed region includes 23,600 acres of tidal and freshwater wetlands.
- There are 13 functioning dams, and 17 wastewater treatment plants in the watershed.
- Commercial fisheries harvests in NH were valued at over \$12.5 million in 1997.
- Tourists spent an estimated \$483 million in the seacoast region during 1996.

HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY

- Nutrient and bacterial contamination from wastewater treatment facility malfunctions, illegal direct discharges, faulty septic systems, and non-point pollution has impacted water quality.
- Toxic contamination is the result of historic industrial sites, oil spills, industrial and municipal wastewater, and stormwater runoff.
- Sediment laden runoff from upland watersheds and rivers has created problems.
- Oyster populations and clam densities have declined.
- Wildlife habitats have been lost and fragmented.
- Salt marsh habitats have been lost or degraded from filling, development, and historic ditching and draining to harvest salt marsh hay and control mosquitoes.
- Seasonal fish populations have declined due to over-harvests and poor water quality.
- Rivers that once supported substantial runs of anadromous fish now host minimal returns or none at all.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

- Awarded 27 technical assistance grants addressing water quality and habitat improvements, and planning and outreach efforts.
- Helped the NH DES step up their non-point source investigations, resulting in the identification of numerous cross connections and illegal discharges to the estuaries.
- Developed a tool for land and habitat conservation and resource management.
- Provided local and regional scale maps identifying high-value natural resource areas susceptible to development pressures to each of the 19 communities with tidal frontage.
- Identified pollution sources, cleaned up, and then opened over 42,500 acres of the estuaries to recreational shellfish harvesting.

Steamed New Castle Mussels

Fresh mussels harvested from the rocky shore areas of New Hampshire are a treat. Serve with plenty of crusty bread to

1 large onion, chopped
3/4 cup of white wine
or water
5 pounds of mussels,
cleaned

Wash each mussel thoroughly and cut off the beard along the side of the shell.

Place the onions and wine in the bottom of a large, heavy pot. Add the mussels, and immediately bring the wine to a boil. Cover the pot, lower the heat and steam the mussels for six to ten minutes. Do not overcook because they will lose flavor.

Using a slotted spoon, place the mussels in a serving bowl. Strain the broth through coffee filters and serve with the mussels and plenty of crusty bread.