

FEASIBILITY STATEMENTS FOR ISLAND-NESTING SEABIRD GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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Goal: Maintain or enhance the long-term presence, diversity, and viability of seabirds nesting on the coast of Maine.

Objective 1: Maintain seabird-nesting habitat on all coastal nesting islands (containing one or more nesting pairs of seabirds since 1976) through 2000.

Objective 2: Develop specific population goals and objectives for priority species by 2000.

Desirability: The objective will in general be desirable to both the consumptive users (eider hunters) and nonconsumptive users of the seabird resources.

Feasibility: Objective 1 can be met through habitat protection initiatives such as acquisition, resource protection zoning, land use planning, conservation easements, and landowner agreements, and through physical manipulation of the habitat itself.

A portion of Objective 2 has already been met as population goals and objectives have been developed for Common, Arctic, and Roseate Terns and Common Eiders.

Capability of Habitat: Since 1976, one or more seabird pairs have been documented nesting on 453 islands or exposed ledges on the coast of Maine.

Possible Consequences: Restricted land uses on privately owned, seabird nesting islands or adjacent to other nesting islands will likely result in conflicts between resource managers, landowners, and others. However, many seabird nesting islands are currently owned by public agencies or private conservation groups with long-term interests in the conservation of seabird nesting habitat. Further, recreational use on these islands will be restricted to dates outside the critical nesting period. Despite these restrictions, nonconsumptive users (primarily bird watchers) can still observe seabirds around nesting islands from a distance.

Increased populations of some seabirds may conflict with commercial fisheries, including aquaculture and agriculture. However, these conflicts and relationships are not totally understood at this time. Examples of potential conflicts include eider competition with commercial fishermen who harvest mussels, green urchins, and periwinkles. Further, cormorants may compete with commercial and recreational Atlantic salmon fishermen, because cormorants prey on stocked and native Atlantic salmon smolts. In addition, gulls may adversely affect the productivity of other seabird species by eating their eggs and young. Lastly, gulls have also been documented eating commercial blueberries.