



Gulf of Maine Council Award Winner Highlights

Awards Presented May 27, 2026

*The Algonquin Hotel
St. Andrews, New Brunswick*

Sustainable Communities Award

The Gulf of Maine Council's Sustainable Communities Award recognizes a community or organization within the Gulf of Maine region for exemplary work in achieving sustainability outcomes related to the Gulf of Maine environment and economy.

Town of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia

The Gulf of Maine Council is honored to recognize the Town of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, with the Sustainable Communities Award for outstanding leadership and long-standing commitment to sustainability, environmental stewardship, and community resilience. As proudly acknowledged at public events, the Town of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, is located in Mi'kam'ki, the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. Annapolis Royal has become an inspiring model for small coastal communities by integrating sustainability into local governance, economic development, climate adaptation, and environmental protection initiatives while honoring cultural history and community values. The Town's innovative approaches include using engineered wetlands to help treat wastewater, integrating solar energy and EV charging stations throughout the community, and using salt marsh restoration to protect historic properties and reduce the impact of sea level rise and storm surge. Whether promoting renewable energy, protecting natural resources, or fostering climate resilience, the Town of Annapolis Royal is leading the way toward building a sustainable future for its residents and the broader Gulf of Maine region.

Longard Volunteer Award

The Gulf of Maine Council's Longard Volunteer Award was established in memory of Art Longard, a founding member of the Council. This special award is presented to an individual from one of the five states and provinces bordering the Gulf of Maine to recognize volunteer commitment to environmental protection and sustainability within the Gulf of Maine.

Marko Melendy, Maine

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to present Marko Melendy of Maine with this year's Longard Volunteer Award. Marko exemplifies the rare combination of professional excellence, civic leadership, and hands-on environmental stewardship that strengthens communities and protects working waterfronts. Through his work at Bowdoin College and extensive volunteer service across Midcoast Maine, Marko has demonstrated a sustained commitment to marine resource protection, environmental advocacy, and public service. At Bowdoin College, Marko supports responsible scientific research and field-based learning on key coastal and marine issues. As a community volunteer, he serves as Chair of the Brunswick Rivers and Coastal Waters Commission, where he provides thoughtful leadership on aquaculture, harbor management, coastal access, and marine resource use. He also serves on the Brunswick Conservation Commission, the Brunswick Shellfish Committee, and the Mare Brook Watershed Steering Committee, helping advance sustainable shellfish management, habitat protection, and watershed-scale environmental stewardship. Known for his deep local knowledge, collaborative

spirit, and unwavering commitment to protecting the environment, Marko Melendy has inspired others through his leadership, advocacy, and hands-on volunteer efforts. Through his dedication and service, he has made a lasting contribution toward sustaining the natural resources and communities that define the Gulf of Maine watershed.

Sustainable Industry Award

The Gulf of Maine Council's Sustainable Industry Award recognizes an individual, company, or organization within the Gulf of Maine region for demonstrating innovation and leadership in efforts to improve the well-being of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem and the communities that call it home.

Vito Giacalone, Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to present this year's Sustainable Industry Award to Vito Giacalone of Massachusetts for his outstanding leadership and dedication to preserving Gloucester's fishing industry and maritime heritage. In 2007, Vito founded the Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund, a nonprofit community permit bank created to help preserve fishing access for Gloucester fishermen and protect the long-term sustainability of the city's historic working waterfront. Under Vito's leadership, the organization purchases, holds, and leases fishing permits to ensure these critical fishing rights remain in Gloucester rather than being sold to outside interests. By making permits available to small-scale fishermen at reduced rates, the Fund has helped sustain local livelihoods, strengthen Gloucester's commercial fishing fleet, and preserve the traditions of one of New England's most iconic fishing communities. Through his vision, innovation, and unwavering commitment to the fishing industry, Vito Giacalone has created a successful model for protecting community-based fisheries and supporting the long-term resilience of Gulf of Maine coastal communities.

Susan Snow-Cotter Leadership Award

The Gulf of Maine Council's Susan Snow-Cotter Leadership Award is bestowed in memory of Susan Snow-Cotter, a long-time friend and supporter of the Gulf of Maine Council. This special award recognizes a coastal management professional who exemplifies outstanding leadership or exceptional mentoring in the Gulf of Maine watershed.

Betsy Nicholson, Massachusetts

The Gulf of Maine Council is honored to recognize Betsy Nicholson of Massachusetts for her extraordinary leadership and dedication to advancing coastal and ocean management throughout the Gulf of Maine region. Throughout her career with NOAA, Betsy has been a trusted and collaborative leader who consistently brought people together to address complex coastal and ocean challenges. She helped establish and co-lead the Gulf of Maine Council's Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Committee alongside Canadian partners, creating opportunities for cross-border collaboration and information sharing during a pivotal time in regional ocean planning. Betsy also played an important role in launching the Northeast Regional Ocean Council, helping to strengthen coordination among coastal

managers throughout New England. Beyond her many professional accomplishments, Betsy has been an exceptional mentor, colleague, and friend to countless people throughout the Gulf of Maine community. Known for her warmth, strategic insight, and ability to make everyone feel welcome at the table, Betsy has inspired and supported a generation of coastal management professionals. Through her vision, mentorship, and decades of public service, Betsy Nicholson has made a lasting contribution toward a healthier and more resilient Gulf of Maine watershed.

Visionary Awards

Gulf of Maine Council Visionary Awards are presented to individuals or organizations within each of the five Gulf of Maine jurisdictions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. These Awards recognize innovation, creativity, and commitment to promoting a healthy Gulf of Maine.

Jill Carr, Massachusetts

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Jill Carr of Massachusetts with a Visionary Award for her dedication to protecting natural resources within the Gulf of Maine while serving as a Habitat Restoration Program Manager for the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Partnership. Jill is a dynamic leader, innovator, and collaborator who has spent more than two decades advancing coastal conservation while strengthening partnerships across the Gulf of Maine region. She has developed several widely used tools that support water quality monitoring, environmental data collection, and public access to scientific information. Her work has made environmental data more accessible and useful for researchers, municipalities, nonprofits, and decision-makers working to protect coastal resources. Known for bringing people and ideas together to solve problems, Jill's expertise spans seagrasses, wetlands, fisheries, water quality, and coastal habitat conservation. Whether working as a diver, drone pilot, boat captain, or programmer, she approaches challenges with creativity, determination, and practical problem-solving skills. Beyond her technical accomplishments, Jill is respected for her enthusiasm, generosity, and collaborative leadership style. She inspires meaningful engagement, learning, and partnership among those working toward healthier coastal ecosystems and communities. Through her dedication, leadership, and commitment to conservation, Jill Carr has made a lasting contribution toward a healthier and more sustainable Gulf of Maine watershed.

Michael Thompson, Massachusetts

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to honor Michael Thompson of Massachusetts with a Visionary Award for his outstanding contributions toward protecting natural resources within the Gulf of Maine. Michael is a visionary leader at the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. His work bridges the gap between complex scientific data and practical policy solutions, supporting both ecosystem health and the regional blue economy. One of Michael's most significant accomplishments has been advancing whale protection through an AIS-based messaging system developed in partnership with Marine Information Systems Inc. The system sends real-time alerts to vessels exceeding speed limits in Right Whale Seasonal Management Areas, improving compliance and reducing risks to endangered whales.

This groundbreaking approach has helped establish a new standard for marine situational awareness and species protection. Michael also led spatial mapping efforts that informed the U.S. Coast Guard's adoption of the Massachusetts Bay and Gulf of Maine Fairways, reducing ship strikes and improving conditions for marine wildlife and maritime navigation alike. In addition, he integrated nearly 5 million commercial fishing records into an economic analysis demonstrating the Sanctuary's important role in supporting sustainable fisheries and coastal economies. Michael has also led pioneering drone research using advanced tagging technology to study whale movement and underwater behavior while minimizing disturbance to the animals. Through science, innovation, and collaboration, Michael Thompson has advanced marine conservation throughout the Gulf of Maine region.

Geoff Smith, Maine

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Geoff Smith of Maine with a Visionary Award for his outstanding contributions toward environmental stewardship in the Gulf of Maine. As leader of The Nature Conservancy's marine conservation program in Maine for almost 20 years, Geoff has worked with fishermen to improve the health of fish populations and the resilience of fishing communities. His tireless and dedicated work in the Gulf of Maine has resulted in trusted partnerships with the fishing community, advancements in marine science innovation, and improved ocean and coastal policies at the state, regional, and national levels. Geoff spearheaded TNC's permit banking initiative to ensure that groundfishing opportunities remain available to fishermen, while creating conditions for testing new gear solutions and facilitating enhanced catch data collection. His innovative approach has informed fisheries monitoring and improved integration of climate data and fishermen's on-the-water observations into the science and management process. Geoff also serves on several key leadership organizations, including TNC's North America Region Fisheries Community of Practice, the New England Fishery Management Council, the U.S. delegation to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, and the Maine Coast Community Groundfish Sector Board of Directors. Geoff Smith has been, and continues to be, an unsung champion for the Gulf of Maine and the communities that depend on the well-being of its natural bounty.

Geoff Wilson of Maine

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Geoff Wilson of Maine with a Visionary Award for his outstanding contributions toward protecting natural resources within the Gulf of Maine. Geoff's innovative research and collaboration have fundamentally reshaped approaches to salt marsh restoration in New England. His research revealed how legacy agricultural practices continue to influence salt marsh degradation, health, succession, and resilience — a major shift in our understanding of why marshes function and appear as they do today. Geoff used this information to create a 4-Tiered Restoration Approach, which has been successfully applied to more than 12,000 acres of salt marsh throughout the Gulf of Maine. This strategy incorporates original techniques like ditch remediation with novel restoration approaches to reconfigure marsh surface hydrology, while employing the least intrusive methods possible. These principles have been expanded to support approaches for treating invasive *Phragmites australis*, a fundamental threat to salt marsh systems. Through collaborations such as the Salt Marsh Adaptation and Resiliency Teams — also known as SMART Teams - Geoff Wilson has brought together scientists, conservation organizations, and restoration practitioners to expand

knowledge-sharing and strengthen regional restoration efforts. His work continues to help build healthier marshes, stronger coastal ecosystems, and more resilient communities throughout the Gulf of Maine watershed.

Chris Peter, New Hampshire

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to honor Chris Peter of New Hampshire for his outstanding leadership in salt marsh science and restoration in the Gulf of Maine. As Research Coordinator for the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Chris has spent the past 25 years assessing and restoring salt marshes throughout the Gulf of Maine. He has led regional and national projects - successfully coordinating large, diverse teams through complex scientific studies involving data analysis, monitoring, and publications. Chris's work has helped document how salt marshes are changing in response to sea level rise, providing critical information for coastal managers planning for the future of these habitats. He also helped develop and refine monitoring protocols for salt marshes and is currently leading a New England effort to establish consistent regional standards, including new methods for measuring salt marsh migration. Beyond vegetation monitoring, Chris also co-leads a national biomonitoring working group within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and contributes to projects involving submerged aquatic vegetation and other important coastal indicators. He is widely respected not only for his scientific expertise but also for his collaborative and inclusive leadership style. Through his leadership, mentorship, and ability to bring people together around shared goals, Chris Peter has made a lasting contribution to salt marsh science and coastal conservation throughout the Gulf of Maine region.

Todd Selig, New Hampshire

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Todd Selig of New Hampshire for his outstanding leadership and commitment to sustainability and resilience within the Gulf of Maine watershed. As Town Administrator for Durham, New Hampshire, Todd has helped position the community as a regional leader in climate resilience, energy efficiency, and environmental stewardship. Working closely with the University of New Hampshire and local partners, he has advanced initiatives focused on renewable energy, greenhouse gas reduction, land conservation, and protection of water resources connected to the Great Bay Estuary. Todd has also been a strong advocate for collaborative regional planning and practical local solutions to climate and sustainability challenges. Under his leadership, Durham has worked to integrate climate action, sustainability, and resilience planning into the town's vision and comprehensive planning efforts, helping ensure that environmental considerations are embedded in future community development and decision-making. His leadership has strengthened Durham's long-term resilience while promoting innovative approaches that can serve as a model for other Gulf of Maine communities. Todd is widely respected for his collaborative leadership style, support for local and regional partnerships, clear communication, and ability to advance pragmatic solutions to some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing coastal communities. Through his leadership, innovation, and commitment to public service, Todd Selig has made a significant contribution toward protecting the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Maine region.

Jennie Graham, Nova Scotia

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to present Jennie Graham of Nova Scotia with a Visionary Award for her contributions toward advancing nature-based solutions for coastal protection and resilience in the Gulf of Maine. Through her professional accomplishments as Vice President and Senior Restoration Specialist with CBWES Inc., Jennie has become a recognized leader in tidal wetland restoration and climate resilience in Atlantic Canada. With nearly two decades of experience working on the unique ecology, hydrology, and agricultural history of the Bay of Fundy region, Jennie has advanced innovative nature-based solutions that help protect coastal communities, strengthen resilience, and restore vital tidal wetlands. Jennie has played a central role in designing many of Nova Scotia's major restoration projects, contributing to the restoration of more than 440 hectares of tidal wetlands. Her leadership on projects such as Making Room for Wetlands and the Onslow–North River Managed Dyke Realignment reflects her strong commitment to scientific integrity, creativity, and collaboration with local communities. Her nature-based restoration designs, research, publications, and conference presentations have helped strengthen coastal restoration expertise across Atlantic Canada. Jennie is also a dedicated mentor and educator, providing technical guidance and training to students, young professionals, and environmental organizations across Atlantic Canada. Through visionary leadership and an unwavering commitment to coastal resilience, Jennie Graham has made a lasting and meaningful contribution to sustainability in the Gulf of Maine region.

Schoodic Riverkeepers, New Brunswick and Maine

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to honor the Schoodic Riverkeepers for their extraordinary cross-border efforts to restore the Skutik River watershed within traditional Peskotomuhkati territory in New Brunswick and Maine. Since 2011, the Passamaquoddy Schoodic Riverkeepers have led collaborative efforts to restore alewife populations and improve the ecological health of the Skutik River, which today forms part of the Canada-U.S. border. At the heart of Peskotomuhkati territory, the Skutik River has long been essential for transportation, sustenance, culture, and identity for the Peskotomuhkati Peoples. Once supporting an estimated 80 million sea-run alewives, the river was historically one of the region's most important ecological systems. Over the past two centuries, the Skutik River has suffered extensive environmental degradation caused by dams, pollution, and habitat loss. Through education campaigns, public events, ceremony, and advocacy, the Schoodic Riverkeepers helped build momentum for major restoration milestones, including passage of legislation reopening the river to alewives in 2013, the development of the Skutik River Restoration Plan, and the removal of the Milltown Dam in 2024. Their work has become a powerful example of community-based watershed restoration rooted in Indigenous leadership, collaboration, cultural connection, and long-term stewardship. While many organizations and individuals have contributed to the ongoing restoration of the Skutik River, the progress achieved and hope for the future reflect the dedication, effectiveness, and volunteer leadership of the Passamaquoddy Schoodic Riverkeepers.

Roberta Clowater, New Brunswick

The Gulf of Maine Council is honored to recognize Roberta Clowater of New Brunswick with a Visionary Award for her decades of leadership and advocacy in conservation and marine protection throughout the Gulf of Maine region. As Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society New

Brunswick Chapter, Roberta has been a leading voice in efforts to establish Marine Protected Areas in the Canadian Gulf of Maine and advance collaborative conservation initiatives across New Brunswick. For more than thirty years, she has worked with governments, environmental organizations, fisheries groups, and communities to build support for meaningful conservation in some of the region's most complex and heavily used coastal and marine environments. Roberta also coordinated the New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Coalition, where she worked with the Provincial Government and various stakeholders to advise the government on priorities and recommendations for the Protected Areas Strategy for New Brunswick. This campaign resulted in the protection of over 500,000 hectares in the Province. In addition to her conservation leadership, she shares her knowledge and passion for environmental stewardship as a part-time lecturer at the University of New Brunswick's Faculty of Forestry and Environmental Management. Through her thoughtful leadership, collaborative approach, and unwavering commitment to conservation, Roberta Clowater has made a lasting contribution toward protecting the natural heritage of the Gulf of Maine watershed.

Peter Lawton, New Brunswick

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Peter Lawton of New Brunswick for his outstanding contributions to marine science and conservation throughout the Gulf of Maine region. As a Research Scientist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada at the St. Andrews Biological Station, Peter has spent more than 40 years studying benthic ecosystems, marine biodiversity, and habitat distribution in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine. His early research focused on lobster and crab fisheries science, advancing our understanding of lobster habitat requirements and benthic recruitment processes critical to sustainable fisheries management. His extensive field research using SCUBA diving and underwater video technologies became an important foundation for science-based management in the region. Peter's work later expanded to benthic biodiversity and habitat mapping. He played a key role in Canada-U.S. offshore research missions using remotely operated vehicles to survey cold-water coral forests in Corsair Canyon and Jordan Basin, both of which were later protected by the Canadian government. Peter also helped lead major international research collaborations, including serving as Co-Principal Investigator for the Gulf of Maine Area Program of the Census of Marine Life, which established critical biodiversity baselines for ecosystem-based management. Known for his scientific rigor, collaborative leadership, and dedication to understanding marine ecosystems, Peter Lawton has made lasting contributions to marine conservation, fisheries science, and ecosystem-based management throughout the Gulf of Maine region.

Distinguished Service Awards

Our final category of awards tonight recognizes individuals with **Distinguished Service Awards** for their exceptional contributions toward promoting a healthy Gulf of Maine ecosystem while serving as members of the Gulf of Maine Council.

Jim Chase, New Hampshire

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Jim Chase of New Hampshire with a Distinguished Service Award for his longstanding support of efforts to advance a healthy and sustainable Gulf of Maine ecosystem. As President of the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, New Hampshire, Jim spearheaded efforts to understand and address the site's vulnerability to sea level rise, coastal flooding, erosion, and increasing storm surge. Located within Odiorne Point State Park, the Seacoast Science Center became a regional leader in climate resilience and environmental education under Jim's leadership. Jim helped integrate a comprehensive Climate Resilience Project into the Center's facility expansion and educational programming, reimagining the museum around sustainable infrastructure while expanding its ability to educate the public about sea-level rise, coastal flooding, and local marine habitats. Jim also advanced innovative sustainability measures, including renewable energy, high-efficiency heating systems, and other site improvements designed to reduce environmental impacts and strengthen long-term resilience. Importantly, Jim shared the Seacoast Science Center's adaptation planning efforts, experiences, and lessons learned with the Gulf of Maine Council and the broader regional community. His collaborative approach helped inform regional strategies to strengthen coastal resilience, protect waterfront infrastructure and natural resources, and prepare Gulf of Maine communities for the impacts of climate change. The Council also appreciates Jim's longstanding commitment to educating and inspiring future generations of environmental stewards throughout the Gulf of Maine region.

Kathleen Leyden, Maine

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Kathleen Leyden with a Distinguished Service Award for her exceptional contributions as a long-time member of the Gulf of Maine Council and former Director of the Maine Coastal Program. Anyone who has had the pleasure of working with Kathleen can attest to her deep personal commitment to protecting coastal resources and the communities and economies that depend on them. As a collaborative and forward-thinking leader, Kathleen consistently worked to bridge science, policy, and practical action to address some of the Gulf of Maine region's most pressing environmental challenges. Never afraid to ask the tough questions, Kathleen consistently pushed conversations forward in ways that encouraged innovation, accountability, and practical solutions. With a keen understanding of the connections between natural resources and coastal communities, she helped advance innovative and pragmatic solutions to protect coastal habitats and marine ecosystems while supporting sustainable economic activity. Kathleen also helped lead regional climate and ocean planning efforts, including co-chairing the Coastal and Marine Working Group for Maine's Climate Action Plan. While serving as Chair of the Gulf of Maine Council, she promoted cross-border collaboration and strengthened partnerships throughout the region. She also fostered valuable coordination and learning among New England coastal managers through her leadership with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council. Respected as a leader, mentor, and friend, Kathleen has inspired colleagues throughout the region through her thoughtful leadership, dedication to public service, and enduring commitment to the Gulf of Maine.

Ellen Mecray, Massachusetts

The Gulf of Maine Council is pleased to recognize Ellen Mecray of Massachusetts with a Distinguished Service Award for her exceptional contributions as a long-time member of the Council and as a leader in

advancing regional climate science and adaptation. Ellen served as co-chair of the Council's Climate Network, where she worked across borders with colleagues in Canada and the United States to bring scientists, coastal managers, and practitioners together to better understand climate impacts in the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. A thoughtful, collaborative, and forward-thinking leader, Ellen has consistently championed the use of science to inform practical solutions to coastal flooding, sea level rise, storm surge, and other climate-related challenges. By connecting academia, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and maritime interests, Ellen helped strengthen regional collaboration and build shared understanding across disciplines. She partnered with Canadian colleagues to launch the Gulf of Maine Climate Quarterly Outlooks and Outreach, an innovative tool through which U.S. and Canadian scientists share seasonal data, anomalies, and regional climate impacts. This resource continues to support coastal managers on both sides of the border as they make decisions related to coastal management, planning, and adaptation. Ellen's collegial spirit, problem-solving approach, and commitment to bringing people together have made a lasting contribution to the Council's work and to the resilience of the Gulf of Maine region.