

**Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Partnership (BoFEP)**

***2020 Update to BoFEP's Strategic Plan***  
***- Shaping the Future***



**@pgw 2017. Whale watching off Brier Island, NS, Sept. 2017, a popular tourist activity bringing attention to the presence of various species of whales and porpoise in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine, and the current plight of the endangered North Atlantic Right whale.**

## **Table of Contents**

Preface

**1.** Introduction

**2.** BoFEP

2.1 Why we do it

2.2 Who we are and what we do

2.3 How we achieve our goals

**3.** Strategic Plan 2020-2025

3.1 Structure of BoFEP

3.2 Financial Stability

3.3 Communications Strategy

3.4 Outreach

3.5 Working Groups

3.6 Advocacy

**4.** Next Steps – the Agenda

Appendix

**For further information on BoFEP contact:**

[www.bofep.org](http://www.bofep.org)

## **Preface**

Over the past 10 years, BoFEP has been constrained in its ability to truly, actively advocate for the health of the Bay of Fundy, by government guidance. This resulted in dynamic discussion within the organization and the outcome was that BoFEP chose not to be perceived as an advocate, despite its vision and mission.

Today, we are in a different milieu. The attitudes of government and the people within Canada have become more conscious of our natural world and its ecosystems. Covid has helped that consciousness as we see clearer skies, and as we take advantage of local natural spaces like never before. It has helped reinforce the potential for parity between human and natural forces.

It is time for BoFEP to become an advocate for the health of the Bay of Fundy in active terms, rather than passive.

The form that this advocacy will take will be an important discussion within BoFEP and will be foremost in the strategic operations of the organization over the next few years.

What can be said, as guidance, is that advocacy needs to go beyond writing letters of support for various Bay of Fundy initiatives. It needs to go beyond talking unless the talking is at the community level and intended to increase people's awareness of the Bay (one of the constant, strong tenants of BoFEP).

BoFEP needs to assert itself and be up front in any and all discussions about coastal development, wetland issues, coastal chemical issues, fisheries issues, coastal community economies, coastal development, waste water systems, waterway reclamation, and others.

We leave it at that!

It is up to the Steering Committee to continue discussion on what BoFEP advocacy looks like.

Respectfully submitted,

Hugh Akagi, Sandra Currie, Marianne Janowicz

The BoFEP Strategic Plan Committee, August 2020.

## **1. Introduction**

The Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Partnership (BoFEP) was formally founded in 1997 by a group of pre-eminent marine and environmental scientists, researchers, environmental activists, government representatives and laypeople. The mission of the organization is to:

- Recognize the Bay as a living organism which is to be respected, protected, and used in thoughtful and responsible manner
- To study and promote the ecological integrity, biodiversity, and productivity of the ecosystem in order that conservation and restoration may occur.
- Promote a cultural shift in our current relationship with the Bay of Fundy so that the ecosystem can sustain the social well-being and economies of its coastal communities.
- To facilitate communication and co-operation among those interested in understanding, sustainably using, and conserving the resources, habitats, and ecological processes of the Bay of Fundy.

As we review and update the Strategic Plan (BoFEP, 2011), the world has been hit by a pandemic which has changed the way people work, how we socialize, and how we travel. Along with the pandemic have come events that have highlighted racism throughout the world. It has also led to air and in some instances, water that is cleaner than it has been in decades. There are lessons that have been learned from this experience and there are many more lessons to be understood and acted upon.

Consequently, we take this opportunity of the renewal of the Strategic Plan to find those lessons and incorporate actions and strategies into the Plan that will be the building blocks for creating a new relationship with the Bay of Fundy ecosystem.

This working document describes the BoFEP Strategic Plan for the period 2020 and beyond. It has been prepared for the Steering Committee and membership to help shape a future direction and agenda of activities for BoFEP's annual work plans.

The Strategic Plan was developed as a result of two imperatives. The first was that there are no longer annual grants to organizations such as BoFEP: all funding is project based and includes only a small percentage for operations. The second is that management and Steering Committee realize that an organization run by volunteers only is not as effective as expectations for BoFEP.

## **2. BoFEP**

### **2.1 Why We Do It**

The Bay is a dynamic, highly productive, and diverse coastal ecosystem, despite 400 years of Western settlement and significant change in some habitats, e.g., salt marshes. The Bay contains an abundance of valuable renewable resources and wildlife that is both culturally important, fascinating, and challenging for the scientists studying ecological relationships and the impacts of human activities. The Bay's natural history is very well documented, which is essential to understanding how to proceed with its current resource and environmental management.

However, the scientific and coastal communities around the Bay of Fundy are deeply concerned about its long-term health and ecological integrity. The Bay faces a myriad of resource and environmental problems. In all, the 1996 BoFEP workshop identified at least 38 major issues confronting the Bay, and most have since been confirmed.

The cumulative effect(s) of such disturbances and stresses, have been threatening the ecological integrity of the Fundy ecosystem at an accelerating rate in recent decades. The sustainability of many of its natural resources, from fisheries species to its extraordinary wildlife, has been significantly undermined, slowly curtailing future economic opportunities for many of the Bay's resource-based coastal communities. For over 100 years, marine scientists and ecologists have strived to enhance our understanding of the Bay's oceanographic and ecological processes, marine biodiversity, and living resources. For many millennia before that, the true native peoples of the area had an understanding of the ecology of the region.

It is within this context and with these concerns that the founders of BoFEP saw a role for an independent organization integrating our collective efforts to study,

protect, and conserve the health of the Bay, its living resources and biodiversity, and its many intrinsic values. BoFEP attempts to provide reliable unbiased information.

## 2.2 Who We Are and What We Do

In 1996, people conducting research on the Bay of Fundy and interested in its future gathered to discuss how to protect and conserve the ecosystem of the Bay from the many threats that were impinging upon it.<sup>1</sup> The academics, researchers, government representatives, members of NGOs and coastal residents concluded that a greater integration of ecosystem research occurring within the Bay of Fundy region was needed, inclusive of jurisdictions (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Maine) and watersheds. Unfortunately, ecosystem-based research is still an unfulfilled need in the region.

BoFEP was formally established in November of 1997<sup>2</sup>. Its objective then and now is:

- To promote diverse, dynamic, and productive Bay of Fundy plant and animal communities, coastal habitats and watersheds that are appreciated, valued, and wisely used by residents and visitors.

Our principal achievements have been through working groups, communications, and workshops. Several working groups have conducted new research and synthesized information on priority topics. The working groups have also been the cement of the organization. They have brought together a large group of researchers and interested persons in the BoFEP territory. These people, while not always actively involved in the organization, step up when there is a grant proposal or an issue that needs their involvement and expertise. To a large extent, it is the hidden membership of BoFEP, the “friends of BoFEP”. These people are also our

---

<sup>1</sup> A background scientific report on the Bay of Fundy and its issues, prepared in advance of the 1996 Workshop by members of the Fundy Marine Ecosystem Science Project, helped to focus the discussion and became part of the report of that workshop (see Percy et al. 1996 at <http://www.bofep.org/publications>)

<sup>2</sup> This occurred as part of the second BoFEP science workshop, co-sponsored with EMAN with the cooperation of Dr. Mick Burt of UNB Fredericton, and the St. Andrews Biological Station.

local voices and sounding boards---where we go when we need input into research directions or introductions into communities.

The current organizational structure includes a Management Committee (MC) and a Steering Committee (SC). The Management Committee, a subset of the SC, is the day to day operator of the organization. The Steering Committee is the advisory body for the Management Committee. Service on the Management Committee is carried out by volunteers, as is membership on the larger Steering Committee.

This 2020 update to the strategic plan identifies the critical areas of activities for the organization and will form the basis of choosing our priorities and developing annual work plans. We believe that implementing the updated plan will lead to a more sustainable organization and work output of continued value to the mission and goals of BoFEP.

## **2.3 How We Achieve Our Goals**

To achieve its vision for the Bay of Fundy, BoFEP's mission is:

- to study and promote the ecological integrity, biodiversity and productivity of the Bay of Fundy ecosystem;
- to foster the social well-being and economic sustainability of its coastal communities; and
- to facilitate communication and co-operation among individuals and organizations interested in understanding, sustainably using, and conserving the resources, habitats and ecological processes of the Bay of Fundy.

BoFEP carries out its mission and achieves its goals by:

- *facilitating* the creation of knowledge about the Bay of Fundy
- *sharing* that knowledge, and
- *using* that knowledge to maintain and improve the health of the Bay.

### ***Facilitating the Creation of Knowledge about the Bay of Fundy***

Working groups focussing on specific aspects of the Bay of Fundy ecosystem such as mudflat ecology, eelgrass habitat, sub-littoral ecology, salt marsh ecology and the effects of tidal restrictions, and stress and cumulative effects of pollution are important in bringing people together and creating new information about the Bay. Some working groups also consider the economic and cultural components of Bay of Fundy life. Once annual funding from government to the organization halted, some working groups have continued, independent of organizational funding and with loose connections to BoFEP (e.g. EIUI research program that evolved from the nascent Informatics WG).

### ***Sharing Knowledge about the Bay of Fundy***

BoFEP sponsors a biennial Bay of Fundy Science Workshop to convey new information and knowledge produced by working groups, other regional researchers, and BoFEP members. Eleven workshops have been held to date. The workshops attract a broad cross section of people who are interested in the Bay of Fundy, its ecosystem, and living resources. After each workshop, its Proceedings are published in digital form and distributed to participants, as well as being available on the website.

The BoFEP Technical Report series is now established as a home for the Proceedings and project studies. It carries on from the earlier technical reports that were published through Environment Canada.

The most recent *Fundy Issues* fact sheet, —Fundy’s Fascinating Fossils: the Unique Palaeontology of the Bay of Fundy (Percy 2010), is the thirty-first published since 1997. It was written to help celebrate the designation of Joggins, Nova Scotia, as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2008. The 31 fact sheets to date are available in printed form as well as on the website.

BoFEP also has a quarterly e-newsletter, *Fundy Tidings*. It provides news about BoFEP, highlights new information on the Bay, summarizes what partner



organizations are doing, and profiles a selection of noteworthy activities occurring in the region.

The BoFEP website ([www.bofep.org](http://www.bofep.org)) archives all of the above publications as well as provides information on research conducted by the working groups. Examples are the ongoing bibliography on the mudflat amphipod, *Corophium volutator* (D. Hamilton, Mount Allison University), and a searchable Fundy — Information Collaboratory giving access to the content of all BoFEP publications to 2006 (this project is also ongoing at Dalhousie University as the EIUI research program — [www.eiui.org](http://www.eiui.org) ). A variety of other relevant and recent documents pertaining to the Bay of Fundy and to the function of BoFEP are also posted on the website.

### ***Utilizing Information about the Bay of Fundy***

BoFEP information is utilized by researchers, government agencies and personnel, and other organizations in many regional projects and programs. Consultants utilize the information when providing information for environmental impact assessments of new projects (e.g. the proposed tidal power projects in both upper and lower parts of the Bay), as do the agencies that review the project proposals. Groups use the information as they create educational programs and as they inform the public about the Bay of Fundy ecosystem. An example is the project of public information sessions on biodiversity sponsored by the Coastal Livelihood Trust (CLT), a group located in southwest New Brunswick (see unpublished report to BoFEP, 2011), and the joint EAC-BoFEP project with municipal planners. Information generated by BoFEP and its members was used by the groups proposing the establishment of the Fundy Biosphere Reserve in NB and the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site at Joggins, NS; both of these important initiatives were successful, reflecting the value of BoFEP's role as an information source for the Bay.

BoFEP has an ongoing series of Talking Circles on conservation. These gatherings have brought members of the First Nations community together with other coastal residents to explore the concepts and practice of conservation from the different cultural perspectives, to listen and learn from one another, and to work together on

the various challenges of utilizing and conserving coastal habitats and living resources. BoFEP worked with the Coastal Zone Canada Association at its 2010 Conference in Charlottetown, PEI, to conduct a special, well-attended session on this topic.

### **3. Strategic Plan 2020-2025— Shaping the Future**

This updated plan has two objectives: the first is to update language to be more inclusive and relevant to the 2020's, and second, to provide the information and focus for annual work plans which would identify targets for completing the components of the Strategic Plan.

There are five areas for BoFEP to focus on during the life of this Strategic Plan. The five focus areas are:

- communications so that the word about the Bay of Fundy and the organization gets out to the public and BoFEP members;
- re-establishing working groups to work on topics of interest to members and the public;
- reaching out to the public, to other organizations and to governments so that input from these sources steer the direction of research and focus for BoFEP;
- seeking funds so that the first three areas of focus can be realized;
- and advocating for the health, security, and preservation of the Bay of Fundy ecosystem.

#### ***3.2 Financial Stability Strategy:***

The Financial Stability Strategy is intended to create a situation where BoFEP has the financial capacity to embark on research, engage the public in dialogue and maintain its communications activities. Access to specific project funds will likely be the primary source of funding in the future. Also, increasing membership is another piece of financial stability.

**The Financial Stability Strategy** seeks to solidify the financial security of the organization by:

- Applying for grants and project funds offered by various government agencies.
- Actively working on increasing paid membership in the organization;
- Seeking other ways to obtain organizational funding.

As we move forward with this strategy our guidelines are the following:

- Each accepted project must fit within the mission and goals of BoFEP.
- BoFEP will seek funding for special projects of interest and importance.
- BoFEP's new special projects should involve new members of BoFEP. The projects will be managed by members of the Management Committee.
- The contractors should be members or member organizations of BoFEP, and preferably members of BoFEP working groups.
- A percentage of each contract will be charged for BoFEP operations, i.e., organizational overhead.
- Every project will have joint sponsorship – the funder, the contractor, and BoFEP. All parties will be acknowledged for their contributions, in instances where contractors are used.
- Project results will be the intellectual property of both the project sponsor and BoFEP.
- Project reports will be given at the biennial science workshop or specific meetings dealing with the topic being investigated.
- Every project will produce a report that is published through BoFEP, placed on the website, and advertised through BoFEP and its members.

### ***3.3 The Communications Strategy***

Conveying new information about the Bay of Fundy, its ecology, coastal communities, and economic drivers is critical to the future and influence of BoFEP. The organization is built upon three pillars: promoting and facilitating *the creation, sharing and using* of knowledge about the Bay of Fundy (see Section 2).

The membership has identified the need for BoFEP to be more visible to the public. BoFEP generally needs the means to convey messages on the state of the Bay of Fundy's environment and resources to policy makers. Working groups need effective ways to transmit new information to people living around the Bay.

The **Communications Strategy** seeks to build upon the strength of the information that BoFEP creates and the ways to send it to the public through:

- A larger arsenal of communications tools.
- An active communications team.

As we move forward with the communications strategy, our guidelines are the following:

- There must be continued strategic budgeting for communications to ensure that: the website is effective in transferring information and is easy to use; *Fundy Tidings* continues to be compiled, produced and distributed; and funds are available for new communications initiatives.
- Increasing the arsenal of communications tools (e.g., press releases, articles, social media communications, films for the public).
- Increasing the number and variety of publications from the organization and its working groups.

- An editorial board will be established to assist with the creation of the *Fundy Tidings* newsletters and other publication of the organization. Other publications will be undertaken, such as a book on the Bay of Fundy based on the Fundy Fact Sheets and summaries of annual reports and AGM minutes.

### **3.4 Outreach**

Reaching out to the public, to other organizations and to governments is important to BoFEP so that input from these sources steer the direction of research and focus for the organization. It also provides an opportunity to engage a larger group of people who become part of the BoFEP network.

The intent here is to engage people at their local, community or regional level to provide input into issues of concern and research priorities.

As we move forward with the communications strategy, our guidelines are the following:

- Engage people at the local level in various portions of the Bay.
- Through this engagement, increase the BoFEP community and profile.
- Through local involvement, become relevant to more people who identify their issues and identify research and issues-oriented focus for BoFEP.
- Develop a membership recruitment strategy.

### **3.5 Working *Group Strategy***

Working groups and their projects are at the core of BoFEP's mission to facilitate the creation, dissemination and use of information and knowledge necessary to maintain a healthy ecosystem and the integrity of the Bay of Fundy.

The working groups provide a forum for experts and interested persons to explore collective knowledge and experience and convey it to the public through BoFEP communications tools, publications, and forums.

This would be a platform outside/ beyond their mandates within their institutions, barring any potential conflicts. In seeking funding, they would have some autonomy from BoFEP as a whole. Working groups also provide advanced university students with research and networking opportunities. And working group members can serve as mentors to students and young professionals.

As we move forward with this strategy our guidelines are the following:

- Each Working Group project will strive to consider its implications to at least two of the three components of environmental sustainability of the Bay of Fundy: ecology and environment; society and communities; and coastal economy, planning and management.
- Working groups will extend their links to other Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine organizations and First Nations.
- Working groups will ensure that their research projects or other studies (e.g., literature reviews, data analyses) are relevant to the concerns and information needs of residents, stakeholders, and the ecosystem of coastal communities.

### ***3.6 Advocacy***

As the world emerges from COVID, there will be a need to refocus and reshape many of the institutions, research priorities and economies. In the past, activities in the Bay of Fundy have been driven by economic considerations of industries or other interests. The power of nature in the bay has been its only advocate. BoFEP has striven to engage people in its ecosystem vitality but it is time for our role to become active in a new way so that institutional and economic pressures do not continue to dominate and challenge the future of the Bay.

We need to recognize the causes of this Bay's present condition and take a leadership role in being a spokesperson promoting the health of the bay, (taking lessons from the Native tradition of giving the "mute" victims a voice through our stories, our belief in "Mother Earth", and our relationship to every living creature as our "relatives"!).

The most important tool for moving ahead is knowledge, history, wisdom, from the past. Progress as defined in today's world has been instrumental in significantly

changing our ecosystems and destroying much of the past. We need to learn from the past!

As we move forward with this strategy our guidelines are the following:

Management Committee is tasked with developing a forum for Steering Committee and Friends of BoFEP to design the specifics of the BoFEP Advocacy strategy.

#### **4. Next Steps—Implementing the Future Direction and Agenda for BoFEP**

The Bay of Fundy has many unique features, ecosystems, living resources and marine wildlife, as illustrated by its selection as Canada's only entry into the New7NaturalWonders Contest in 2010–2011. The Bay's long-term and comprehensive stewardship is urgently needed. Despite progress in a number of areas, the reality is that such comprehensive stewardship is delayed by the paucity of appropriate policies and action at various government levels, and frequent failure to use the available legislative tools to ensure adequate conservation and protection.

BoFEP's view is that genuine and comprehensive stewardship will come from the actions of citizens around the Bay, and through the activities and actions of NGOs, as well as through the continued programs of government institutions. The activities of people in the coastal communities and their organizations will be essential to ensure that negative trends of environmental and resource loss are reversed, that the Bay is protected from harmful new developments, and that coastal areas deserving of long-term conservation are set aside for perpetuity.

## Appendix 1. Vision, Principles, and Mission of BoFEP

### TO ADVANCE THIS VISION, BoFEP will:

1. Form a geographically dispersed, adaptable, responsive and inclusive network, linking all partners who share the vision and principles;
2. Serve as a readily accessible network for scientific, community and other knowledge pertaining to the Bay of Fundy by:
  - a) *facilitating the timely sharing of information about the Bay of Fundy among partners*
  - b) *fostering effective communications among interested groups and individuals*
  - c) *encouraging and facilitating co-operative activities and linkages among partners and with other interested groups or individuals;*
3. Promote and facilitate the regular assessment of the state of the Bay of Fundy ecosystem (or of specific issues) which will identify issues, priorities, accomplishments and new directions.
4. Promote and facilitate long-range planning and integrated management in the coastal zone.
5. Create working groups that either find their own funding or work collaboratively among their members to produce new research and information about the Bay.

### Mission statement

Perhaps now we are beginning to understand interrelated and cumulative impacts of human caused disturbance and pollution that challenge the health of the Bay of Fundy, despite its enormous water exchange and apparent resiliency. With each bit of knowledge gathered the ability to understand the Bay of Fundy is enhanced; with this in mind the mission of BOFEP had evolved to;

- To facilitate communication and co-operation among those interested in understanding, sustainably using, and conserving the resources, habitats and ecological processes of the Bay of Fundy
- To study and promote the ecological integrity, biodiversity and productivity of the ecosystem in order that conservation and restoration may occur.
- Promote a cultural shift in our current relationship with the Bay of Fundy so that the ecosystem can sustain the social well-being and economies of its coastal communities.
- To facilitate communication and co-operation among those interested in understanding, sustainably using and conserving the resources, habitats and ecological processes of the Bay of Fundy.



