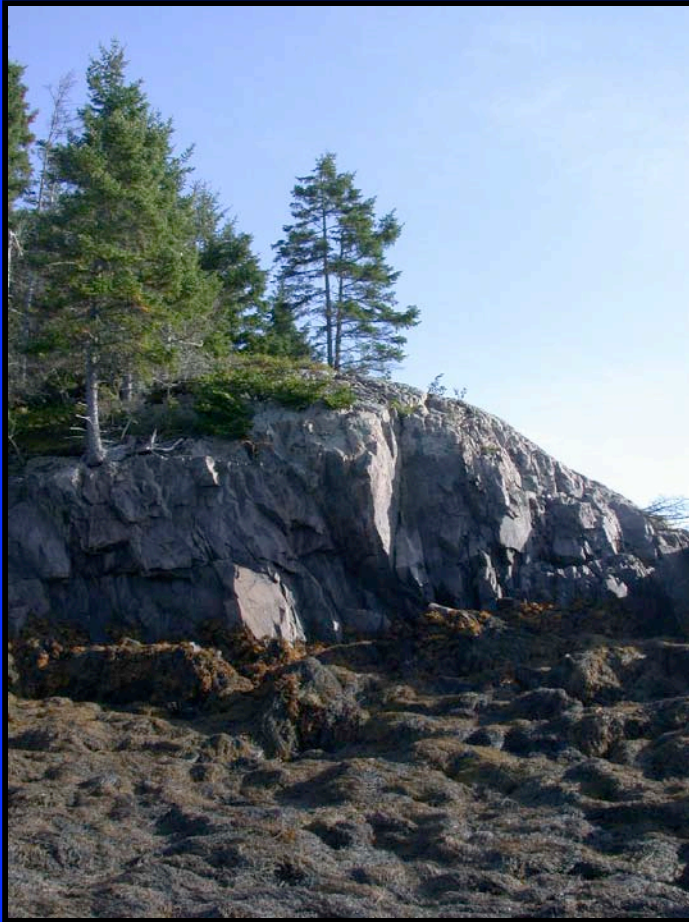


The case for a moratorium on rockweed harvesting in Cobscook Bay



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- Importance of rockweed
- Misleading information about harvest
- Damage done – 2008
- Myth of “sustainability” of harvest (rockweed recovery)
- Moratorium



Important functions of rockweed in Cobscook Bay

Food for grazers

Shelter – small animals (snails)



Important functions of rockweed in Cobscook Bay

- Essential fish habitat for juvenile pollock

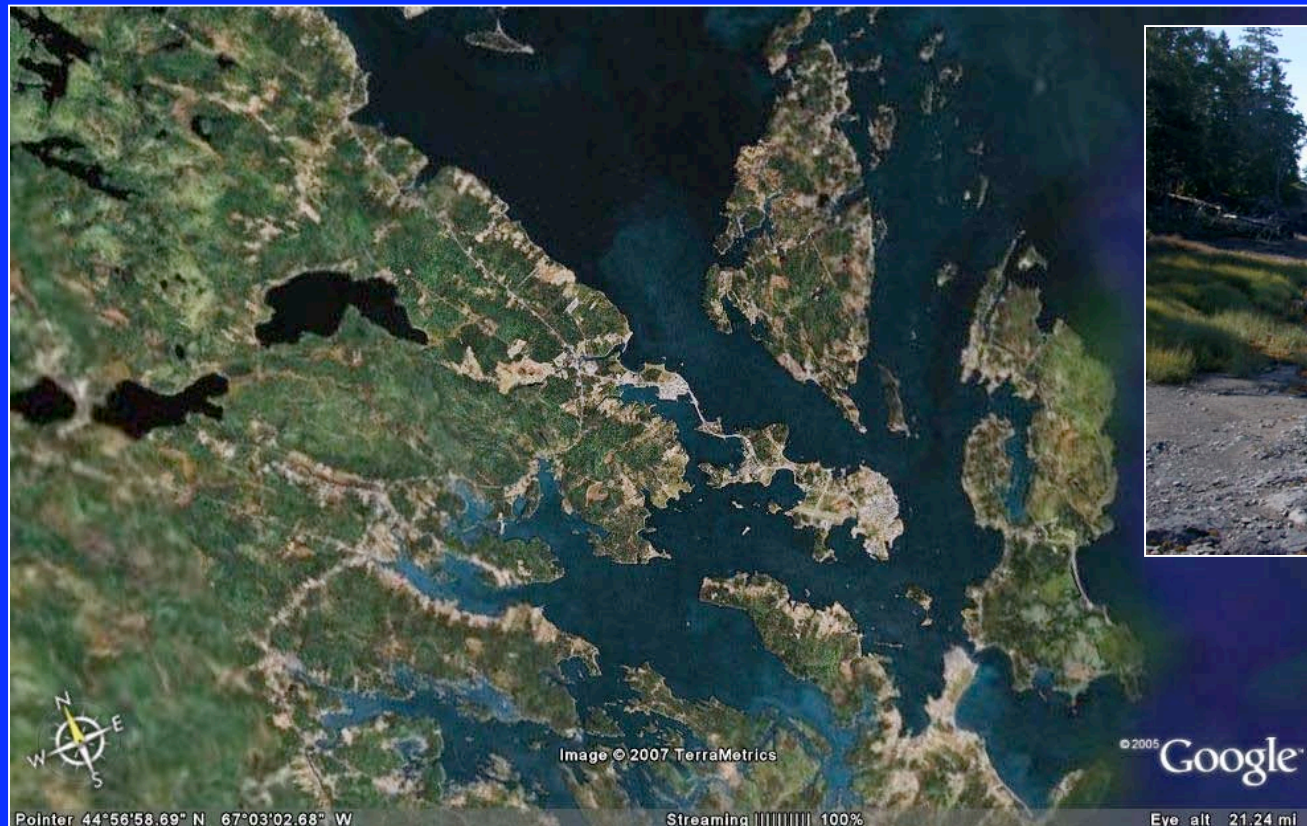


Important functions of rockweed in Cobscook Bay

- Winter feeding areas – eiders
- Fall feeding areas – shorebirds



Important functions of rockweed in Cobscook Bay



Energy into the ecosystem: Contributes 60% of total biomass as carbon to the Cobscook ecosystem (which supplies scallops and clams; Vadas, Wright, Beal 2004)

Importance of rockweed to the Cobscook Bay ecosystem

Vadas, Wright and Beal, 2004:

- “Rockweeds in Cobscook Bay are among the most productive cold-water intertidal assemblages and contribute substantial amounts of carbon to this large embayment.”
- “Fucoids are important, perhaps critical, to the productivity and energy flow in Cobscook Bay.”
- “It is possible that the productivity of fucoids may play a large role in the impressive secondary productivity of filter-feeders in the Bay, e.g. scallops and soft-shell clams...”



Effects of rockweed harvesting elsewhere in Maine (Jill Fegley thesis, 2001)

- affected 6 of 10 common invertebrates using rockweed as a habitat
- precise time scale of habitat recovery unknown
- ecological impacts of harvesting appear to have site-specific components
- Periwinkle (*Littorina littorea*) population lower during the winter in harvested areas



- p. 152: “Careless harvesting of this resource is likely to adversely affect not only the productivity of seaweed populations but also the diversity of the invertebrates and algae associated with it. “



Q: How long does it take the rockweed to “recover” from severe harvesting?

A: More than 20 years (study in Iceland)



FACT CHECK: 2008 ROCKWEED HARVEST

	HARVESTERS SAY:	EVIDENCE SAYS:
Sustainability of harvest	“sustainable”	** Not sustainable
Amount of rockweed removed from Cobscook	3,000 MT – (based on the “honor system”)	** 7,000 to 8,000 MT Independent estimate
Cobscook Bay as a unique area	Cobscook Bay is not unique	** Cobscook Bay is unique (Northeastern Naturalist papers 2004)
Bycatch mortality	Minimal	** extensive bycatch death reported by harvesters themselves

FACT CHECK: 2008 ROCKWEED HARVEST

	HARVESTERS SAY:	EVIDENCE SAYS:
Rakes used	Rakes have special guides to keep the cuts legal	** Rakes have no guides to keep cuts legal (16")
Conservation lands	Conservation lands will not be harvested	*** Conservation lands were harvested: Moosehorn, State Parks, IFW islands, etc.
Protection of reproducing plants	Harvest stops during reproductive period	** Harvest continued through reproductive period

ROCKWEED HARVEST: ILLEGAL CUTS (< 16" of plant remains)

Bob's Cove, Trescott



ROCKWEED HARVEST: ILLEGAL CUTS (< 16" of plant remains)



**Carryingplace cove
Trescott**



**Shackford Head State Park
Eastport**

ROCKWEED HARVEST: ILLEGAL CUTS (< 16" of plant remains)



Raft Cove Bar Island

ROCKWEED HARVEST: ILLEGAL CUTS (< 16" of plant remains)

Long Cove Reversing Falls



DAMAGE

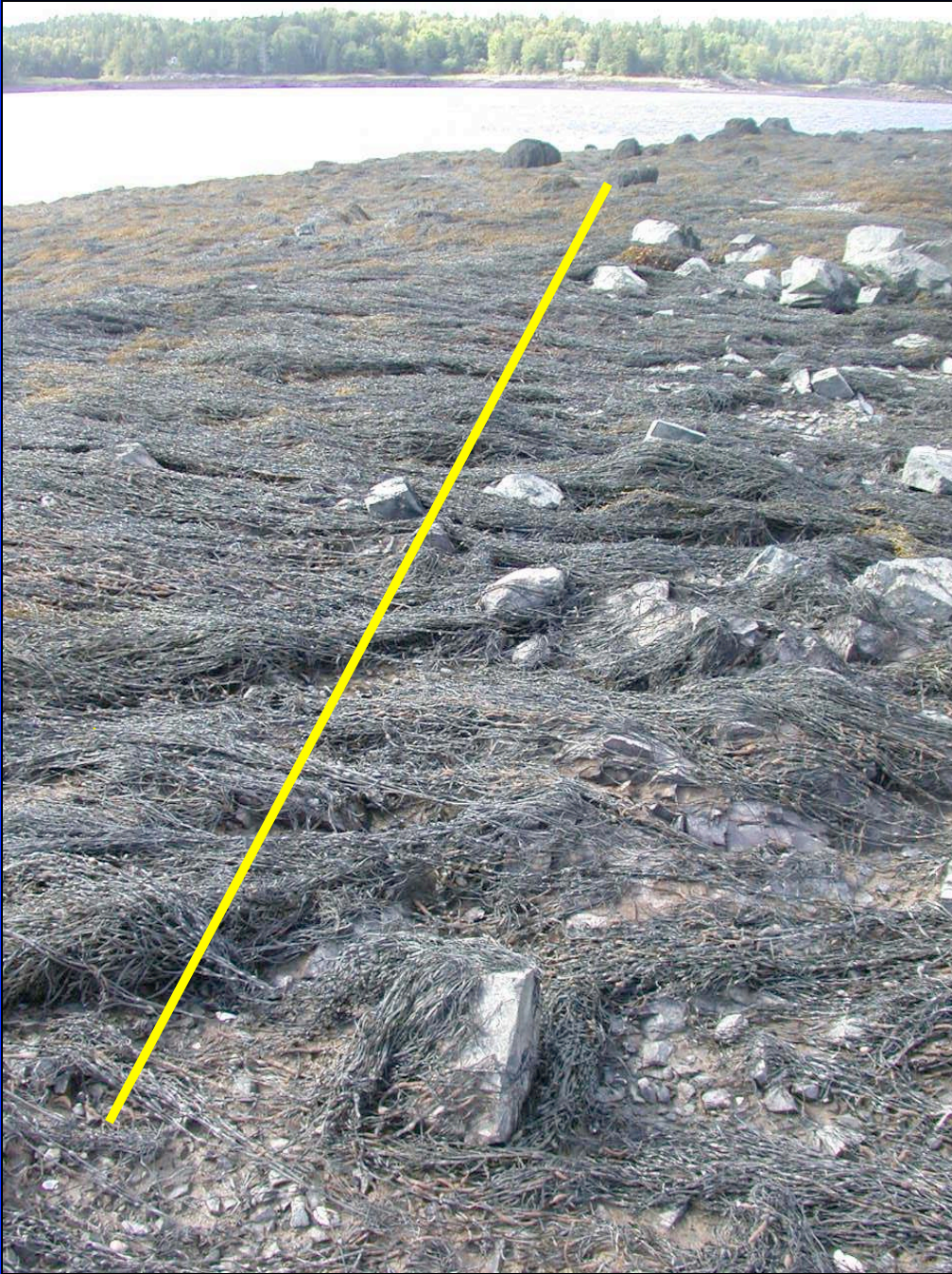
BAR ISLAND – WHITING BAY

Normal area

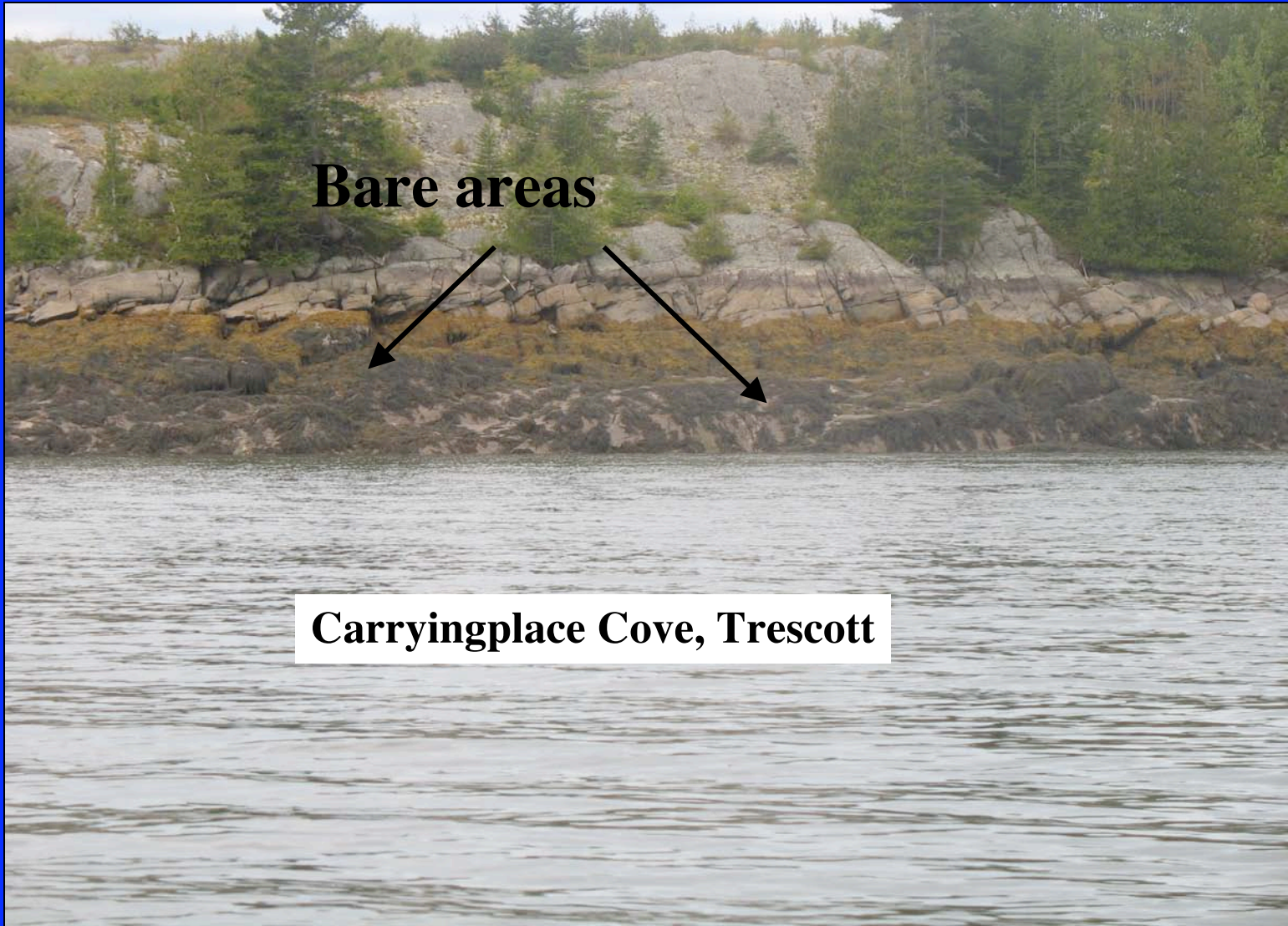


Damaged area





Bar Island, Whiting Bay



Bare areas

Carryingplace Cove, Trescott



Carryingplace Cove, Trescott

The myth of a “sustainable” rockweed harvest

**Sustainable harvest: repeat harvests with no long-term
negative environmental change**

**Fegley (2001): sustainability includes biomass recovery,
habitat recovery, morphology recovery**

✓ **Biomass recovery**

X **Habitat recovery (rockweed community)**

X **Morphology recovery**



The case for a moratorium in Cobscook Bay

- ✓ **Existing regulations (16" cut) not enforced**
- ✓ **No verified data on amount of rockweed harvested, entire plants removed, or bycatch (periwinkles, etc)**
- ✓ **Harvest cannot be regulated: DMR can enact new regulations but has no ability to enforce them (10% budget cuts)**
- ✓ **Harvesters promised conservation lands would not be harvested – but they were harvested**
- ✓ **Harvesters in 2008 were primarily non-local**

Is the community willing to risk another unregulated harvest season?



www.rockweedcoalition.org for more info/photos