Clam Hunter Seafood (App 2)- West of Parker Head, Phippsburg

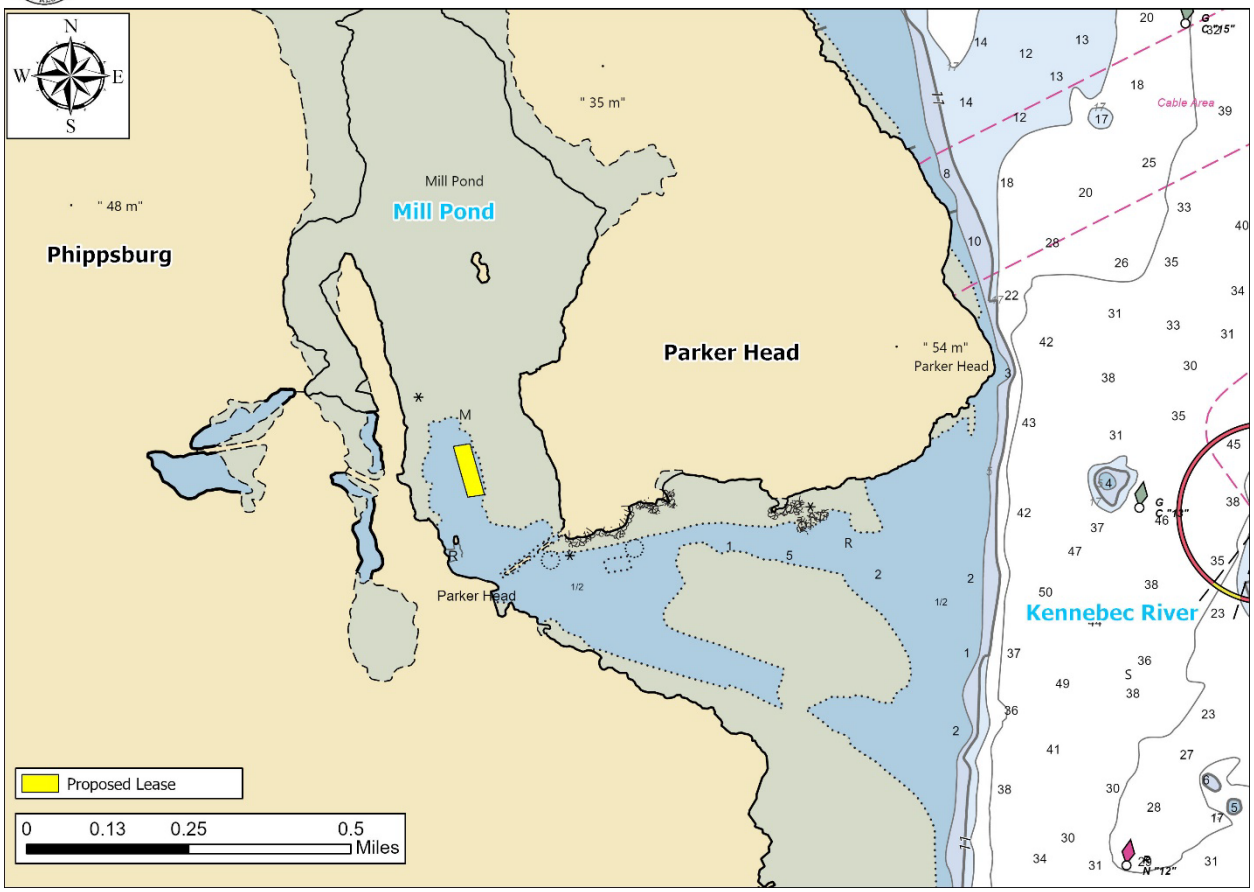

Figure 1. Vicinity map.[1]

Location: West of Parker Head, Mill Pond, Kennebec River, Phippsburg, Sagadahoc County, Maine

Purpose: Standard lease for suspended culture of American/eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) and quahogs (*Mercenaria mercenaria*).

Site Review: Geoffrey Shook and Katie von Hohenleiten
Report Preparation: Katie von Hohenleiten, Geoffrey Shook, and Meryl Grady

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all figures in this report were created in ArcGIS Pro version 3.3 using digitized NOAA Nautical Charts or geo-referenced aerial photographs provided by The Maine Office of GIS.

Application Overview

The applicant, Clam Hunter Seafood Inc., is requesting a 0.98[2] acre, 20-year, standard lease west of Parker Head in Mill Pond within the Kennebec River for the suspended culture of shellfish. Gear is intended to remain on site year-round with the possibility of bags being sunk to the bottom in the winter.[3] The applicant currently operates limited purpose aquaculture (LPA) site SATW117 within the boundaries of this standard lease proposal (Figure 4).

General Characteristics

On July 3, 2025, Department of Marine Resources (DMR) scientists assessed the proposed lease site. DMR scientists arrived on site at approximately 11:22 AM. The proposal is situated within Mill Pond, which is part of the Kennebec River. There is an old, stone dam located at the southern end of Mill Pond. A small section of the dam has been removed which allows water access to and from Mill Pond. Access to Mill Pond is through the small opening in the dam, which is approximately 100 feet wide as determined by aerial imagery. At lower tidal stages, there is approximately 30 feet of navigable water through the opening in the dam. Access to Mill Pond can be tidally dependent due to shallow water depths and strong water currents during incoming and outgoing tides (Images 1 and 2, Figures 1-3). The area surrounding Mill Pond is mudflats spotted with ledges, leading to mixed forested uplands and residential properties.

Image 1. The opening in the old stone dam located at the southern end of Mill Pond.

[2] Applicant originally requested 0.96 acres. DMR calculations indicate the area is 0.98 acres.
[3] Application pages 4 and 8.

Image 2. Overhead view of the opening in the dam located at the southern end of Mill Pond. [4]

Depth

On July 3, 2025, DMR scientists began collecting depths at the proposed site at approximately 11:45 AM. The tide was falling with the next low tide predicted to occur at 12:07 PM (Table 1). Depths were collected at proposal corners and determined to be between 2.8 and 11.0 feet. Correcting for tidal variations derives water depths to be approximately 1.5 to 9.7 feet at mean low water (MLW, 0.0 feet). Approximate depths at mean high water (MHW, 8.5 feet[5]) at corners of the proposal are 10.0 to 18.2 feet (Table 2).

Table 1. Predicted tidal heights in Fort Popham, Maine.[6]

Date	Time	Height (ft)
2025/07/03	-	-
2025/07/03	6:02 AM	7.9 H
2025/07/03	12:07 PM	1.2 L
2025/07/03	6:32 PM	8.4 H

[4] Image taken from aerial imagery - Coastal\orthoCoastalMidcoast2023
[5] MHW in Hunniwell Point is 8.5 feet, NOAA Tide Station 8417177
[6] https://www.usharbors.com/harbor/maine/fort-popham-me/tides/?tide=2025-07#monthly-tide-chart

Table 2. Collected and derived depths at corners of the proposed lease area.

Corner	Measured Depth (ft)	MLW Depth (ft)	MHW Depth (ft)
1	5.0	3.7	12.2
2	2.8	1.5	10.0
3	3.8	2.5	11.0
4	11.0	9.7	18.2

Bottom Characteristics

DMR scientists observed the bottom characteristics of the proposed lease site via a remotely operated vehicle (ROV). Bottom characteristics were categorized using the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS), a national standard for describing features of the marine environment (Table 3). Sediment information was determined based on visual analysis of the video. The bottom of the proposed lease site is composed of mud and shell hash.

Table 3. Bottom characteristics of the proposed site.

Substrate Origin	Substrate Class	Substrate Subclass	Substrate Group
Geologic Substrate	Unconsolidated Mineral Substrate	Fine Unconsolidated Substrate	Mud
Biogenic Substrate	Shell Substrate	Shell Hash	Not Classified

Position and Distances to Shore

The measuring tool in ArcGIS Pro 3.3 was used to verify the distances and bearings between proposed lease corners. Distances to shore were determined using the measuring tool in ArcGIS Pro 3.3, a nautical chart provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the application coordinates (Table 4, Figure 2).

Application Coordinates (WGS84) – 0.98 Acres

Corner	Latitude	Longitude	
1	43.788246°	-69.803404°	then 101 feet at 77° True to
2	43.788308°	-69.803030°	then 423 feet at 169° True to
3	43.787171°	-69.802710°	then 100 feet at 259° True to
4	43.787117°	-69.803082°	then 420 feet at 348° True to 1

Table 4. Approximate distances from proposed lease corners to surrounding features (Figure 2).

Feature	Distance
Corner 1 to western shoreline at MLW	~137 feet to the west
Corner 1 to northern shoreline at MLW	~215 feet to the north
Corner 2 to northern shoreline at MLW	~94 feet to the north
Corner 2 to eastern shoreline at MLW	~12 feet to the east
Corner 3 to eastern shoreline at MLW	~2 feet to the east
Corner 3 to opening in old stone dam	~644 feet to the south
Corner 4 to opening in old stone dam	~651 feet to the south
Corner 4 to western shoreline at MLW	~220 feet to the southwest

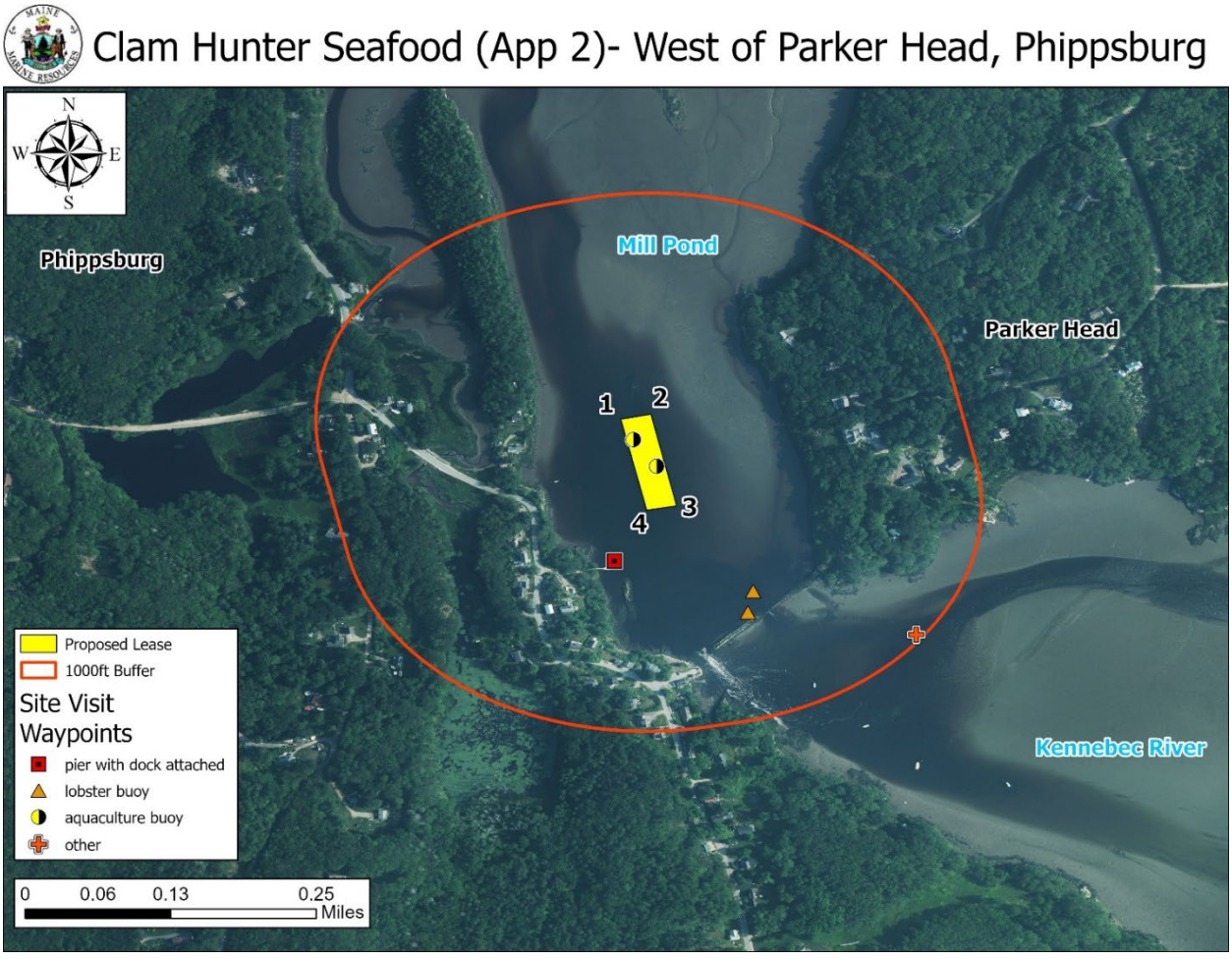

Figure 2. Proposed lease area with site visit observations.

Pursuant to statute and regulation, aquaculture leases are evaluated in consideration of applicable decision criteria. The Site Report documents DMR's observations of the area and other information, in consideration of those criteria, as noted below:

(1) Riparian Ingress and Egress

During the site visit, DMR observed riparian properties on both the eastern and western shores of Mill Pond. The proposal is approximately 137 feet to the east of the western shoreline at MLW, and approximately two feet west of the eastern shoreline at MLW. One pier with a dock attached was observed approximately 253 feet southwest of the proposed lease. No other docks were observed (Figure 2).

A Harbormaster Questionnaire was sent to the Town of Phippsburg. DMR did not receive a response.

(2) Navigation

The proposal is located in shallow water west of Parker Head in Mill Pond within the Kennebec River. Mill Pond is accessible via an opening in an old stone dam approximately 644 feet to the south of the proposal. Access to Mill Pond is through the small opening in the dam, which is approximately 100 feet wide as determined by aerial imagery. At lower tidal stages, there is approximately 30 feet of navigable water through the opening in the dam. Access to Mill Pond can be tidally dependent due to shallow water depths and strong water currents during incoming and outgoing tides. Water depths on the approach to Mill Pond are shallow, with the shallowest depth reading to be approximately 0.5 feet at MLW (Figure 3). DMR observed half submerged obstructions/hazards approximately 500 feet east of the old stone dam. The obstructions are charted and noted as “other” in Figure 2.

DMR did not observe any vessels operating in the vicinity of the proposal during the site visit.

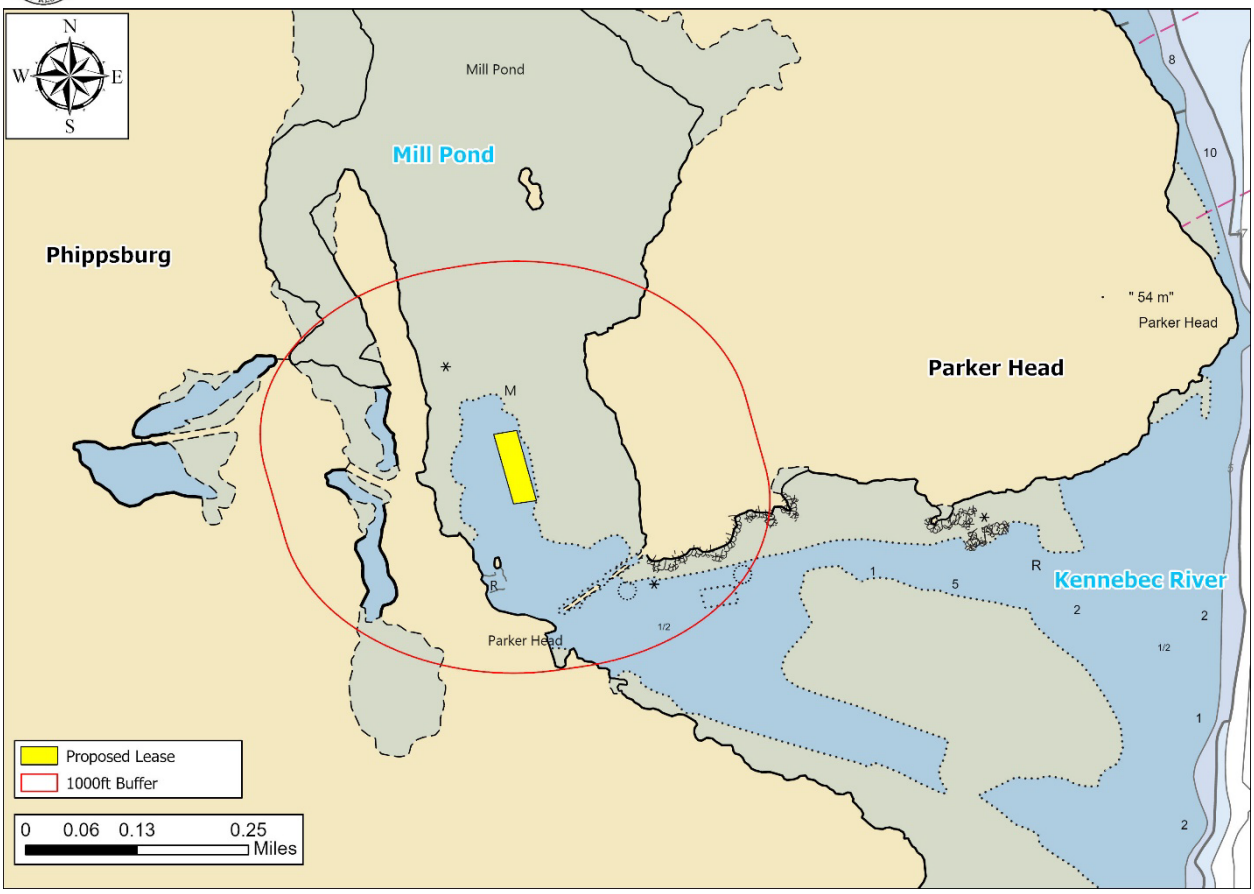

Figure 3. Navigational channels in the vicinity of the proposed lease area.

(3) Fishing and Other Uses

During DMR's site visit, scientists observed one individual recreationally fishing from shore, approximately 607 feet to the south of the proposed lease. DMR scientists also observed two lobster buoys approximately 467 and 531 feet southeast of the proposed site (Figure 2).

(4) Other Aquaculture Uses

There is one LPA within the boundaries of this proposal. The applicant currently operates LPA SATW117.[7] The LPA would be relinquished if this standard lease proposal is granted.[8] There are no aquaculture leases within 1,000 feet of the proposal (Figure 4).

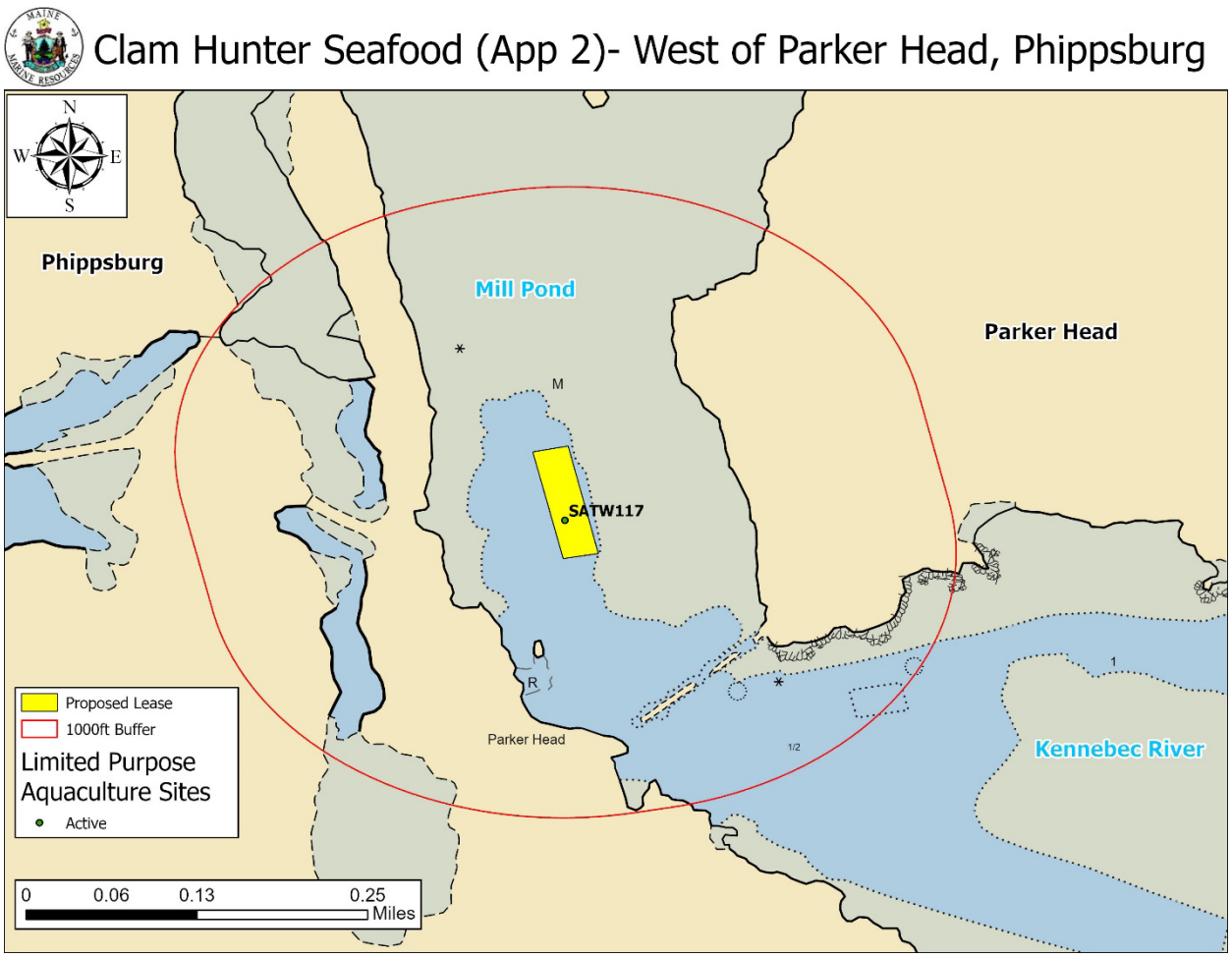

Figure 4. Aquaculture leases and LPA licenses in the vicinity of the proposed lease area.

(5) Existing System Support

Epibenthic Flora and Fauna

DMR scientists utilized an ROV to assess the epibenthic ecology of the proposed lease. The relative abundance of epibenthic flora and fauna observed in the video footage is described below in Table 5.

[7] The application also lists LPA SATW317 within the boundaries of the proposal. However, SATW317 was not renewed for 2025.
[8] Application pages: 10,11,13 and 15.

Table 5. Species observed using underwater video footage.

Species Observed	Abundance
Tufted fringe seaweed (*unknown*)	Abundant
Sea lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*)	Occasional
Rock weed (*Fucus vesiculosus*)	Occasional
Sugar Kelp (*Saccharina latissima*)	Rare

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*)

Records of eelgrass collected by DEP in 2023 indicate no mapped eelgrass presence in the vicinity of the proposal (Figure 5).[9] No eelgrass was observed within the proposal boundaries during DMR's site visit.

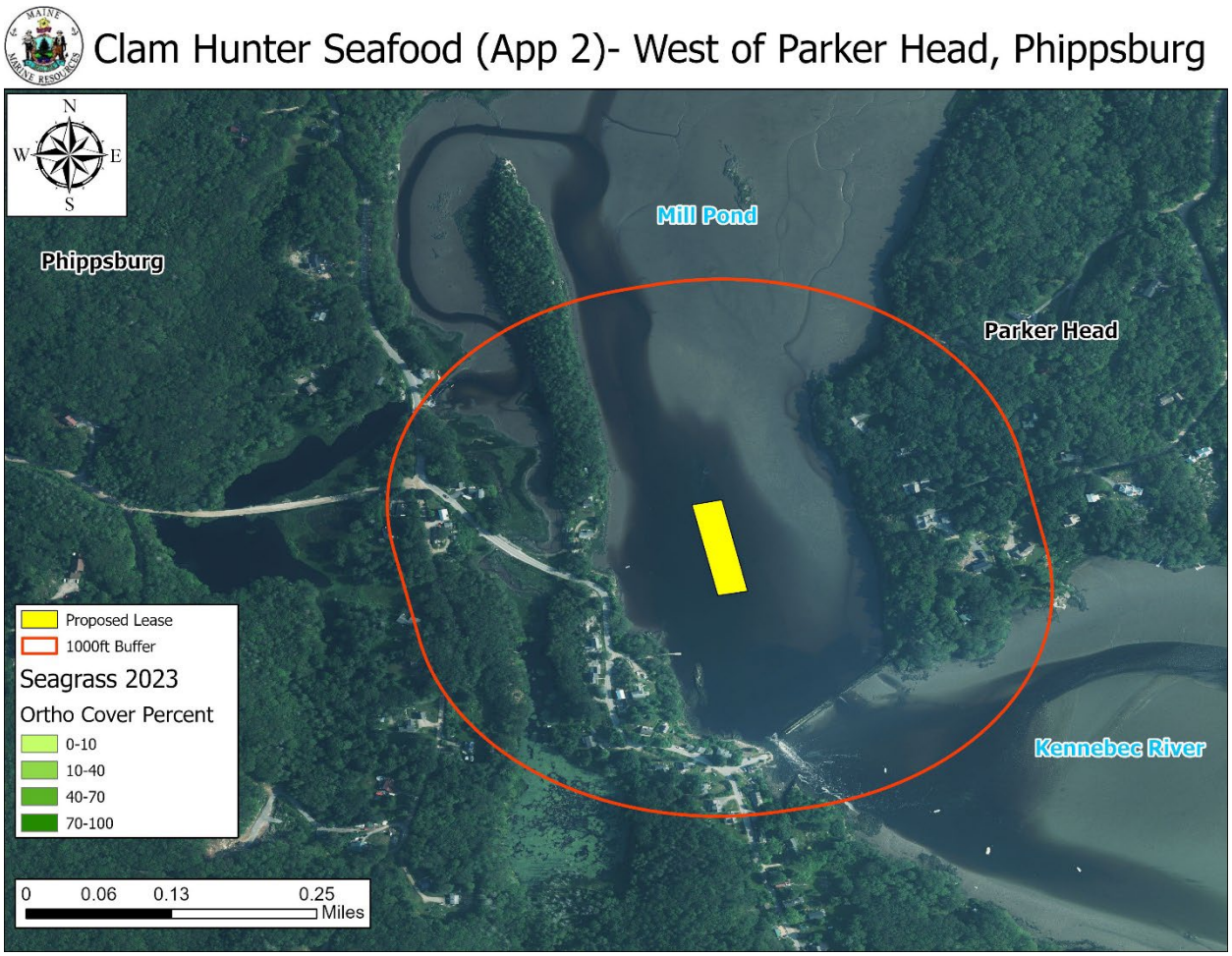

Figure 5. Mapped eelgrass (*Z. marina*) in the vicinity of the proposed lease area.

[9] Data obtained from The Maine Office of GIS "GISVIEW.MEDEP.Seagrass2023". Widgeon grass was observed only in a tributary to the Great Salt Bay, upstream of a culvert that likely restricts tidal flow. Eelgrass was the dominant vascular species in all other locations. This is the most current record of mapped eelgrass within the vicinity of the proposal.

Wildlife

During DMR's site visit, scientists observed Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), an osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), egret (*Ardeinae sp*.), great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*), a bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus),* and sturgeon (*Acipenser sp.)* in the general vicinity of the proposal. The harbor seal was observed swimming in the Kennebec River, outside of Mill Pond. The sturgeon were observed jumping out of the water and averaged approximately 1-3 feet in length. DMR could not identify the species of sturgeon, but the Kennebec River is a known habitat for both Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) and shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*).

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) has jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the state. IFW also has the authority to conserve wildlife populations and their ecosystems through applicable state laws and rules. DMR provides IFW with notice and the opportunity to comment on all complete lease applications. In addition, the Site Report also includes IFW designated and mapped habitat types that are within 1,000 feet of the lease proposal, if applicable.

According to Geographic Information System (GIS) data maintained by IFW and available through the Maine Office of GIS (MEGIS), there is one mapped habitat type within 1,000 feet of the lease proposal. The proposal is entirely within mapped Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat (TWWH), which is a type of Significant Wildlife Habitat designated and regulated by IFW (Figure 6). [10]

Though bald eagles are no longer listed on Maine's Endangered and Threatened Species List, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) may also have jurisdiction over the management and conservation of the species based on applicable law and rule. Data collected by USFWS in 2023 by aerial nest survey shows there is no mapped bald eagle nesting site within 1,000 feet of the proposal (Figure 6).

IFW was provided with the opportunity to comment on this proposal. DMR did not receive any comments.

[10] https://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/environmental-review/significant.html

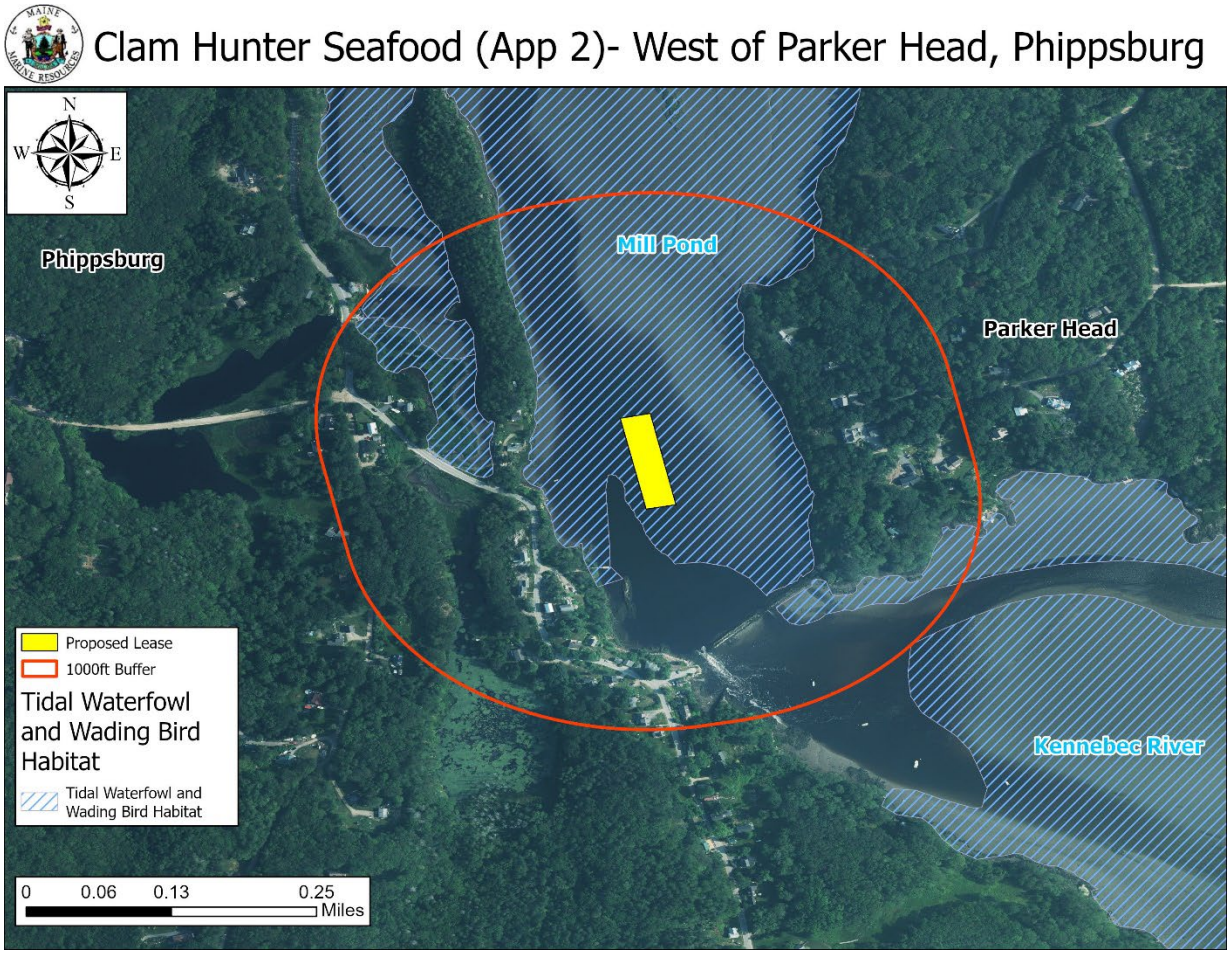

Figure 6. Mapped habitats in the vicinity of the proposed lease area. [11]

[11] Data obtained from USFWS "Bald_Eagle_Nests_-_Maine_2023" and IFW "EHRTERN", "EHPLVTRN", "GISVIEW.MEIFW.Twwh", "ShorebirdAreas", and "SNI".

(6) Interference with Public Facilities

The proposed lease is approximately 936 feet east of conserved land owned by the Town of Phippsburg (Figure 7). The conserved land is approximately 0.44 acres in size. The proposed lease is not within 1,000 feet of any other beach, park, docking facility, or conserved lands owned by federal, state, or municipal governments.

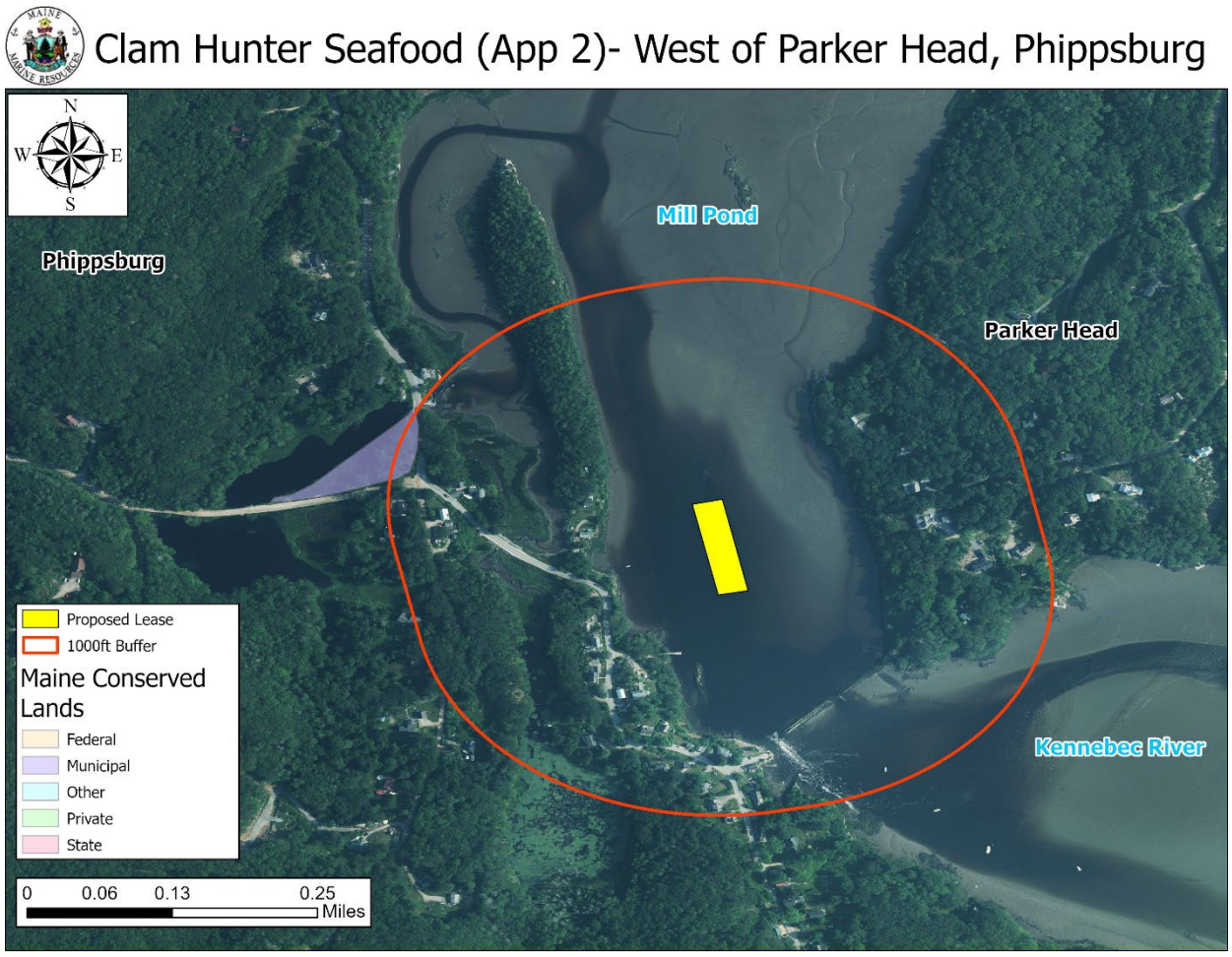

Figure 7. Public facilities near the proposed lease site.[12]

[12] Data obtained from The Maine Office of GIS "GISVIEW.MECONSLANDS.Conserved_Lands"

(7) Growing Area Classification

The proposed lease is currently located within an area classified as Conditionally Approved by the DMR Bureau of Public Health and Aquaculture (Figure 8). The area closes to the harvest of shellfish when Kennebec River discharge meets or exceeds 40,000 cfs between May 1 – September 30; when Kennebec River discharge meets or exceeds 30,000 cfs between October 1 - December 31 AND seasonally from November 1 through April 30.

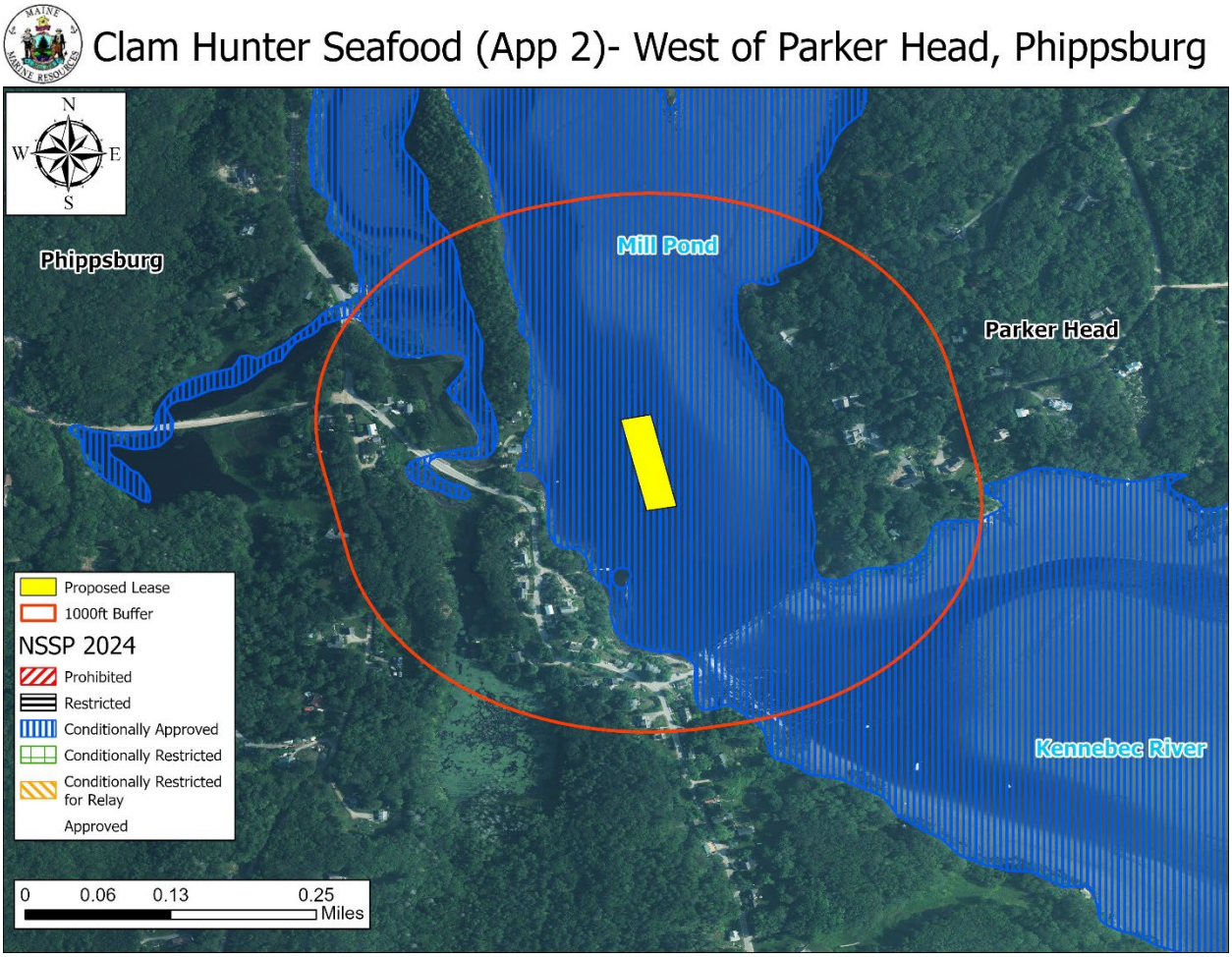

Figure 8. Growing area classifications near the proposed lease site.[13]

[13] Data obtained from The Maine Office of GIS "MaineDMR Public Health - 2024 NSSP Classifications | ArcGIS Hub Home"