

**Lost to the Sea Meeting**  
**August 17-18, 2017, Darling Marine Center**

**Facilitator's Summary of Afternoon Discussion**

**WHAT**

The discussion's central question:

How can stakeholders help to monitor, rescue, and protect shell middens in Maine?

**WHY**

The group identified the need for a unified public message about middens, including:

Value: shell middens are an important and tangible part of Maine's cultural heritage and paleoenvironmental record.

Urgency: shell middens in Maine are eroding fast, due to sea-level rise and associated storm/wave action.

Action: monitoring shell midden decline is a start, but is not enough. The cultural and paleoenvironmental information contained in shell middens must be rescued now, and also studied and protected in the future.

**HOW**

Though this initiative will be long term, the group started by developing some action items for the next 18 months, focusing on engaging citizen scientists in helping monitor, rescue, and protect middens, including:

- Conducting outreach specifically to the land trust community to forge collaborations around protection and monitoring middens on their lands (i.e., volunteers conduct monthly monitoring, after storms, take photos etc.) and participation in test or data recovery excavations.
- Conducting additional initial outreach to municipal officials, land trusts, academic clubs, and other groups about shell middens (i.e., delivering "shell middens 101" talks around the coast).
- Developing a preliminary training module so citizen scientists can become an effective and credible source of labor, while learning and contributing to the protection of Maine's heritage.
- Explore opportunities to engage youth and students of all ages in shell midden studies through local schools and universities/colleges.
- Establishing a pilot project as a demonstration of the goals of the group.
- Engaging with Maine's tribes in shell midden rescue and conservation.

**WHERE**

Of the 2,000+ shell middens currently known in Maine, there is a need to prioritize which middens need immediate attention. Maine Historic Preservation Commission has a database of middens with various levels of detail about each site. This database can help inform the development of a "short list of significant and potentially most threatened

sites” which can be cross-referenced with land trusts and other landowners who are interested in collaborating on monitoring or rescue efforts on middens on their properties.

### **WHO and WHEN**

The group identified the long-term need for an organizational framework and/or group to serve as a digital repository and a clearinghouse for advice, information, action, and planning about Maine’s shell middens. Until then, meeting participants volunteered to undertake the various tasks over the next 18 months to help move action items forward.

### **Other topics**

Two important topics repeatedly came up during the course of the discussions that bear mentioning here.

- 1.) Standardizing methods for monitoring and data recovery will be critical so that volunteers do not unintentionally contribute to the loss of archaeological information.
- 2.) Creating a repository for data and collections that are produced as part of the monitoring and rescue work is needed.

### **Context and background:**

It is important to note that this discussion took place after a morning of presentations about middens and sea-level rise in Maine, and descriptions of model programs in the UK. Maine’s challenges and opportunities identified included:

#### Challenges

Private property  
Vandalism/looting  
Erosion and sea-level rise  
Funding  
Need for project reporting and co-ordination center  
Need for training  
Need for eyes and ears along the coast  
Lack of archaeological collection repositories

#### Opportunities

Learning and documenting  
Broader conversations with tribal representatives about heritage and conservation  
Education  
Technology  
Citizen engagement  
Erosion can act like excavation

**For more information or to become involved, contact  
Alice Kelley ([akelley@maine.edu](mailto:akelley@maine.edu)).**

*This facilitator’s summary compiled by Natalie Springuel, Maine Sea Grant. More detailed meeting notes were taken by Catherine Schmitt of Maine Sea Grant, and are available on request.*