

**2024 ROCKWEED (*Ascophyllum nodosum*)
HARVEST PLAN
FOR COBSCOOK BAY, MAINE**

**Submitted to:
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
State of Maine
Augusta, Maine**

**Submitted by:
ACADIAN SEAPLANTS LIMITED
1244 Highway 1, PO Box 88
Jonesboro, ME
Tel. 207-479-1571**

February 28, 2024

Introduction

In accordance with Title 12 §6803-C Cobscook Bay Rockweed Management Area, Acadian Seaplants Limited (ASL) submits this harvest plan for the purpose of identifying ASL's objectives and methods for the harvest of rockweed (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) in Cobscook Bay for the year of 2024.

Harvest Method

The harvest of rockweed in Cobscook Bay will be carried out primarily from small boats utilizing unique cutter rakes designed by the company specifically for the rockweed harvest. Additionally, some harvest may be conducted with a mechanical harvester, similar to those that have been used in Maine for many years.

These harvest methods have proven to be efficient and sustainable with minimal disturbance to the habitat and impact on associated species. Harvesters will be trained to make a reasonable effort to return any marine organisms harvested with the rockweed to Cobscook Bay as soon as is practicable. Equipment to remove bycatch more easily from the deck of harvesting boats will be provided at the mobile bagging platforms.

These harvest methods ensure a low exploitation rate and leave more than ample canopy for intertidal dwellers, allows for rapid regeneration of harvested individuals, and suppressed shoots and minimizes the disturbance of the habitat architecture.

Harvest Areas and Harvest Quantities

During the 2024 season, harvesting will be carried out in 21 selected sectors in Cobscook Bay. The harvest within any specific sector will not exceed 17% of the total harvestable biomass of that sector. Control of the daily harvested amount for each sector is recorded as per ASL's sector landing reporting instructions.

This will be achieved by recruiting a sufficient number of local harvesters operating for up to twenty-six weeks from May to the end of October.

Our plan involves harvesters using mobile bagging platforms as boat unloading sites that can be moved to various harvesting locations within the harvesting area. Bagged seaweed is then transported via barge.

Success in the recruitment of harvesters within the general area will be paramount in establishing a harvesting force capable of achieving our objective.

Biomass Survey

Satellite or aerial imagery is used to calculate the area covered by rockweed in all allocated sectors (excluding beds adjacent to Federal, State/Town, or Private conserved lands). An updated biomass survey will be carried out in sectors not surveyed within the last three years before harvesting begins in those sectors. Surveys will be conducted using the established standard procedure; taking 10 random 50 x 50 cm samples along a 30m transect positioned in the middle portion of a rockweed bed. The number of transects will be determined in the field according to the size of the sector.

Harvester Safety

Prior to the 2024 season, harvesters will be provided with safety training on shore and on the water that will consist of familiarization with US Coast Guard Regulations for small vessels, the effects of wind and tides and the partnering of inexperienced harvesters with experienced harvesters. ASL will provide harvesters with a copy of its Rockweed Harvesting Safety Guidelines, and it will be stressed to all harvesters that good judgment and responsible actions are key elements to safe harvesting. Small vessel training will be scheduled by ASL on behalf of the harvesters prior to the start of the harvest season. Harvesters will be required to participate in all training sessions sponsored by the company.

All harvesting vessels will be equipped with the required safety devices (e.g. life jackets, flares, sound devices, etc.) complying with the US Coast Guard Regulations. Additionally, the company Health and Safety Director will work with harvesters to educate and encourage them to ensure their equipment meets required safety specifications.

Harvester Recruitment and Training

ASL will place a strong emphasis on the hiring of local people who may already have the operational skills and knowledge required for working safely on the water. Other people interested in rockweed harvesting will be recruited and trained on the safe operation of a small vessel and all components of the rockweed harvesting operations with a strong emphasis on safety. It is estimated that 6 - 8 direct jobs and 4 indirect jobs will be created related to the harvest activity.

Familiarization of all aspects of rockweed harvesting will be carried out during the company's pre-harvest kick-off meeting with the seasoned and new harvesters. Training of new harvesters will be conducted via information sessions with company resource personnel and in the field by experienced harvesters and resource managers who will remain on site for training for as long as necessary. Training will include familiarizing harvesters with proper boat handling, general boat safety, harvesting technique, cutter rake maintenance, boat unloading technique, harvesting regulations and guidelines, harvest data collection and other related information.

Respectfully submitted,

Jake Patryn and Alison Feibel

Deidre Gilbert
Maine Department of Marine Resources
21 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

February 28, 2024

Dear Deirdre:

Please find enclosed, Acadian Seaplants' proposed 2024 Harvest Plan for Cobscook Bay, State of Maine. We are applying for the following sectors; A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, A-5, A-6, A-7, A-8, A-13, A-14, A-15, A-16, A-17, A-19, A-20, A-21, A-22, A-23, A-34, A-35, and A-36 for a total of 21 sectors. No more than 17% of the total harvestable biomass will be harvested from any sector.

Sincerely,

Jake Patryn and Alison Feibel
Acadian Seaplants Limited