

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR ATLANTIC PUFFIN MANAGEMENT IN MAINE

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Problem 1: The Department's current financial and personnel support is inadequate to create new puffin nesting colonies. Additionally, habitat must be protected from disturbance and degradation, and birds must be protected from predators.

Strategy 1.1: Actively seek support for sufficient additional staff and financial resources to conduct habitat management. Reallocating existing staff and financial resources is not feasible, as it would prevent achieving management goals and objectives for other species.

Strategy 1.2: Reduce or eliminate gull populations on puffin nesting islands.

Strategy 1.3: Restrict human visitation on puffin nesting islands during the nesting season.

Strategy 1.4: Develop public outreach activities to promote an awareness and understanding of Atlantic Puffins (habitat requirements, vulnerability to human disturbance, and the need for gull control).

Strategy 1.5: Continue to cultivate cooperative management relationships with conservation partners and landowners.

Strategy 1.6: Contribute to efforts to increase conservation ownership of islands that are important for nesting Atlantic Puffins by obtaining additional sources of funding and/or redistributing existing personnel time.

Strategy 1.7: If necessary, protect nesting islands for Atlantic Puffins as Significant Wildlife Habitat (NRPA), Essential Habitat (Maine's Endangered Species Act), or as P-FW or P-RP zones (LURC).

Problem 2: Atlantic Puffins may not naturally colonize potential nesting sites.

Strategy 2.1: Actively seek support for sufficient additional staff and financial resources to conduct population management. Reallocating existing staff and financial resources is not feasible, as it would prevent achieving management goals and objectives for other species.

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Strategy 2.2: Develop and enhance cooperative relationships with conservation partners and landowners to maintain or improve the suitability of potential nesting islands.

Strategy 2.3: Use translocation, attraction, and gull control techniques, as appropriate, to restore breeding populations of puffins on islands with suitable habitat.

Strategy 2.4: Restrict human visitation on potential nesting islands during the nesting season.

Strategy 2.5: Develop public outreach activities to promote an awareness and understanding of Atlantic Puffins (habitat requirements, vulnerability to human disturbance, and the need for gull control).

Problem 3: There may be resistance to various habitat management approaches by the public and other conservation agencies (i.e., predator control and reduction of human-related disturbance).

Strategy 3.1: Develop public outreach activities to promote an awareness and understanding of Atlantic Puffins (including its habitat requirements, vulnerability to human disturbance, and the need for gull control). This awareness may increase the public's understanding and acceptance of management tools that will be used.

Strategy 3.2: Develop support from other conservation agencies for the Department's habitat management approaches.

Problem 4: Additional knowledge of life history and habitat requirements of Atlantic Puffins (e.g., winter ranges, use of foraging habitat during breeding season, nesting habitat partitioning among seabird species, chick provisioning studies, predation, and survival of chicks to maturity) is needed to enhance population growth.

Strategy 4.1: Actively seek support for sufficient additional staff and financial resources to collaborate on research of puffin populations with Universities and other seabird researchers. Reallocating existing staff and financial resources is not feasible, as it would prevent achieving management goals and objectives for other species.

Strategy 4.2: Support efforts of other conservation agencies and organizations by sharing knowledge and data collected in Maine.