

# Eelgrass Restoration



Measuring eelgrass height at a restoration site in Great Bay. Photo by J. Carroll

## How much eelgrass restoration has been done?

**A total of 8.5 acres of eelgrass beds have been restored which is only 17% of the goal. Poor water quality is often the limiting factor for eelgrass transplant survival.**

**EXPLANATION** Several eelgrass planting projects have been completed since January 1, 2000. A small, community-based project was attempted in North Mill Pond in 2000. Eelgrass was transplanted in over twenty wooden planting frames. The total area covered by the project was 0.5 acres. None of the transplants survived due to the water not being clean enough. In 2001, an eelgrass replacement project for the US Army Corps of Engineers was completed in Little Harbor. Eelgrass was transplanted and covered 5.5 acres. The restoration was monitored for one year following the transplant and found to be successful. However, because

the purpose of this project was to replace eelgrass beds that were destroyed, it was not counted toward the PREP goal. In 2005, eelgrass was transplanted to locations in the Bellamy River (1 ac.) and Portsmouth Harbor (0.25 ac.). In 2006-2008, a total of 6.8 acres of eelgrass was restored in the Bellamy River. The project was funded by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Therefore, since 2000, 8.5 acres of eelgrass restoration projects have been completed (16% of the goal) (Figure 19.1). Prior to 2005, no state or federal money was available for eelgrass restoration.

This indicator tracks restoration effort in terms of acres for which restoration was attempted. The area of successful, functioning habitat created by restoration projects may be lower.

### Why This Matters

Eelgrass grows in meadows on the floor of the estuary and provides important habitat for young fish, lobsters and mussels. Historic data suggests that eelgrass meadows in the Piscataqua Region watershed have been thinning or lost over time. Restoration efforts attempt to restore the coverage and function of this critical habitat.

**PREP GOAL** Restore 50 acres of eelgrass habitat by 2020.

**FIGURE 19.1** Cumulative acres of eelgrass restoration 2000-2011

