

Building a Network of Champions in New Hampshire



New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan represents a great accomplishment because the plan covers reducing greenhouse gas emissions, providing long-term economic benefits, and developing a general adaptation strategy for the state.

The plan also illuminated the need to bring climate change adaptation planning to the local level, and thus the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup was formed.

The workgroup helped build the relationships and networks needed to bring the right people together to address local climate adaptation needs. A specific example from one New Hampshire community is provided below.

A Unified Approach

The New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup is a collective voice focused on making communities resilient. This coalition of 19 organizations represents all sectors of government, the private sector, and nonprofits.

Since a vulnerability assessment is an important component of all adaptation plans, the workgroup decided the first step was to understand what a vulnerability assessment entails and agree on a common

approach for assessments in New Hampshire. The membership participated in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center's webinar, Roadmap for Adapting to Coastal Risk, and adopted the approach outlined in this training as the framework for the coastal assessments. Because everyone was using the same framework, the effort led to a coordinated approach to collecting data and pursuing funding sources.

Another important step was helping the public and municipal officials reach a better understanding about the issue of climate adaptation. The Natural Resources Outreach Coalition and New Hampshire Sea Grant joined forces for this effort. The workgroup recommended hosting several climate-related discussions, or "climate conversations," within coastal watershed communities to build community awareness. The NOAA Coastal Services Center provided a technical assistance webinar for the team that highlighted similar efforts in other parts of the country.

The Natural Resources Outreach Coalition piloted the "climate conversations" in a small semi-rural estuarine community at the headwaters of the Great Bay. A series of interactive meetings were held, each one designed to build momentum towards action. The first meeting was a session that allowed community members to freely discuss their experiences with hazards, weather, and climate change in small groups. This "world café" approach embraced a New England communication tradition—neighbor talking to neighbor. Many of the participants and organizers credit this approach with the effort's success. At the end of the session, participants were able to make recommendations to the town for prioritizing the issues and developing and implementing an action plan.

A follow-up meeting provided participants with the opportunity to explore implementation strategies for their highest priority issues, which included improving stormwater management and building community preparedness for extreme storm events. Members of the





Workshop participants present recommendations for prioritizing community issues and developing and implementing an action plan.



Participants engage in "climate conversations" to build community resilience.

local planning board discussed how these actions could be included in the town's updating of its master plan, and they also discussed a vision statement that reflected the interest in decreasing stormwater runoff. The team

developed a community action plan based on the results of the two community discussions. Suggested actions included

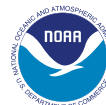
- A presentation on stormwater management techniques and options from the local university
- Stormwater regulations to more effectively deal with increased frequency of large precipitation events
- Public awareness programs, including a rain garden at the town hall and rain barrels at the elementary school
- An emergency preparedness calendar that contains information on personal and community storm preparedness

A final community meeting allowed participants to assess the feasibility of each action and identify leaders. The team has received grant funding to support action items over a six-month period.

Resources

New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup: <http://nh.stormsmart.org>

Roadmap for Adapting to Coastal Risk: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/roadmap>



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