

## **BUILDING SUPPORT FOR COASTAL CONSERVATION: SMALL ORGANIZATIONS AND BIG PLANS**

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Stakeholder participation has become widely recognized as a critical component of natural resource planning, management, and decision-making. Participatory geographic information systems (PGIS), one of many techniques for involving stakeholders, is a practice in which local communities are invited to share their knowledge and opinions to help generate maps for informing management and decision-making. Participatory GIS can foster collaboration among stakeholders, capture important knowledge from indigenous or underrepresented individuals, and provide a focal point for discussions, among other benefits.

The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Services Center assisted the non-profit Great Works Regional Land Trust in developing a strategic plan for the land trust's conservation work. The land trust is a volunteer driven organization serving six communities in southwest coastal Maine that are experiencing changes in land use radiating out from the expanding metropolitan Boston region.

Stakeholder participation techniques have been employed throughout the development of the plan to promote buy-in within the community and the land trust itself. This oral presentation will discuss the interviews, surveys, and participatory mapping techniques used, and how they contributed to the development of the strategic conservation plan.

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