



# Decreasing Vulnerability for Maine's Beach-Based Business Community

## Overview

Sea-level rise and extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change impact Maine's coastline and are anticipated to increase in frequency and strength. Beach-based businesses, a powerful economic engine for Maine, are generally little-prepared for storm surge and coastal flooding. Yet lessons learned from previous disasters underscore that the recovery of businesses is critical to the overall recovery of a region's economy.

This project will adapt and transfer the Tourism Resilience Index, previously developed for the Gulf of Mexico, to Southern Maine. Coastal businesses in Kennebunkport and Kennebunk will be helped to assess their ability to maintain operations during and after a disaster. The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve also will collaborate with business leaders, municipalities, and climate adaptation professionals to decrease the vulnerability of Maine's beach-based business community to natural disasters.

This project will strengthen resilience work throughout Maine communities by helping businesses prepare for climate change impacts and share needs with local decision makers.

### Project Location

Kennebunk, Maine  
Kennebunkport, Maine

### Project Duration

June 2016 to June 2018

### Project Lead

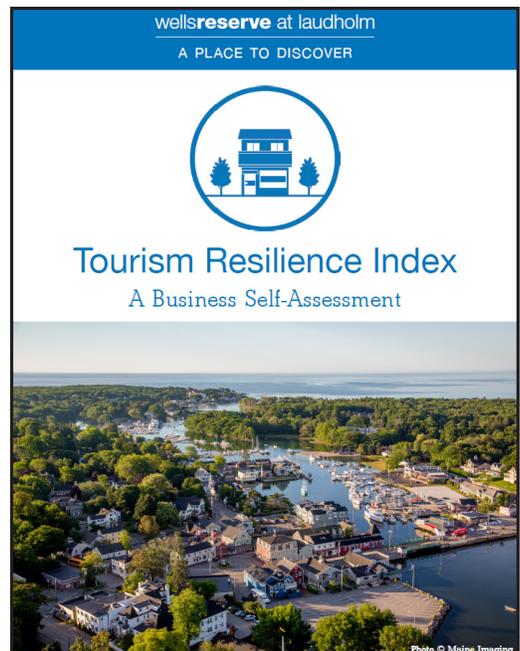
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### Project Type

Science Transfer – promoting the use of science

### Project Partners

- Kennebunk-Kennebunkport-Arundel Chamber of Commerce
- Laudholm Trust
- Town of Kennebunkport, Maine
- Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve



## Anticipated Benefits

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- Southern Maine businesses will better understand how they can prepare for climate-related natural disasters.
- Municipal decision makers will better understand how the local business community can become more resilient to natural disasters.
- Business owners will become more engaged in climate adaptation dialogue and strategy.

## Project Approach

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Using a collaborative approach that engages researchers and local business owners, the project team will adapt a tourism-resilience index for Southern Maine businesses. After the team completes pilot testing, a broader community of local business owners will complete facilitated self-assessments in Kennebunkport and Kennebunk, Maine. Participating businesses will be given their custom tourism-resilience index, or score, along with suggested steps they can take to increase resilience to natural disasters.

The project team will meet with these same businesses one year later to reassess and measure progress. The team will then aggregate the scores of participating businesses, and a summary of lessons learned will be shared with Southern Maine chambers of commerce, municipalities, and climate adaptation professionals. The project partners will also share strategies for adapting and using the tourism-resilience index in different regions. They will also highlight common gaps and barriers businesses encounter when planning to safeguard their risk to natural disasters.

## Targeted End Users and Anticipated Products

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- New England business owners and climate adaptation practitioners will receive business self-assessments and corresponding implementation guidance.
- Project partners and participants will receive and share the summary report of aggregated findings from participating businesses, including barriers and opportunities.
- The National Estuarine Research Reserve System, regional business networks, climate adaptation providers, and municipal decision makers will receive outreach products and presentations.

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### About the Science Collaborative

*The National Estuarine Research Reserve System's Science Collaborative supports collaborative research that addresses coastal management problems important to the reserves. The Science Collaborative is managed by the University of Michigan's Water Center through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Funding for the research reserves and this program comes from NOAA. Learn more at [nerrs.noaa.gov](https://nerrs.noaa.gov) or [graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs](https://graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs).*