

Increasing Social Resilience in Midcoast Maine to Plan for and Recover from Coastal Hazards

Pilot Meeting January 14, 10:30am-1:30pm, Roux Center, Bowdoin College

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Participants

Lee Cataldo, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust
Josephine Ewing, Arrowsic Conservation Commission
Kathy Gravino, Georgetown Conservation Commission
Mary Ann Nahf, Harpswell Conservation Commission
Aaron Park, Bath Forestry Committee & Bath City Council
Steve Walker, Maine Coast Heritage Trust
Ellen Winchester, Phippsburg Conservation Commission
Jarred Woolston, City of Brunswick

Project Team

Victoria Boundy, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership
Annie Cox, Wells Reserve
Kristen Grant, Maine Sea Grant
Liz Hertz, Blue Sky Planning Solutions
Ruth Indrick, Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
Eileen Johnson, Bowdoin College

Overall Project Goal: Build a socially diverse regional network of practitioners working on resilience issues and identify the highest priority actions the region can take together with and without funding to increase the resilience of those identified as the region's populations most vulnerable to storm impacts.

Pilot Meeting Goal: Convene a small group of local and regional practitioners who represent the larger field of natural resource planning and conservation. Use this pilot meeting as a chance to work as a group to clarify how best to partner and scale-up opportunities that increase resilience for fish and wildlife as well as human communities in the region.

Objectives for the Pilot Meeting:

- Increase understanding of the partnerships, communication systems, and priorities of the Sagadahoc organizations addressing vulnerabilities to storm impacts.
- Increase understanding of the concept of social vulnerability and demonstrate how the Social Vulnerability Index can be applied locally, using communities represented at the meeting as examples.
- Identify the resources and tools used by the natural resource planning and conservation organizations to address the impacts of storms and climate change. Identify related gaps in knowledge and needs for data.

- Identify an approach for scaling-up to help build capacity for increasing the social resilience of the region.

AGENDA

10:30 – 10:45 Welcome and Introductions

- Steve Walker asked what the groups long-term goals are moving forward, in terms of process.
- Mary Ann: Harpswell ConCom began to realize over the past year from the initial Pilot Meeting what a strong EM program the town has.
- Liz: We have all of these great sectors, who stay in their lane; how can we better work together?

10:45 – 11:00 What is community resilience in the context of services to populations vulnerable to storm impacts? What is social vulnerability? Eileen Johnson

Social vulnerability and social resilience – what are they?

What defines vulnerability – hazards of place (risk); (geography) biophysical vulnerability; Adaptation; Social vulnerability (Social fabric)

Social vulnerability: shaped by dynamics of poverty, age, agency, race, economic diversity, housing density, dependence on infrastructure

What contributes to resilience? Social resilience; institutional resilience (e.g. flood insurance); economic resilience; housing and infrastructure; community capital (# civic orgs, disaster preparedness; drivers for rural resilience); environmental resilience (natural flood buffers; local food production).

Factors contributing to vulnerabilities of rural communities: isolation; aging populations; limited access to emergency services; limited road infrastructure; reliance on natural resource economies.

Why is it important for planning? There is still a low awareness of the importance of social vulnerability.

At what scale do we plan? Social capital matters; activities help build this.

What is specific for rural communities? Limited options for evacuation and response routes; longer travel times to hospitals; rural emergency response relies on volunteer responders; limited capacity for addressing infrastructure challenges

Maine Social Vulnerability Index: takes data like socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, housing and transportation. Using census data, aggregated info and developed a comparison for communities along coast of Maine. What makes a community vulnerable: greater percentage of families with children; self-employed or employed in natural resource industries.

Discussion:

Q: Kathy: Please send Eileen's Powerpoint presentation out to participants.

Q: Kathy: Wind. You didn't mention wind and Georgetown has a problem with falling trees due to wind. Access is a big issue with windstorms. Eileen: Social capital becomes important (e.g. neighbors removing trees)

Q: Lee: Have you engaged yet with State? E.g. culvert blow-outs. Liz: worked for State; progress made in IDing critical infrastructure, esp. DOT. But how MaineDOT prioritizes, with limited funding, is where the biggest impacts are. So rural communities are further down the list. However, if rural communities worked together, there are programs where there are cooperative projects done. There is an opp now with new Admin and Climate Council to raise awareness of social vulnerability. Ruth: Arrowsic fish passage project worked with DOT to make it a priority. Priorities need to work from local up. Steve: Has DHHS been involved? (Liz: No. CDC was involved) Again, state govt is gearing up again so it's a critical time. MaryAnn: DOT more willing to work with you if community can contribute and match more so working with other communities is a good strategy.

11:00 – 11:45 Does your conservation organization consider community vulnerability to storm impacts in its work in the Sagadahoc region? *Take 5 minutes to record your answers to the questions below, then share your answers with the group.* Kristen Grant, facilitator

- If so, how does your organization address community vulnerability? Can you give an example?
- What are your organization's priorities related to addressing community vulnerability?
- Who do you cooperate with when addressing community vulnerability, at both local and regional levels?
- How do you communicate with your partners?
- Coastal Maine communities experienced serious impacts from the series of nor'easters in March, 2018. Did your organization take any particular action to address community vulnerability in response to those storms?

Aaron: Bath Forestry Committee focuses more on infrastructure, tree-scapes, blowdowns. Committee is not really doing anything along those lines. Supporting tree care and health of trees around city but when they blow down they block access and impact community vulnerability (Recreation space, property) and Committee has not considered this dimension as fully in the past

Kathy: ConsCom does community education through publications. Usually 2 programs a year and a booth at Town Meeting and other events. Trying to reach people about these issues including intense storms and changing landscapes. Focus on different parts of these impacts in their publications and their events. Priorities: Community education and monitoring storm impacts (e.g. taking photos; placing stakes to show flood impacts; also have water gauges now. Cooperate with town govt, community service agencies, residents, sometimes other towns as a "conservation collaborative." March 2018 – monitored floods. Williams Rd. West Georgetown – photos; road commissioner aware. Ruth: refrigerator magnet of who to contact in town in the event of an emergency, resources available. They have been working with Arrowsic for some of these initiatives.

Ellen, Phippsburg: Years ago involved with marsh migration grant, which made people aware of flooding. EMA started planning. EMA is now very effective. Road to Popham floods often. More recently talking about transportation, for emergencies and because large population of elderly, aging in place, getting to basic necessities. Started talking to BOS about transportation issues in context of emergencies. Tree and

brush cutting has been very effective; not losing power as often. Main road into Phippsburg very important to maintain and prevent blowdowns from cutting off access. Worked with KELT on culvert replacement; huge amount of effort (time) to engage DOT. How can we be more effective in replacing culverts? Jobs: Most people are self-employed and work in natural resources; shellfishermen, lobstermen, forestry. All are impacted by storm events. Dean, one single shellfisherman, does the MHB testing and communicates with BOS re. opening or closing flats. Road to Popham floods often. She noted that they rely on local residents who can assist with clean up (have access to chain saws for example)

Steve Walker: MCHT considers communities, vulnerable communities somewhat as we look at community impacts as well as ecological impacts. If project addresses some community need now, it'll add to community resiliency down the road. Also consider socioeconomics; keep spreadsheet of this info and pay taxes to municipalities to fund municipal services. Every project has a scoring sheet with how projects impacts different community segments and services. Have done harbor improvements for municipalities, have helped towns do dredging. Most vulnerable communities we work with are not in Sagadahoc County. We do habitat restoration. Also do affordable housing projects. Also do a lot in terms of marsh migration statewide, priority areas where marshes could move inland. Working with Maine Farmland Trust for tidal water adjacent to farmland. March 2018 nor'easters: made sure our sites were clear and open; did a couple of culvert replacements as a result of storm.

Lee: Hadn't framed work as social vulnerability. Do landscape resiliency. Local food systems. Carbon capture (MOFGA templates). Community engagement and community education. Increasing social capital. Farmers, municipalities, food pantry, Bowdoin. Share volunteers (mini needs assessment). March 2018: addressed imperative on-the-ground needs; shifted thinking a little about how to be more prepared. Increasingly looking at community, carbon capture programs, increased focus on marsh migration issues and protecting large forested blocks which improves carbon capture and habitat.

Mary Ann: Have been reaching out to public for last 7-8 years. Began by targeting private road owners. So much shoreland in town means people are interested and taking different pieces of it. ConsCom working in background on this and reaching public with newspaper articles, road vulnerability and press around it. Picture post project through CBEP to document storm impacts. Close tie-in with EM Director who is also in Cumberland County. Have utilized Bowdoin College too to help on projects. Began climate resiliency task force in Sept. and finishing report (money through Shore-Up grant). Road owners know they may have to take care of projects themselves but some have formed road associations to put them in better stead for funding. Kathy: Harpswell and Georgetown ConComs network and work together. Part of MCOG. Other participants noted that Harpswell has been great at networking and sharing information

Phine: Very rural community. Focused on improving fish passage and enlarged culvert. Used a couple of dozen volunteers for a fish count and monitoring. Had algal bloom in pond. Arrowsic doing picture post project – focused on critical roads that lose access—learned from Harpswell ConsCom. Put in posts on town roads but has taken almost a year just to get permission from MaineDOT. Beneficial to work in partnership with other peninsular communities to gain support and interest from MaineDOT. Broadband connectivity issue Georgetown-Arrowsic.

Jared: Lucky in Brunswick with a big planning dept. Not a lot of time looking at social equity, e.g. food systems planning. Do spend a lot of time dealing with things through development review – need to have a good zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. Not a lot of state support and dated resources, e.g. for comprehensive planning support. My involvement in Maine Assoc. of Planners most relevant. Dealing mostly with rural communities – Brunswick is a hybrid of rural/urban. Emergency Management planning update at county level. Help navigate how decentralized state govt is now. Sending draft

priorities and policy from MAP for Climate Council. Also state is focused on opioid crisis. MAP decided to look at other drug problems too from an equity standpoint. What are the stressors that lead to substance abuse problem and how does it relate to land use, e.g. how can town support you? How can planning facilitate community ties which might help to address social issues. Wondering if Office of Innovation is considering things from a land use perspective. The need to get away from staying in one lane. DEP is still clinging to Site Location of Devt Act – some equity problems with that. Some towns have more capacity to deal with development – Brunswick does not have to go through site law but most do and then they have to deal with a bottlenecked DEP. Regional planning is our biggest limit in Maine. Pointed out challenges posed by this for rural communities that do not have much support to complete comprehensive plans. Without the up to date comprehensive plans, the towns could not apply for some state funding as a result.

11:45 - 12:15 Lunch

12:15 – 12:45 What resources/tools do you rely on? *With the help of a facilitator, work in groups of ~3 to discuss the questions below for 15 minutes. Record and share your answers.*

- What are the resources and tools you rely on to address communities' vulnerabilities to storm impacts and climate change?
- Are there barriers to using these resources or tools?
- Are there data or knowledge gaps?
- Is there a role for Bowdoin students in helping to address these needs?

Resources/Tools

- Commonality
- State departments
- Foundations (\$)
- Comprehensive planning process
- Regional sharing
- Data (GIS, SLR viewer-State, Marsh migration; NOAA)
- Flood Resilience Checklist - very helpful but may need to be adapted for smaller towns and other parts of the state
- Professional municipal staff
- Town volunteer boards (Energy Efficiency Committee)
- Consultants
- Casco Bay Estuary Partnership
- Beginning with Habitat
- People and knowing the right people
- Facts & info gains respect of town boards
- Projects gain visibility to the public (e.g., conservation guides)

Barriers

- Knowledge gaps
- Time (from community engagement to implementation/project completion)
- Silo

- Navigating resources
- \$
- People are busy (knowledge base)
- Communication, local & regional
- Saltwater intrusion?
- Focus on local needs to bridge regional
- Lack of regional support and need to facilitate information exchange
- Barriers to completing comprehensive plans are lack of resources and technical assistance - finding right contractor

Bowdoin Student Projects

- [student excitement and energy is good for projects and getting things passed]
- Ongoing data collection/monitoring
- Ongoing data gathering and updates such as census data
- Forest cover & age/carbon sequestration
- Web portal for regional resource
- Case studies
- Adapt flood checklist for small towns
- Role of student enthusiasm as a dimension of projects

12:45 – 1:05 How can the Social Vulnerability Index tool help improve community resilience?

- SoVi tool demonstration in represented communities, Liz Hertz + Q/A

1:05 – 1:30 Collaborating to increase social resilience to storm impacts – how to?
Brainstorming approaches, Kristen Grant, facilitator

- What are possible next steps for building collaboration between emergency management, social service, and conservation organizations?
- Conservation guide format & social vulnerability guide/region
- Age friendly survey data
- Bring towns together to get everyone on same page
- Embayment planning
- Focus on service centers (Brunswick & Bath) and their corresponding peninsular communities. How do we engage better connections in key players for increased resilience.
- Onion foundation?
- 4th pilot meeting with consumptive users: Ag, forestry, fisheries, attract funding
- Broadband is an economic issue
- A lot more resources in place, challenge is connecting them.
- Use model of Age Friendly guide developed by local communities that has general information but also provides information specific to each community - which could be a model for building networks

- Harpswell as one example of a community that has been working on related issues for 15 years - the value of being armed with facts
- Connection with representatives from fisheries and other marine industries

1:30 Wrap up and Adjourn