
The New Hampshire Coastal Program cultivated a successful regional partnership that supports local communities through trainings, technical assistance, and leveraging funds.

New Hampshire's Coastal Adaptation Work Group

During a “king tide” in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a restaurant parking lot turns into a pond. Further south in the town of Hampton, some residents are forced to place their cars on higher ground as the ocean seeps into their yards and driveways. King tides are extra-high tides that occur when the moon and sun align and combine their gravitational pull. Within reach of these tides are popular historic neighborhoods with homes that once hosted George Washington. While king tides only happen twice a year, they can



NHCP Coastal Resilience Specialist Kirsten Howard facilitates a workshop discussion.

cause widespread damage due to flooding and erosion. However, extreme flooding like this is being experienced more frequently. Rising sea levels intensify normal high tides, mirroring king tide impacts on a more regular basis. That, combined with more severe winter storms, threatens New Hampshire's vibrant coastal communities.

In 2009, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program (NHCP), Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, New Hampshire Sea Grant, Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, and the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition came together to address a need.

They held a workshop about preparing coastal New Hampshire for risks and hazards related to storm surge and sea-level rise. This meeting catalyzed the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup (NHCAW), which has leveraged more than \$5 million in grant funds and hosted 16 workshops attended by over 700 participants. “The New Hampshire Coastal Program supports the NHCAW because it’s hands down the best collaborative entity I’ve ever worked with in my 16 years of government service,” said Program Manager Steve Couture. NHCAW is now made up of 21 members, including the City of Portsmouth, the Towns of Newington and Seabrook, Regional Planning Commissions, the University of New Hampshire, engineering firms, and the investment firm Pax World Management. “It just keeps building and building and building,” said Sherry Godlewski, NHCAW co-chair.

The NHCP has been pivotal to the growth and success of NHCAW. In 2010, the NHCP began providing small grants to enable more communities to participate. Using priorities identified through NHCAW activities, NHCP supplied dedicated resilience planning and technical assistance to the small towns of Newfields and Rye. In 2013, NHCP leadership resulted in a \$200,000 grant for NHCAW to establish a web-based coastal data viewer, marsh sediment monitoring, and workshops to engage local businesses. Another group of NHCAW partners, coordinated by NHCP, was awarded a grant in 2015 to conduct 10 local vulnerability assessments. They will consider risks to community assets like critical infrastructure, transportation networks, and natural and cultural resources.

In addition to education, scientific advancement, and direct assistance to communities, NHCAW coordinates the region's many ongoing projects so that people know where to go with questions about coastal resilience. With veteran practitioners leading the group, resource-tapped local officials trust them and are willing to give some of their limited time and resources to attend workshops and partner on small grant projects and planning efforts. Through discourse with member organizations, the group is able to build on each other's projects. NHCAW's continued effectiveness results from the fact that all participants are dedicated to open communication and a shared vision for creating more resilient coastal communities.