

HIGH WATER MARK INITIATIVE FOR COASTAL NH

CASE STORY: RYE, NH



OVERVIEW

The Town of Rye has coastline bordering the Atlantic Ocean and several inland tidal tributaries. Its oceanfront coastline is protected by a variety of natural landforms and constructed barriers including sand and cobble beaches, bedrock outcrops, tidal wetlands, saltmarshes, seawalls, revetments and shale piles.

Rye has a thriving and diverse beach tourism economy, public parks and beaches, and a working waterfront of fish and shellfish industry, businesses, restaurants, and recreational facilities. Although a popular warm weather destination, Rye has a significant year-round residential population including winter rentals. NH Route 1A, a major local and Seacoast region transportation route, traverses the length of Rye and portions are highly susceptible to coastal flooding and damage during storm events.

Lead by municipal staff, boards and commissions, and residents, Rye has taken tangible steps over the past few years toward a more resilient future including community outreach, long range planning, and regulatory changes.

COMPLETED ACTIONS

Planning for Climate Change Workshops

In 2014, Rye partnered with the Rockingham Planning Commission and UNH Cooperative Extension to hold a series of public workshops focused on raising awareness of flood impacts in the community and providing recommendations on how homeowners and businesses can be better prepared and reduce their flood risk.

Tides to Storms Vulnerability Assessment

In 2015, Rye participated in meetings to learn about the mapping and statistical data produced by the Rockingham Planning Commission's Tides to Storms Vulnerability Assessment. Stakeholders including Department Managers, officials and municipal staff offered insights about local flooding issues and recommended actions to address deficits in planning, emergency response, infrastructure management, and investments in adaptation measures.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

In 2016, Rye updated its Hazard Mitigation Plan and incorporated results from the Tides to Storms Vulnerability Assessment (2015) including maps, statistical information about asset impacts, and recommended actions to reduce flood risk and vulnerability from sea-level rise and storm surge. Incorporating climate change information into this plan provides a solid rationale for implementing proactive, preventative and adaptive measures that address changing conditions and community priorities.



Climate Highlights

- ✓ Coastal Hazard and Climate Adaptation Master Plan Chapter
- ✓ FEMA Community Rating System
- ✓ Floodplain/Freeboard Standard

Master Plan Update

The Rye Planning Board began a comprehensive update of its Master Plan in 2016. Information about climate adaptation and resilience were incorporated into a new Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation Chapter was adopted by the Planning Board in 2017 (available online at www.town.rye.nh.us) and updated Transportation, Land Use and Natural Resources Chapters which will be adopted in 2018. Topics addressed in these Chapters include completed and anticipated changes to land development standards, results of the from the Tides to Storms Vulnerability Assessment (2015), Community Rating System activities, High Water Mark Initiative participation, and community outreach and engagement.

Zoning Amendments

In 2018, the Rye Planning Board proposed and voter successfully adopted a zoning ordinance amendment to revise the existing floodplain development standards to require a 1-foot freeboard (elevation above the 100-year/1% annual chance base flood) for all new structures and substantial improvements to existing structures.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Community Rating System

With a grant from the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership in 2016, the Rye Planning and Zoning Administrator partnered with the Rockingham Planning Commission to assess the Town's eligibility to apply to the FEMA Community Rating System Program. This Program offers incentives for municipalities to undertake proactive measures to reduce flood risk and vulnerability by offering discounts on National Flood Insurance Program rates to policy holders in the community. At this time, Rye has brought nonconforming structures in the floodplain into compliance with NFIP standards and modified administrative recordkeeping practices to qualify, and has scheduled a meeting to meet with FEMA staff about reapplication to the CRS Program.

NEXT STEPS

Public Outreach and Education

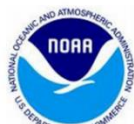
The Town currently has on its website links to the Preparing for Climate Change program, updated Master Plan Chapters and the Town continues to update the website with new initiatives and programs that highlight coastal resilience and awareness. www.town.rye.nh.us/Pages/RyeNH_BComm/prepare/index. As part of the CAV Visit to Rye to join the Community Rating System (CRS) with FEMA, the Town of Rye will be holding a public outreach forum with the Planning Board in the fall, 2018 to launch the CRS project and talk about ways to educate the public about the CRS.

Floodplain Development Standards

Once accepted to the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) program, the town anticipates further amendments to their Floodplain Development Standards ordinance to gain additional CRS program eligible activities and points to achieve increased reductions in insurance premiums for National Flood Insurance Program policy holders.

[Visit Rye's High Water Mark sign at Wallis Road near the corner of Route 1A.](#)

**For more information about the High Water Mark Initiative for Coastal NH visit
www.rpc-nh.org/highwatermark**



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