

Rockingham Planning Commission Developing New Tools to Help Municipalities Adapt to Climate Change

Municipalities along New Hampshire’s coast are increasingly taking steps to adapt to rising seas and climate change. With grant funds from New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program, Rockingham Planning Commission is developing a user-friendly coastal land use guide to inform local decision makers about climate change and increase the resiliency of our region. The coastal land use guide will cover a wide range of resilience and adaptation priorities, challenges, and opportunities in all 17 of New Hampshire’s Coastal Zone municipalities. Additionally, RPC is developing a framework for a regional sustainability program to help facilitate actions across New Hampshire’s coastal communities. This project is being conducted in partnership with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, with support from multiple local and state partners.

Project funder, Kirsten Howard, NHDES Coastal Resilience Program Coordinator, shared that “This project is going to create some much-needed guiding language to help all of our coastal communities formalize the ways that they plan for increasing coastal flood risks and the ways that they create community resilience in land use policy. The DES Coastal Program is thrilled to be able to support the project and looks forward to the valuable products it will produce.” The guide will help facilitate



adoption of recommended best practices by local decision makers using the best available New Hampshire based science, policy, and guidance. Implementation of model regulations and standards will be supported by ready to use products and provide multiple mechanisms for long-term adoption success and tracking of their effectiveness.

Given the challenges posed by climate change, the project will develop a framework for a regional sustainability and resiliency program, including a funding concept, as the long-term strategy to implement the coastal land use guide recommendations, and more broadly to increase the capacity of coastal municipalities to adapt and thrive. Tim Roache, Executive Director of the RPC, says that “addressing coastal hazards are important to our entire region and the guide will provide our communities with



tools to plan for those changes.” The regional sustainability and resiliency program will be modeled after similar initiatives undertaken in New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Examples of successful regional cooperation, organization and implementation will be showcased.

For more information, visit the project webpage at www.therpc.org/sustainability, or contact Senior Planner/Project Manager Julie LaBranche at jlbranche@therpc.org or (603) 658-0522.

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