HIGH WATER MARK INITIATIVE FOR COASTAL NH

CASE STORY: HAMPTON, NH

OVERVIEW

The Town of Hampton has coastline bordering the Atlantic Ocean and the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary. Its oceanfront coastline is protected by a wide sand beach and seawall with the exception of the southernmost portion of Hampton Beach State Park which is protected by a small sand dune system.

Hampton has a thriving and diverse tourism economy and a working waterfront of fish and shellfish industry, businesses, restaurants, recreational facilities, and public parks and beaches. Although a popular warm weather destination, Hampton Beach has a significant year-round residential population including winter rentals.

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

King Tide 2017, Hampton, NH Photo credit: Will Brown

Climate Highlights

- ✓ Amended Floodplain/Freeboard Standards
- ✓ FEMA Community Rating System
- ✓ Stormwater Drainage Study

COMPLETED ACTIONS

Tides to Storms Vulnerability Assessment

In 2015, Hampton 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 2017, Hampton updated its Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan update 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.

Zoning Amendment and Funding Approval

In 2017, the Hampton Planning Board proposed and residents successfully adopted a zoning ordinance amendment to revise the existing floodplain development standards and require a 1-foot freeboard (elevation above the 100-year/1% chance base flood) for all new structures and substantial improvements to existing structures.

Reduction of Impervious Coverage

In 2017, the Conservation Commission recognizing the connection between impervious coverage, water quality, and flooding, sponsored a warrant article to reduce the maximum impervious coverage percentage on a parcel. For properties outside of the aquifer protection zone impervious cover maximums were reduced from 85% to 60% and reduced to 75% in the business seasonal zone. The warrant article revised the impervious coverage formula to exclude areas of wetlands and open water in determining minimum lot size. This ensures that the calculation accurately represents the portions of the property that are truly buildable. New construction and substantial redevelopment projects must meet this lower impervious cover threshold. To date, there have been several beach redevelopment projects that had to incorporate green infrastructure in order to meet lower impervious percentage.

Floodplain Ordinance Reorganization and Freeboard

In 2017, Hampton partnered with the Rockingham Planning Commission to re-organize the town's floodplain ordinance and incorporate a 1-foot freeboard requirement to add an additional margin of safety over the FEMA minimum base flood elevation requirement. The 1-foot of freeboard applies to all new structures and substantial improvements of existing structures within the floodplain.

Hampton Town Wetland Permit

Hampton revised its Wetland Permit Application to require applicants to identify their flood hazard zone. The Conservation Commission finds there is great synergy between the Wetland Ordinance and the Floodplain Ordinance given the fact that tidal buffers are located within Flood Hazard Zones. The Commission meets with applicants to discuss flood protection measures that could be incorporated into their site plans which is particularly useful when projects are in the design phase.

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.

Hampton Seawall. Photo credit: Rich Beauchesne

Seabrook-Hamptons Estuaries Alliance

The mission of the Seabrook-Hamptons Estuaries Alliance is to protect the coastal and aquatic resources and preserve the Hampton-Seabrook estuarine system through education, community outreach and research. The Alliance works collaboratively with the NH Coastal Adaptation Workgroup and stakeholders in Hampton, Hampton Falls and Seabrook to fulfil its mission, and is actively seeking grant funds to develop a Master Plan for the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary.

Stormwater Drainage and Flood Studies

In 2018, the Hampton Board of Selectmen proposed to warrant articles, which were approved by voters, to fund stormwater drainage and flood studies at Hampton Beach to address ongoing impacts from storm related and nuisance tidal flooding to private property and public infrastructure. Residents also supported a measure that authorizes the Town to complete a detailed infrastructure vulnerability assessment of specific high-risk flood areas at Hampton Beach. This assessment will identify specific infrastructure modifications that will help alleviate ongoing flooding from increased stormwater runoff, seasonal high tides and storm surge.

NEXT STEPS

Master Plan Update

The Hampton Planning Board expects to begin a comprehensive update of its Master Plan in 2018. Information about climate adaptation and resilience should be incorporated into this document including 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 initiatives of the Seabrook Hampton Estuaries Alliance.

Public Outreach and Education

Hampton Planning and Conservation staff and the Seabrook Hamptons Estuary Alliance have partnered with the NH Coastal Program to implement a three part public workshop series from June to August of 2018 focused on property-level resilience strategies, protection from coastal flooding impacts, and natural and structural shoreline stabilization options.

Floodplain Development Standards

The Hampton Conservation Commission is considering two options to amend the Wetland Ordinance that would: require open foundations (allow for unobstructed flow of water underneath a structure) for substantially improved structures or new construction within 50 feet of a tidal wetland; or create a Coastal A Zone in the floodplain ordinance that would apply the VE Zone construction standards to the AE and AO flood zones.

Visit Hampton's High Water Mark sign at the Town's Transfer Station off Hardardt's Way.

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

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