

Portsmouth, New Hampshire Adapts to Climate Change

Project Summary/Overview

This project, funded by the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment (GOMC) and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), allows the City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire to advance local efforts to adapt land use, infrastructure, policies, and programs to reduce the vulnerability of the built and natural environment to changing environmental conditions. The project will integrate these adaptation strategies into city-wide plans, regulations, and policies. Specifically, this project will include updates to the city Master Plan, building codes, and the city's capital improvement plan.

Project Background

Portsmouth's location makes the city particularly vulnerable to certain weather events. The city has a high likelihood of experiencing hurricanes and other high wind events as well as severe winter weather. As a coastal community on an estuary, Portsmouth is highly vulnerable to storm surges and high tides. Increased intensity and frequency of coastal storms and sea level rise has the potential to result in extensive property damage and costly repairs for the city, as well as residents and businesses. Of particular concern is the potential for irreplaceable historic property loss in the city's Historic District, portions of which are located in high hazard areas.

In September of 2011, the GOMC and the NROC sent requests for proposals from coastal communities in New England to advance local efforts to adapt to climate change.

Project Implementation

The project will utilize scenario planning to explore uncertainty about the future consequences of climate change on the city both long-term and short-term. The utilization of scenario planning will seek to avoid

adverse impacts on the environment and natural resources by considering potential future impacts.

Project Outcomes and Conclusions (Lessons Learned)

Decision makers, planners, and the public will have access to new information on adapting to changing environmental conditions due to climate change. The project will serve to update current regulations and policies.

*Peter Britz, Environmental Planner
City Clerk's Officer for the City of Portsmouth, NH
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801
(603) 610-7215*

Part of the Northeast Climate Change Adaptation Project

*In 2011, the [Northeast Regional Ocean Council \(NROC\)](#) and the [Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment \(GOMC\)](#) received funding from the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's \(NOAA's\) Climate and Societal Interactions Program \(CSI\)](#) to examine innovative municipal approaches to climate change adaptation in the coastal zone of the Northeast and Bay of Fundy. The two-year project, *Stimulate Innovation and Increase the Pace of Municipal Responses to a Changing Climate in the Coastal Zone of the Northeast and Bay of Fundy*, was completed in June, 2013. The research and outreach for the project was conducted by the following partners: the [Marine Affairs Institute](#), a partnership of [Roger Williams University School of Law](#), [Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program](#), and [University of Rhode Island](#); [Blue Urchin](#); [StormSmart Coasts Network](#); and [Clean Air-Cool Planet](#).*

*Read more about the Northeast Climate Change Adaptation Project on our website:
<http://necca.stormsmart.org/>*