

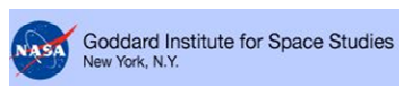


***Coastal Resilience***  
*www.coastalresilience.org*

***Launch for Coastal Connecticut  
Workshop***

**March 30, 2011**

**The Meeting Room, Old Lyme Town Hall, 52 Lyme Street**



## MEETING REPORT

### **Purpose of meeting:**

To introduce the newly-expanded Coastal Resilience Tool, demonstrate how it can help municipalities and state/federal agencies visualize the impacts and plan wisely for your community's future.

### **Purpose of this Report:**

To capture and present the reaction from workshop participants to the information provided by the Coastal Resilience tool – in particular the visualization of sea level rise and/or storm surge – in their community and learn how the Coastal Resilience website and tool can benefit dialogue between the state, regional and municipal entities.

This report is divided into two sections. The first section captures comments related to the question:

- ✓ Is the Coastal Resilience website and tool useful and how can it be applied?

The second section captures comments related to the question:

- ✓ How can we work together and foster dialogue and understanding on the critical issue of changing coastlines?

A list of participating State Agencies, Towns and Cities, Regional Planning Agencies, Council of Governments and others is provided at the end of this report.

### **Preferred Reference:**

The Nature Conservancy. 2011. Coastal Resilience: Launch for Coastal Connecticut Workshop – Meeting Report. Old Lyme, Connecticut.

## Is the Coastal Resilience website and tool useful and how can it be applied?

This conversation was facilitated by a series of leading questions. Participants were asked to consider these questions, but were not required to answer them specifically. The framing questions included:

- *How do you think the Coastal Resilience Tool will help you?*
- *What does this information mean for your community?*
- *Are there some particular places or issues that come right to your mind?*
- *Are there some projects or situations that can benefit from this information?*
- *What does this information mean for the state or multiple communities?*

The responses below were submitted by the participants during this portion of the workshop and have not been modified. The list of responses should not in any way be considered an endorsement or a definitive statement of any of the organization's that participated. Responses were submitted anonymously on hand written notes during the workshop.

### Participant's comments:

#### *How do you think the Coastal Resilience Tool will help you?*

- Property owners and developers can use the tool to evaluate impacts on their property and future developments. Access quality of construction needed to accommodate flooding.
- The tool helps communicate the value of wetlands and underdeveloped shoreline.
- Helps communities understand the risk associated with catastrophic events.
- Excellent for planning for infrastructure improvements, maintenance and emergency management, and disaster response.
- Highlights needs for infrastructure upgrades (e.g. roads, drainage, bridges).
- Highlight how and where "danger" affects disaffected demographics and re-introduces notion of social justice.
- Shows emergency management the need for pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation planning.
- Identifies locations of critical services or basic needs.
- Reinforce what everyone already suspects.
- This tool will help our land trust identify and protect sensitive open-space properties.

- Use tool to aid in public education – K-12.
- Tool fosters dialogue of solutions.
- Useful for planning-both statewide and in communities (e.g. Plan of C/D, Green Plan) and for specific sectors; agriculture, infrastructure, natural resources and public health.
- Provides common groundwork for compassion and discussion of sea level rise and storm surge impacts for communities, local governments and state.
- Tool will help in future development, land use and type of zoning permitted considerations.
- Tool should be useful to determine what, if any, parcels of land should be considered for future purchase.
- Education, planning for future sea level rise and evacuation.
- Helps to identify need for infrastructure improvements in vulnerable areas.
- Use tool to re-enforce and modify long range planning.
- Help to prioritize green space acquisition by towns, land trusts, state, etc. Or identify useful/good areas for representation in P of C/D.
- Tool can be used to raise public awareness and stimulate community discussion or planning for sea level rise.
- Useful for town planners to target areas that should be set aside as open space for the potential expansion of the fragile tidal marsh as projected in the models.
- The tool will help refine the decision making process with regards to land use (future) using graphic data as a tool in the process to determine spatial placement of infrastructure.
- Use tool for town planning meetings with public to look at areas that may need protection and to look at alternative scenarios in planning along different time frames.
- Educate the public visually on what is likely to happen with sea level rise.
- Can provide the basis for projecting coastal property protection needs and the potential impacts of widespread coastal hardening protection measures.
- For teaching my students at UCONN Avery Point about potential impacts of climate change and sea level rise on different aspects of our communities (I think it will engage and excite them).

- May help direct future planning, but also raises lots of questions as it relates to probability and accuracy of data.
- Locating critical facilities in various scenarios for working with emergency managers. There are often questions about where they will be housed. If it is in a vulnerable building then it may defeat the purpose.
- This tool provides info which can help state and local communities react to any natural or man-made disaster.
- This model would be amazingly valuable if OPM's locational guide map categories (new 2011) were available. State agencies are increasingly using this map as criteria for permitting and discretionary funding (grants).
- Tool will help facilitate communication with stakeholder, property owners and residents.
- Tool will be useful as a tool for sitting down with homeowners and agency representatives to go over vulnerable land areas. Use it as a land planning tool.
- Will help local land use discussion makers visualize the impact of climate change. Visualization is a much better way of presenting the information than a verbal presentation.
- Using tool can avoid making investments and decisions regarding people that are deleterious to the future of the town. Know where to put them vs. where not to put them. Them = both investments and people.
- The tool will assist in determining the regional impacts of coastal change. As a rep for an RPA this tool exposes a need to evaluate proposals from a different perspective in each of our three coastal towns. Furthermore this information will better facilitate the level of our regional plan of development. By knowing the vulnerable areas of our coastal communities we can better development and improve conservation strategies.
- Can be used for conducting municipal and/or state level vulnerability assessments.
- Revising town plan of conservation and development – this tool will inform the plan.
- Evacuation planning (local and region wide) and shelter/evacuation routes for vulnerable population.

- Suggests where to redesign current culverts to accommodate future storm scenarios.
- Help prioritizing areas for conservation.
- Useful for a regional assessment of vulnerable infrastructure.
- The CRT will help pin point most immediate need(s) as Groton has water on three sides with multiple vulnerable areas. The CT DEP workshops started the discussion but this provides a way forward.
- Inform members and residents about planning for a sustainable and resilient region.
- To scare people. Fear is a powerful motivation to action.
- Yes. Makes visual connections between vulnerable populations in your community and hazards to inform recommendations for master plans.
- Tool is useful in communicating impacts of coastal storms and planning infrastructure improvements.
- Tool is useful in evaluating future development and conservation projects for the town.
- The Coastal Resilience Tool will provide better emergency preparedness planning and persuade the “planning & zoning” to amend its flood plan regs to be better prepared for this eventually. For example, imposing a free board requirement when houses are elevated or substantially improved.
- Can provide useful information for siting and design of critical infrastructure.
- Allow for region wide coastal ecological impact assessment and mitigation planning.
- The tool can help convince others of the gravity of the problem.
- The tool provides a justification for action.
- Tool will help planning and zoning commissions to see possible future scenarios w.r.t. policy on land uses and density of development (including winterization).
- Help people see how they and their neighbors might be affected.
- Useful in understanding the magnitude of potential problems.
- Visualize the geographic extent of sea level rise.
- Tool to benefit ongoing national hazard mitigation and emergency management.

- Tool can be used for utility siting and rehabilitation decisions.
- A great educational resource; need to hold community meetings to introduce this, through public halls.
- Tool will help measure the impact of sea levels on development in New Harbor/Coastal areas.

*What does this information mean for your community?*

*Are there some particular places or issues that come right to your mind?*

*Are there some projects or situations that can benefit from this information?*

- A key challenge will be in prioritizing response to projected impact areas with capital improvements; e.g. what areas are most vulnerable or what actions provide most improvements for expenditures and the consequences if you chose the wrong place or protect to start.
- Raises the question: How can one state provide tax incentives to communities? How can local communities work together?
- Raises the question: How can we begin to mitigate risk individually as citizens and as a community?
- Towns will need support in order to develop solutions to local and regional concerns.
- Concern that impact to transportation infrastructure (RR, highway, bridges) needs to be included or highlighted and subsequent complications to vulnerability rated areas.
- Yes, there are some places and issues that come to mind-now, low-lying densely regulating shore neighborhood and evacuation routes.
- Need to communicate areas of concern to the state DOT (Amtrak lines) and route 146: both are critical to transportation and emergency planning
- This means for my community that some of the largest tax producing properties may be under water and the town should plan now to protect them.
- Projects that come to mind are land acquisitions vs. further development.
- Money spent on infrastructure projects particularly coastal should refer back to the model to see if they could incorporate coastal resilience into their design.
- Can make for better long term planning of capital projects and for emergency services.

- Coastal barrier beaches—degradation of barrier beaches due to increased storm frequency and intensity.
- Both people in floodplains and watercourse buffer areas are not going to cooperate until there is some compensation for the social benefit they are “providing” by not developing their properties (or abandoning their homes/property). The agricultural development rights purchase program is a model—just not a well funded one.
- Work together: Most regional planning organizations have boards of the chief administrative official who work on shared issues—this issue could be one that motivates them to cooperate.
- Could a presentation of this tool be aired on local TV—for the benefit of climate-change deniers? Preferably in each town.
- Take the info back to the towns.
- Have follow-up session to showcase model/pilot towns use of visualization tool to analyze what are “findings”. Then have follow-up session to showcase resulting solutions, goals, policies and action items (municipal improvements, programs, standards)...even if it’s an audit of what already exists.
- Obtain policy statements from professional organizations in reaction to coastal resilience tool to be passed on to Connecticut General Assembly: assessors, surveyors, planners, civil engineers, floodplain managers, director of public works, ZEO’s, environmental planners, CIRMA, etc.
- Lack of willingness to “get behind” necessary action (once identified).
- Your questions skip the many “regional” jurisdictions between the state and the municipalities that are the level at which this planning actually occurs...i.e. natural hazard mitigation plans.
- Municipalities need GIS data for the built environment to be sponsored by individual state agencies.
- Start locally and create a volunteer corps of young, savvy people who could give presentations to public groups.
- Shoreline homes and businesses generate a large percent of grand list. Some shoreline properties are becoming difficult to insure or too costly—FEMA limits are low.



- Wind damage will be an issue during major storms and hurricanes. Forest cover: trees down/erosion. Age of forests—vulnerability to storms.
- What this means for state or multiple communities is that we should be requiring that the state and towns include sea-level use planning in their state and town plans of conservation and development.
- Zoning in Towns: density bonus/infill w.r.t. attainable workforce housing—we must consider our district boundaries and where future water levels may overlap; to avoid increases in most sensitive areas if there is a better area.
- Inland communities need a better understanding of their effect on coastal communities.
- Challenges to increasing resilience via this tool: ignorance, lack of vision, short-term costs.
- Community needs better info, more clearly presented.
- What are implications for drinking water: locations of wells as well as water facilities such as Aquarian and Groton utilities.
- Problem is bigger than any one community.
- How will sea level rise affect spatial relationships between natural resources and the built environment?
- What are risks to existing municipal infrastructure and future infrastructure?
- What to do about all the existing building in areas that will be flooded?
- We must encourage regionalism: link the towns and their solutions i.e. coordinate evacuation routes.
- Particular places: Low-lying beach communities on Long Island Sound.
- With posting on various websites—as educational tool. Engages visitors and at least puts local sea level rise on their radar.
- For community: More awareness, at least for emergency management.
- Old Lyme’s white sands beach area is at significant risk already. Tool illustrates the need for immediate planning.
- Presentations to insurance company reps, there is a lot at stake for them here. Link the site to the insurance company websites.

*What does this information mean for the state or multiple communities?*

- Sea level rise and storm surge projections should be incorporated into state and regional plans of conservation and development. Regional planning needs to be funded to evaluate solutions/options and not just limited to transportation issues.
- State needs towns to enforce building codes.
- State should play a much stronger role — needs to be more visible.
- Will the state agencies and budget embrace the tool in their long-term planning efforts?
- Need state coastal regulation-like the NY state wetlands act that addresses coastal access future construction.
- Better State coordination on this issue now – not 20 years from now.
- State is currently working on a transportation assessment for a 30 town emergency management region. This tool will provide some the resource information we want to include. It gives a beginning point for evacuation routes.
- State needs community support for policies that foster better protection and preparations.
- For state: better disaster coordination-natural and other hazards.

## How can we work together and foster dialogue and understanding?

This conversation was facilitated by a series of leading questions. Participants were asked to consider these questions, but were not required to answer them specifically. The framing questions included:

- *What are the key challenges for your community?*
- *What are the key challenges for the state?*
- *What does your community need from the state?*
- *What does the state need from the communities?*

The responses below were submitted by the participants during this portion of the workshop and have not been modified. The list of responses should not in any way be considered an endorsement or a definitive statement of any of the organization's that participated. Responses were submitted anonymously on hand written notes during the workshop.

### Participant's comments:

#### *What are the key challenges for your community?*

- Challenge at state and local level is the political will to make policy changes and decisions that will cost money and affect private property.
- Key challenges: high tax base of shoreline homes and educating the homeowners.
- Political statements via municipal Plans of C&D. Updated every 10 years. Each update should include gradually stronger policy statements so as not to alarm residents.
- Lack of standardized building codes and support with enforcement
- Education of municipal leaders and of the public.
- Communities need to understand the vulnerabilities of their properties & resources.
- Shrinking grand list.
- Small communities would benefit from regional network, so they don't have to recreate the wheel; adaptation ordinances, setback, higher freeboard standards, etc...
- Need inter-municipal agreements to deal with water issues but difficult to establish. Look to southern Maine coast as an example.

- Funding needed for changes; who will pay? Will the state compensate the impacted?
- Areas of future inundation include town's industrial zones.
- Getting political buy-in at local level by selectmen, mayors, etc...
- Concerns about hazardous pollutants and infrastructure that get released during flooding events (i.e., New Haven harbor)
- My community needs more specific recommendations on how to take this info and transform it into an action plan.
- The key challenges for my community is that the area is already densely developed, there is no room for more migration. Plus it is a very wealthy community, it'll be hard to buy property to act as flood storage and it is hard to tell people what they can and can't do with their properties.

*What are the key challenges for the state?*

- State challenges: short term politics. Bigger problem than at local level
- Political buy in.
- Challenge: the best way to deliver the information to the public
- My community is upstream and not directly affected. However, storm water management will affect coastal towns downstream. Regional planning will benefit.
- Key challenges for the state is home rule and getting the CT Homebuilders association to agree that we should plan for this and not fight new legislation.
- Leadership starts at the top.
- Concern that property owners & towns will respond with hardened structures first which would create more problems longer-term.

*What does your community need from the state?*

- Support for inter-municipal & inter-regional collaboration
- The state legislature needs to recognize the importance of upland streamside buffers and impervious surfaces that aggregate coastal flooding. We need a list of tools that the state can implement to diminish local risk and improve protection

- Communities need support from state legislators as they tackle coastal change.
- State needs to work with shoreline community with providing guidance documentations on adaptation strategies.
- Grant dollars.
- Make the connection of upland effects on the coastal communities.
- State needs to start planning and permitting and building with sea level rise in mind.
- Recognition of the importance and funding for mitigation projects that don't fit into the FEMA "pre-disaster mitigation" box.
- Dialog and greater understanding of challenges at the local level: emergency planning; FEMA/one highway bridge for E/W (I-95 n/s) evacuation and emergency responders makes a bottleneck. Need more northbound egress to escape the shore when a category 3+ hits
- Feds: getting FEMA maps updated. FEMA flood planning info is out of date since it is based on historic data.
- Change in state statute to incentivize coastal adaptation; make Rhode Island type change.
- Regionalization might help keep costs down & decrease duplication of efforts and resource acquisition.
- Having state mandates on climate change adaptation and mitigation would help provide incentives for towns to address this issue and prevent "leakage" of revenues and development to towns that are not addressing coastal climate change.
- State officials need to buy in and town leaders need to buy in.
- The state needs support from communities to enforce and regulate strategies that address climate change.
- Regional planning \$\$\$\$. This needs to be integrated with federal at state, regional and local levels.
- At what point do we become proactive. MA started to purchase homes along the national seashore as the bluffs disappeared. What is the state doing?
- New Haven needs money from the state to enable it to have resources (planning) to determine a path forward.

- FEMA is encouraging development in hazard zones; FEMA needs to incorporate in sea level rise with storm surge and high water now.
- Leadership from the state on sustainable development issue. Amend the state statute to require sea-level use be a part of town plans of conservation and development.
- Communities need clear guidelines and objectives, minimum standards and planning tools and requirements that they can then adapt within the context of their local economy. There needs to be a statewide, or better yet regional program to guide proper planning and regulatory initiatives on the municipal level.
- Political support & leadership.
- Resources, leadership, studies/assessments/data.
- Work with local universities.
- Dialog and understanding: need state to allow local communities to apply local knowledge to local issues/solutions.
- Why is a private organization driving this effort? Coastal planning began at national level and flowed to states, regions and local government.

*What does the state need from the communities?*

- Towns must force legislators to create a coherent statewide climate change policy analogous to Rhode Island and empower DEP and other state agencies to help.
- State officials need to buy in and town leaders need to buy in.
- Long range planning for infrastructure improvement: utilities, transportation, emergency services (EMS), and evacuation plans.
- The state needs from the communities an estimate of the loss of tax revenue if these vulnerable properties are lost.
- Engaging the public through effective, agreed campaign shared by all CT coastal communities.
- Incorporation of climate change into municipal plans – Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans.

**Participants:**

Town of Branford

Town of East Lyme

Town of Groton

Town of Guilford

Town of Old Lyme

Town of Old Saybrook

City of New Haven

Town of Waterford

Town of Westbrook

Town of Westport

Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency

Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments

South Central Connecticut Regional Council of Governments

South Western Regional Planning Agency

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

Connecticut Insurance Department

Connecticut Department of Public Health

Center for Land Use Education & Research

Connecticut Sea Grant Program

Clean Air – Cool Planet

Yale University

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