

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

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NHDES Coastal Program and Partners Announce Coastal Resilience Grant Awards, Commit to Implement NH Coastal Risk and Hazard Commission Recommendations

Portsmouth, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Coastal Program is excited to announce five new projects to promote flood hazard preparedness and resilience in New Hampshire communities along the Atlantic Coast and Great Bay estuary. Together, these projects mobilize over \$521,000 to focus on municipal and state coastal resilience planning and make available dedicated resources and technical assistance to New Hampshire's coastal zone municipalities. The largest project, a Project of Special Merit grant competitively awarded to the Coastal Program by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management, will provide funding for the Coastal Program and partner organizations to assist 10 Great Bay municipalities to carry out their coastal resilience planning and outreach priorities. In addition to that effort, the Coastal Program selected four innovative projects for funding through its 2016 Design Solutions for Coastal Resilience grant opportunity.

This funding announcement comes three months after the New Hampshire Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission released its final report and recommendations entitled, Preparing New Hampshire for Projected Storm Surge, Sea-Level Rise, and Extreme Precipitation. The bipartisan Commission unanimously adopted the final report, which summarizes New Hampshire's vulnerabilities to projected coastal flood hazards and puts forth essential, science-based guidance for the State and 17 coastal zone municipalities to minimize flood risk and enhance resilience. Broadly, the Commission's 35 recommendations and associated actions focus on improving science-based understanding of current and future coastal flood risks, completing detailed assessments of coastal vulnerabilities, and implementing actions that protect and adapt New Hampshire's coastal economy, built structures and facilities, natural resources, and recreational, cultural, and historical resources. NHDES staff members served important roles in the development of the Commission recommendations and are committed to implementing the recommendations over the course of the next several years.

Sherry Godlewski, the NHDES representative on the Commission, said, "The Commission's report provides much-needed guidance on how to begin building resilience in our coastal communities and state agency operations. The Report's sound science and planning guidance

support what our municipal and state decision makers have told us they wanted. They have asked for this guidance, and they are ready to act.”

Godlewski, who has also served as co-chair of the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup (NHCAW) since 2009, explained that coastal communities in New Hampshire have long been thinking about and taking small steps to reduce their flood risks from storm surge, sea-level rise, and extreme rain events. Since its inception, NHCAW has worked directly with all 17 coastal municipalities, as well as other communities in the coastal watershed, to help improve their resilience to flooding. However, the Commission’s report represents a sea change for resilience work, demonstrating to those municipalities that decision makers at every level of government, including in their neighboring communities, are recognizing the need to take major steps to minimize increasing flood risk and commit to taking real action on the ground. The NHDES Coastal Program grant projects will assist resource-strapped communities and state agencies to take real action.

#### NH Setting SAIL Project of Special Merit

The NHDES Coastal Program has been awarded a \$249,995 competitive Project of Special Merit grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management. The project, called New Hampshire Setting SAIL: Acting on the Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission Science, Assessment, Implementation, and Legislation Recommendations (NH Setting SAIL), seeks to support state and municipal implementation of the Commission’s final report and recommendations through outreach and technical assistance. Project partners include the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Great Bay Stewards, Rockingham Planning Commission, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, and New Hampshire Sea Grant.

Most notably, NH Setting SAIL will assist Great Bay municipalities to prioritize and implement actions that meet their unique needs, including the development of a climate adaptation chapter for the City of Dover Master Plan. NH Setting SAIL will also provide capacity for key state agencies to coordinate audits of laws governing the coastal region, as required by Chaptered Law 195/SB 452; complete inventories of vulnerable state assets; and conduct a detailed vulnerability assessment for a specific state asset.

To kick things off, project partners will host two region-specific workshops focused on strategies to address coastal flooding in the Great Bay and Atlantic Coast municipalities. The Great Bay Workshop will take place Thursday, March 23, 2017 at 5:30 pm at the Newmarket Town Hall. For more information and to register for the Great Bay Workshop, visit: <http://nhblog.stormsmart.org/nh-setting-sail-upcoming-workshop-grant-opportunity-for-great-bay-municipalities/>. The Atlantic Coast Workshop will take place Thursday, April 13, 2017 at 5:30pm at the Hampton Falls Town Hall. For more information and to register for the Atlantic Coast Workshop, visit: <http://nhblog.stormsmart.org/nh-setting-sail-upcoming-workshop-for-atlantic-coast-municipalities/>.

NH Setting SAIL is scheduled to be completed by March 2018. For more information about the NH Setting SAIL project, please contact: Nathalie Morison of the NHDES Coastal Program at (603) 559-0029 or [nathalie.morison@des.nh.gov](mailto:nathalie.morison@des.nh.gov)<<mailto:nathalie.morison@des.nh.gov>>.

## Design Solutions for Coastal Resilience Projects

To help communities prepare for coastal hazards, the NHDES Coastal Program launched the Design Solutions for Coastal Resilience grant funding opportunity in summer 2016. The four projects selected for funding combine education, planning, vulnerability analysis, and design work to enhance community resilience. In an effort to improve beach and dune management in Hampton and Seabrook, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and NH Sea Grant propose to carry out a second phase of work to restore degraded dune areas, promote a dune grass Community Garden for homeowners, and design new strategies to minimize dune impacts in the remnant New Hampshire dune systems that provide habitat and storm protection benefits in southern coastal New Hampshire. A proposal from the Town of North Hampton seeks to assess drainage issues at the flood-prone Philbrick's Pond salt marsh adjacent to Route 1A. The Town of Durham sought funds to analyze erosion issues at Wagon Hill Farm and design a nature-based erosion control solution. The Rockingham Planning Commission was selected based on their proposal to work with the City of Portsmouth and the towns of Rye, Hampton, and Seabrook to implement high water mark installations depicting historical and possible future flood elevations. These projects are currently in the contracting phase and are scheduled to be completed by June 2018.

"We received eleven highly competitive proposals in response to the 2016 Design Solutions Request for Proposals, which is a significant bump compared to a similar grant opportunity we had back in 2014. This invested interest from communities, together with the Commission's report findings, suggest to me that preparing for increasing coastal hazards is now a recognized priority for New Hampshire's coastal region," said NHDES Coastal Program Manager Steve Couture.

Funds for this grant opportunity are provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office for Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act in conjunction with the NHDES Coastal Program.

For more information about the Design Solutions for Coastal Resilience projects, please contact: Kirsten Howard of the NHDES Coastal Program at (603) 559-0020 or [kirsten.howard@des.nh.gov](mailto:kirsten.howard@des.nh.gov) or <mailto:kirsten.howard@des.nh.gov>.

For more information about the New Hampshire Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission and to download the final report and recommendations, visit: <http://www.nhcrhc.org/>.

For more information about the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup (NHCAW), please visit: <http://www.nhcaw.org/>.

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