

Neskowin Coastal Erosion Adaptation Planning Effort

Timeframe: 5+year period, completed recently.

The Neskowin effort is a great example of collaboration and determination related to addressing increasing coastal erosion. It represents a community who needed help but was also willing to roll up its sleeves and go to work. The effort exemplifies effective “ground up” teamwork and solid relationship building across organizations.

Neskowin is, and will continue to be, impacted by increasing coastal erosion events. The Neskowin unincorporated community reached out to Tillamook County and the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD). Initial efforts included the creation of the Neskowin Coastal Hazards Committee (NCHC) to address these coastal erosion issues. The NCHC functioned throughout the effort. The committee consisted of a core group of Neskowin citizens, supported by the county and agency partners, including DLCD/OCMP and Oregon Parks and Recreation (OPRD). The committee was chaired by a County Commissioner and accomplished significant work. OCMP, as a partner in this effort, provided substantial staff support throughout the process. In addition, the OCMP provided grant resources and utilized its coastal erosion model code for this effort.

Following are some key concepts developed and supported by the NCHC:

- Significant coastal erosion has occurred in Neskowin for the past several decades
- There is scientific evidence of an increasing probability of more severe coastal erosion hazards into the future
- The Neskowin coastal hazards adaptation planning effort and products will guide community decisions as probabilities increase and erosion events occur
- Planning now to adapt to these hazards and the changing beach environment is prudent and provides a level of confidence for property owners and beach recreation users facing an uncertain future
- Land use policy and ordinance changes will work to safeguard people and property and also protect the coastal resources as defined by Oregon Statewide Planning Goals 7 and 18
- Land use ordinance changes are focused on helping the community to become more resilient to increasing coastal erosion hazards

Community members, as part of the Neskowin Coastal Hazards Committee (NCHC), implemented an extensive and effective education and outreach effort to the Neskowin community and beyond to insure that the NCHC and the community as a whole were informed throughout the process. The effort included numerous well-attended public meetings, community wide mailings and emails, ongoing information distributed on the community website, informal community member discussions, and more. Upon completion of the NCHC’s work, the Neskowin Citizen Advisory Committee, as part of initial steps toward county adoption, held additional meetings with the community and at the conclusion of that process recommended adoption of the amendments to the county. Because of this effort the community in general was informed and supportive of this effort and the amendments were adopted with very few dissenting comments.

As a result of this effort, the land use amendments adopted by Tillamook County are comprehensive and include a coastal erosion adaptation plan for Neskowin and the following associated plan and code amendments:

- Amendments to the Goal 18 element of the comprehensive plan including text and policies which support this effort to increase resilience to coastal erosion

- Amendments to the Neskowin Community Plan text (a new coastal hazards section) and maps (the coastal hazard overlay zone maps)
- Amendments to the development code to create the Neskowin Coastal Hazards Overlay Zone
- Amendments to the development code to create storm water runoff and erosion control provisions for Neskowin.

The department provided resources to assist in the development of these amendments as follows:

- A grant to assist in developing a draft Neskowin coastal hazards adaptation plan.
- A grant to assist in developing an engineering report regarding hard and soft erosion control solutions to protect the village and maintain the beach. The Neskowin community provided the remainder of the overall cost of the project which was substantial.
- DLCD/OCMP staff provided extensive support throughout, including assistance in the development of the draft amendments to implement the adaptation plan.

The department supported the Neskowin Coastal Hazards Adaptation Plan and associated amendments throughout not only their development but also through the land use adoption process. The amendments were adopted in the fall of 2014 but were appealed by two development interests to the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA). Although the LUBA process delayed the effective date of the amendments, LUBA determined that the amendments were legally sound and all appeal processes are now complete and decided in favor of the County and the Neskowin community.

Conclusion: The department believes that this work represent an excellent approach or template to implement the requirements of Goal 7 and Goal 18, and that they have considerable value in providing guidance to other coastal communities in addressing coastal hazards issues. In addition, the strong relationships developed should endure and provide the underpinnings of future effective and collaborative efforts.

A Couple (of many) Lessons Learned: Although robust community processes are invaluable in addressing coastal erosion/climate change impacts at the community scale, they take considerable time and effort. With that said, they are completely worth the effort. Additional, addressing these issues at the community level is a heavy lift for local governments, even with a community driven approach with comprehensive education and outreach efforts. As a result, OCMP staff not only appreciates their efforts but are committed to do whatever possible to support them.