

# Seacoast Public Health Region Update

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Dear Chairman:

This letter serves to update you on the public health preparedness initiatives of the Seacoast Public Health Region. Your Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director and/or health officer is a member of our council and attends quarterly meetings. If you have any questions or comments, please refer to my contact information below. I enjoy working with your town representative in the preparation, response, and recovery of public health emergencies. A regional approach assures and strengthens regional and local emergency preparedness response capacities for both naturally and manmade events. In addition, it can help access additional public health resources in a more timely and organized manner.

**The Seacoast Public Health Region** is one of 14 public health regions in the state created to help the residents in our regions to prepare for, respond to and recover from public health emergencies. Each region has a coordinator who is funded through a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention Preparedness and Response grant. The Town of Exeter accepted this grant for our region's first full-time coordinator. Mary Cook started work as the coordinator on May 1, 2011. Ms. Cook has worked in public health and health education for over twenty years and has her Master's in Education with an emphasis in Health Promotion and Wellness and is a Certified Health Education Specialist.

The Seacoast Public Health Region includes 23 towns in the seacoast region with a population of 140,201. Please follow us at [www.seacoastphr.org](http://www.seacoastphr.org) or on twitter at seacoastphr

## **The focus of the coordinator's work is to:**

- Ongoing improvements to the public health preparedness and response plans, which are integrated into the emergency operations plan of each town in the region; coordinate and/or participate in regional trainings and exercises related to public health preparedness. The coordinator is also responsible for the activation and coordination of point of dispensing sites, and alternate care sites in the region.
- Oversee a Regional Coordination Council made up of government, health care, behavioral health, schools, nonprofit and community representatives to focus on public health preparedness issues.
- Establish and maintain a cadre of medical and non-medical volunteers through the Greater Exeter Region Citizen Corps and the Greater Portsmouth Medical Reserve Corps.
- Assist in the coordination of resources and communication during public health emergencies through the Multi-Agency Coordination Entity (MACE); serve as a liaison between local entities and the State of NH, Division of Public Health Services.

## Accomplishments 2012:

- June, 2012: Conducted a shelter drill with volunteers and tested the registration and set up process of a shelter.
- August, 2012: Conducted a two-day Hepatitis C Clinic in response to 3300 hospital patients being exposed to Hepatitis C. The State of NH DHHS asked our region to conduct a two-day clinic as the majority of patients who had been exposed were from our region. There were 875 patients who attended the two-day clinic at Stratham Cooperative Middle School. We transitioned our point of dispensing plans from rapid dispensing to quick draw. The NH State Lab provided the blood draw and rapid testing. We coordinated over 50 volunteers per shift per day (2 shifts over two days).
- October 2012: Activated our Medical Reserve Corps and Citizen Corps volunteers to staff the North Hampton shelter during Hurricane Sandy.
- February, 2013: Activated our Medical Reserve Corps and Citizen Corps volunteers for shelter response due to snowstorm Nemo.
- February, 2013: Conducted a Family Assistance Center training to assist the region during a mass casualty incident.
- Family Preparedness Workshops: 150 residents attended 13 Family Preparedness Workshops sponsored by GECC/GPMRC at local Senior Centers, Libraries, and Community Centers, Nursing Homes, and businesses.
- Advanced Partner Trainings: Offered 2 advanced training opportunities to partner healthcare agencies, with CEUs, in return for the opportunity to conduct outreach and recruitment.
- Community Emergency Preparedness Class: We offered a Community Emergency Preparedness Class in collaboration with Exeter Hospital and the Exeter Fire Department. 22 local residents participated the class and 18 earned certificates of completion.
- Advanced Member Training: Offered 8 advanced training opportunities to GECC/GPMRC members, as well as those who have participated in the Community Emergency Preparedness Class.
- Statewide Advertisement: GECC/GPMRC recruited new members through the NH Pharmacists Association newsletter, NH Nursing News & Physicians Bi-Monthly with a total outreach of over 28,000.
- Outreach Events: Members participated in 2 outreach events in Exeter in Portsmouth to promote emergency preparedness and enhance public awareness of GECC/GPMRC. 5K Races: Members were activated by the Hampton Falls Fire Department to assist with the LoziLu Mud Run to assist with First Aid and course safety.

## Activities and Priorities for 2013:

- Ongoing improvements to the regional public health emergency annex. In addition, plans for points of dispensing and how to dispense medications or vaccinations to first responders and the public is reviewed twice per year through a Technical Assistance Review (TAR) by state officials and the CDC. Each Region is given a score and the goal is to make improvements to the plan to increase the TAR score.
- Develop training and exercises for regional partners. Upcoming trainings include public information officer training, a low-flow oxygen training for an alternate care facility, and trainings on compassion fatigue and Psychological First Aid.
- Continue to develop agreements with strategic partners for services and use of facilities during public health emergencies.
- Continue to secure grant funds for the Greater Portsmouth Medical Reserve Corps and the Greater Exeter Citizen Corps to fund a part-time volunteer coordinator who recruits, trains, and manages medical and non-medical volunteers.

# Climate Adaptation Plan for Exeter (CAPE) Project

*How we are engaging everyday residents of Exeter*

*A team from the University of New Hampshire and the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is working with the town of Exeter, NH to create a plan for adapting to changes in our climate based on the perspectives of Exeter residents. Below, please find a summary of the kinds of outreach we are doing with different groups to inform the climate adaptation planning process. All plans are advisory to Exeter decision makers.*

## **Town Staff and Civic Leaders: Ongoing**

In these initial meetings, members from the science team meet with groups in Exeter whose mission and work will be directly related to project. This includes the Select Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, River Committee, Exeter Chamber of Commerce, Municipal Departments, etc. The focus is on building relationships and contacts.

## **Communities of Interest I: January – August 2013**

In these meetings, the engagement team meets with intact groups and individuals to explain the project, build relationships, and encourage engagement by a broad array of community members. This includes business owners, senior citizens, low income residents, young people, civic groups, and clubs focused on outdoor activities, health and recreation, etc. The focus is on increasing awareness of and engagement in the project.

## **Community Conversation Event: April 10, 2013**

This event was advertised widely to the whole community and involved small, facilitated groups. Exeter residents were asked to talk about their priorities and recommendations to decision makers regarding preparing for extreme weather events, vulnerabilities, and concerns. The focus was on broad community outreach and input. Approximately 60 people participated, including 10 student co-facilitators from Exeter High School.

## **Citizen Working Group (“CWG”): May – through the end of the project**

**WE ARE HERE**

The UNH science and engagement teams will meet regularly with the Citizen Working Group to grapple with complex issues, to ensure the information is based on local knowledge, and to ensure that the project’s focus is locally relevant. We anticipate this group will meet monthly and have been seeking participants from all previous contacts.

## **Broad Community Conversation Event: September 2013**

This event will be similar to the one held on April 10<sup>th</sup> but will focus on getting feedback on the work of the CWG and UNH Science Team to ensure that all key vulnerabilities for people, infrastructure, and natural resources have been identified and that the work is on the right track in responding to the values and priorities identified by Exeter residents.

## **Neighborhood Conversations: Fall 2013– Spring 2014**

We know the climate impacts & vulnerability information will be useful for particular neighborhoods and areas of town. We will work to host conversations and information sessions for these places. For example, downtown business owners may benefit from talking with one another about the decisions they face, or the Exeter River Coop Community or Phillips Exeter Academy may have areas of land that are particularly impacted and in need of exploration of options.

## **Communities of Interest II: September 2013 – August 2014**

The focus will be on hearing back from residents about the ongoing work of the CWG and UNH Science Team. We will reach out to intact groups to encourage engagement and input, particularly from those who have not yet been engaged.

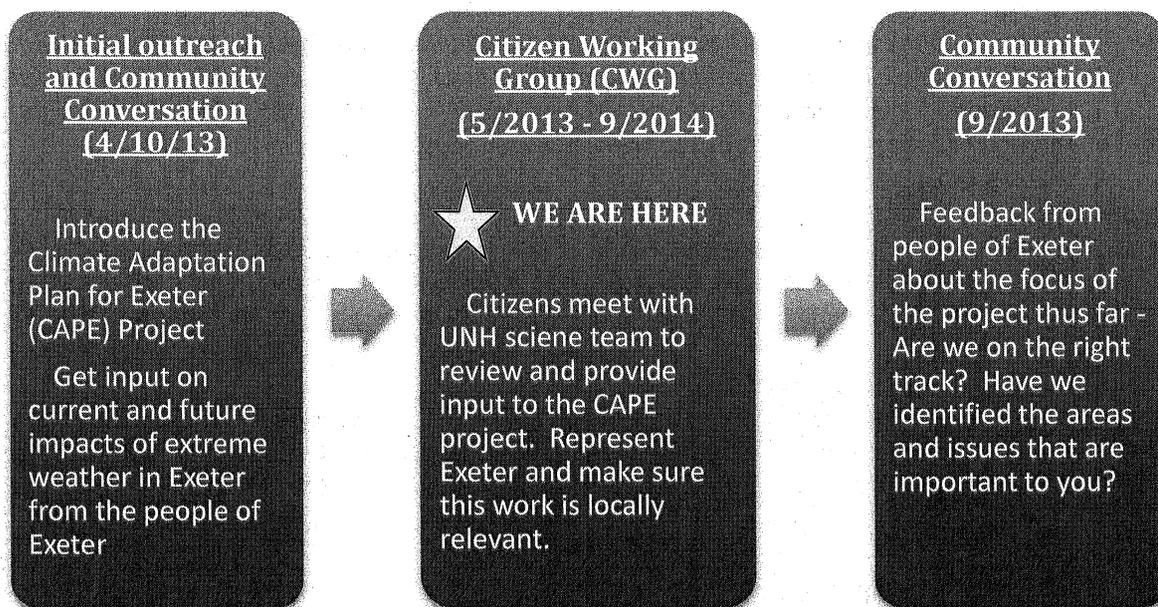
## **Broad Community Conversation Event: Spring 2014**

This event will be focused on getting input and responses to a draft climate adaptation plan prior to presenting a final plan to the Exeter Planning Board and Select Board.

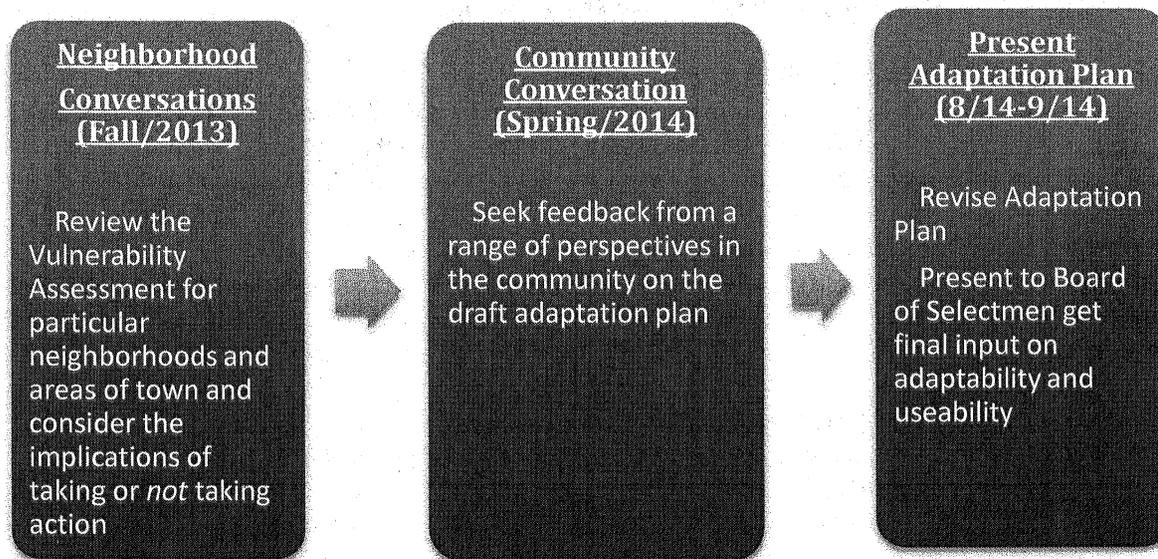
**Project website: [www.capenh.net](http://www.capenh.net)**

*The Climate Adaptation Plan for Exeter (CAPE) Project is being implemented in partnership with the Town of Exeter, UNH, and the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Funded by NOAA through the NERRS Science Collaborative.*

## **Phase 1: Gathering Information for Adaptation Planning**



## **Phase 2: Develop and Revise Adaptation Plan**



### **Questions? Please email:**

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# Interim Report

*Compiled by NH Listens for the Town of Exeter*

*For the Climate Adaptation Planning for Exeter (CAPE) Project*



## Community Conversation on Floods, Rains, and Rivers:

### What does it mean to you to prepare Exeter for a changing climate?

Held Wednesday, April 10, 2013—Exeter High School

## Summary of Themes

### *Vulnerability*

- Participants shared concerns about the vulnerability of different areas in the community. Dams (especially the Great Dam) and culverts were said by many to be vulnerable. Some wanted to get rid of the Great Dam entirely.
- Swazey Parkway was a commonly mentioned area as was Court Street—people were concerned that both of these areas could become unusable in a heavy flood. Downtown businesses were seen as a major concern. Lots of land owned by Phillips Exeter Academy was also mentioned as being at risk.
- Manufactured housing was a concern both due to the low-lying location of much of the housing as well as the ability of homes to stand up to heavy flooding.
- There was concern that things like hunting, skiing, and fishing may become less profitable (as tourism) in the future.

### *Drinking Water and Sewage*

- People are already seeing a deteriorating water quality and are concerned that an increase in pavement and fertilizer use will only cause greater loss of water quality.
- Sewer management was brought up. People wanted to make sure that the town had an adequate way to dispose of sewage and to deal with sewage in the event of a flood or major storm. Wastewater treatment plants were a concern in terms of placement and capacity.
- Regardless of the source of the pollution, something has to be done to clean up the river. Participants were concerned about the pollution that originates from other towns and areas.

### *Safety and Health*

- In the event of a major flood/storm, people are concerned that there would be little way to evacuate the town in a timely manner. PEA students would also present a special challenge as many of them are not from the area. The Seabrook plant was also mentioned as an area of concern.
- Safety for everyone, particularly the elderly and/or disabled was mentioned by several groups.
- Participants noted the possibility of an increase in invasive species with increased water temperature. People see a greater risk of Lyme disease and mosquito-based diseases.
- Electricity—People are worried that a long-term loss of electricity from a storm or other event would leave a section of the population vulnerable. For instance, elderly people who rely on oxygen need electricity to survive.



### **Problem Solving/Adaptation/Future Development**

- Several groups mentioned the need for people to work together and to find a real incentive to solve these challenges. While not all were in agreement over climate change and its causes, the recent impacts were acknowledged. Participants thought giving people economic reasons for making proactive changes now may save the town a lot of money/damage down the road. Systemic change was mentioned repeatedly.
- Education was also an important part of getting people invested in making change. Many felt that the community had a lack of understanding regarding the impacts of a changing climate and that education could help bring about change.
- One of the barriers to change could be the fact that people would be hesitant to do anything to change their home (cost, property tax increases as a result of improvements).
- Some mentioned that one of the ways to adapt to climate change would be to improve infrastructure. Focus on low-impact development, especially when it comes to runoff.
- Funding was brought up several times. It was noted that many of the changes discussed would cost a great deal of money and that the community had to make some value decisions on where to invest.
- People agreed that although large solutions may take a long time to implement, there are some easy things people can do in everyday life to help things (like not leaving an engine idle and using water gardens).

### **Map Exercise Results**

In the beginning of the April 10<sup>th</sup> event, each small group was provided a map of Exeter. Participants were asked:

- 1) To identify and locate on the map areas impacted by extreme weather and changes in climate. The things that were mentioned were categorized as relating to **People, Infrastructure, and Natural Resources**.
- 2) To determine **the most important vulnerability** identified.

The areas below are listed in order of importance and frequency as conveyed by participants on April 10<sup>th</sup>.



#### **PEOPLE**

- Court Street Area
- Loaf and Ladle
- Water Street
- PEA Campus
- Gilman Park Homes
- Princess Way
- Exeter River Landing
- Brentwood Rd
- Downtown Mills



#### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Water Treatment Plan and Reservoir
- Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Great Dam
- String Bridge
- Swazey Parkway
- Great Bridge Transportation Corridor
- Bow Street
- Larry Lane freshwater pump station
- Pickpocket Dam
- Gas line



#### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

- Exeter River and Reservoir
- Squamscott River (water quality)
- PEA conservation land and trails
- Wetlands (down from Riverwoods and recycling center)
- Farmland
- Powder Hill Road wetlands
- Brickyard pond
- Colcord Pond

### **NH Listens**

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