

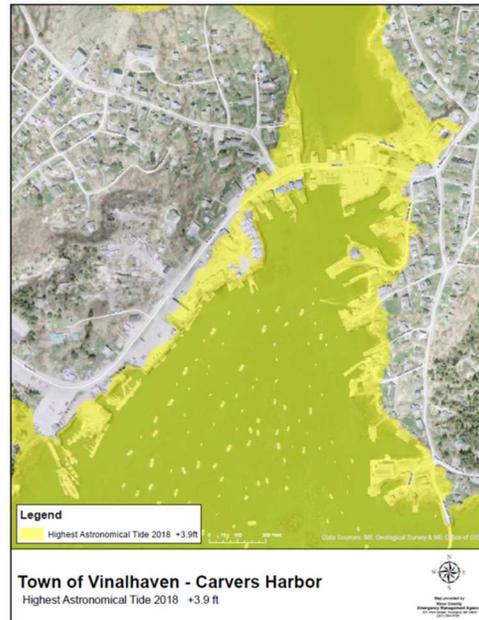


SOUTHERN MAINE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION: MAINE FLOOD RESILIENCE CHECKLIST

Town of Vinalhaven Maine Flood Resilience Checklist Process



Vinalhaven residents meet to discuss findings and recommendations from the Flood Resilience Checklist process and identify next steps for enhancing the island community's resilience to existing and future coastal flooding.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION (completed April 2019)

In fall of 2018, the island community of Vinalhaven undertook an initiative to advance its ongoing efforts understanding local threats to the Town from coastal flooding and planning for climate change. Vinalhaven municipal staff and the town's Sea Level Rise Committee worked with regional planners, county emergency managers, and local environmental non-profits to complete the *Maine Flood Resilience Checklist*, a vulnerability assessment document and framework designed to assist Maine's coastal communities examine local flood risk, evaluate vulnerability to sea level rise and storm surge, and identify specific actions for enhancing community-wide flood resilience.

APPROACH

Spearheaded by the Town's Sea Level Rise Committee, Vinalhaven residents, municipal staff volunteer board members, residents, and representatives from local environmental organizations convened in October of 2018 for a day-long workshop to undertake the *Maine Flood Resilience Checklist* (FRC) process. The Town partnered with regional planning organizations and county emergency managers to plan and implement the process. During the workshop, which was facilitated by the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), MidCoast Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC), and Knox County Emergency Management Agency (KCEMA), participants discussed flood threats to the island community, viewed custom maps that depicted potential inundation from sea level rise and storm surge, systematically evaluated vulnerabilities by working through the FRC questions, and identified opportunities and strategies to enhance the community's resilience to coastal flooding.

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APPROACH *(Continued)*

Following the workshop, SMPDC and KCEMA prepared a summary report outlining Vinalhaven's FRC results and locally tailored recommendations for specific adaptation and mitigation actions, planning strategies, and policies for the town to address its flood vulnerabilities and build resilience. The community-based process concluded with a second workshop with Town staff, the Sea Level Rise Committee, and interested parties during which SMPDC and KCEMA presented the findings and recommendations from the first workshop and facilitated a discussion among attendees about prioritization and implementation of the resiliency action items.

RESULTS

The FRC process enabled the community of Vinalhaven to build on its prior complimentary adaptation efforts to move beyond the theory of resiliency toward the practice of resilience by guiding the Town to translate an assessment of community-wide flood vulnerability into practical, actionable information and specific strategies and policies for enhancing flood resilience and sea level rise preparedness. As an island community that is intrinsically tied to the sea, Vinalhaven has unique vulnerabilities to coastal flood hazards. Extreme high tides and storm surge are already resulting in significant flood impacts to popular and valuable areas in Town. The FRC helped the Town evaluate vulnerabilities of its natural, built, social, and institutional environments from existing and future flood hazards, engage a diverse group of decision-makers in discussions about flood preparedness, and enhance information sharing across municipal departments and volunteer boards and committees. Further, it helped the Town chart a path forward for increasing community resilience through specific flood adaptation and mitigation plans, policies, and strategies and strengthen coordination of Town staff and the Sea Level Rise Committee to implement those plans, policies, and strategies.

NEEDS

Coastal municipalities need technical and financial assistance for tackling climate change. Specifically, communities need direct technical assistance to understand coastal hazards, evaluate community-wide vulnerabilities to those hazards, identify locally relevant planning strategies and policies to address vulnerabilities, and implement actions to enhance resilience.

LESSONS LEARNED

Bringing together diverse municipal staff, volunteer boards and commissions, residents, and regional planning and emergency management staff can help to break down barriers and bridge information 'silos' to improve information sharing and build support for resiliency and adaptation planning. Having a dedicated and passionate individual or group of individuals within a community to drive local resiliency planning and implementation forward is essential. Although assessing and understanding coastal vulnerabilities is a critical first step for helping communities move the needle in terms of resilience, having actionable information and specific policies and strategies for addressing coastal flooding and sea level rise is crucial.



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APPLICABILITY FOR OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

The FRC process incorporates flexibility, allowing communities to examine hazard scenarios and impacts based on local interests, values, and context. It can be applied to municipalities of any size and location and enables them to better understand their comprehensive vulnerability to existing and potential future flood hazards. It also assists communities with identifying and undertaking locally-relevant adaptation and resilience planning, even in the face of strained resources and limited capacity by leveraging existing planning processes and applying a holistic view to community resilience. Integrating information from a broad range of municipal sectors, including land use planning, hazard mitigation, and emergency management, the FRC guides communities to identify specific intervention points where local decision-makers can develop policy, strategies, and actions to address vulnerabilities that are identified through the FRC process. The specific action items Vinalhaven identified for addressing its vulnerabilities and enhancing community-wide resilience can be applied in and adapted for other coastal communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide technical and financial support to coastal communities for assessing vulnerabilities associated with coastal hazards. Foster partnerships between municipalities, regional planning organizations, state agencies and programs, and other partners involved with coastal issues and management. Encourage and provide state-level funding for resiliency planning and implementation of strategies in all municipalities. Facilitate technical support for municipalities to implement adaptation and mitigation actions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Maine Flood Resilience Checklist

https://digitalmaine.com/mgs_publications/521/

Town of Vinalhaven, Sea Level Rise Committee

<https://www.townofvinalhaven.org/sea-level-rise-committee>

11.21.19.

CONTACT

For more information, please contact: Abbie Sherwin, Senior / Coastal Planner,
Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission (207) 571-7065,
asherwin@smpdc.org

Maine's Regional Planning Organizations receive funding from the Legislature and Maine Coastal Program to provide general planning assistance to municipalities within their respective regions. Oversight and administration of annual Land Use Planning Assistance contracts is provided by the Municipal Planning Assistance Program at the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

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