

Maine Climate Council - Community Resilience Working Group Meeting
Friday July 25, 2025
In Person, Viles Arboretum, Augusta

Meeting Summary

The purpose of this meeting was to gather Community Resilience Working Group (CRWG) members to share community resilience updates across organizations, discuss progress on Maine Won't Wait climate action plan recommendations, and cultivate time for in-person connection.

Participants in attendance from the following organization: Maine Emergency Management Agency, Maine Office of Community Affairs, Land Use Planning Commission, Nature Conservancy, New England Environmental Finance Center, Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, Bowdoin College, Soltan Bass, Northern Light Health, Island Institute, Sunrise Economic Council, Department of Environmental Protection, Town of Damariscotta, Southern Maine Planning Development, Tellus Civic Science supporting the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant work, Maine Geological Survey, Maine Public Health Association

Opening Reflections

The group went around the room to share what inspires them to continue working on community resilience. Some themes included: the importance of relationships, collaboration across the state to protect the well-being of communities, sustained commitment, optimism from seeing the ideas from public stakeholder meetings and working groups directly influence policy/investments and lead to tangible change over the last six years.

Updates and Presentations

- *State Resilience Office:* Brian Ambrette provided initial updates that have followed [LD1 An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure](#), such as the launch of the State Resilience Office within the new Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA). Initiatives that the CRWG has discussed with each other and with public input since 2019 have all informed LD1 and MOCA priorities. In response to community-identified needs, a Maine Community Funding Portal will be launched this fall as a consolidated platform on MOCA's website for communities to access grant and loan opportunities. MEMA is currently reviewing applications for the Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund administrator who will hopefully be hired this fall.
- *Dignity Informed Community Engagement:* Tora Johnson shared about the experience of the community-engaged process that the Town of Machias and the Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) are undertaking to envision a resilient future through the [development of a master plan for Upper Machias Bay](#). Self-directed recommendations from the community are encouraged through a dignity-based approach that has opened conversations on complex topics.
- *Science of Hope:* Susie Arnold presented a summary of a [hope theory construct that can be used for climate work](#). This psychological framework finds that hope = goal setting + agency thinking + pathways thinking. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STS) Co-Chairs have results from a survey on critical scientific assets that are lost or at risk of being lost that could impact Maine's people and the economy. Results from the survey and implications for implementing *Maine Won't Wait* will be discussed at the next Climate Council meeting.

Discussion of CRWG Recommendations and Implementation

- CRWG Co-Chair Anne Fuchs presented a brief overview of a survey that had been sent to working group members earlier this summer. Responses indicated some concerns about CRWG action items that will be more difficult to achieve given a changing federal landscape.
- The group discussed the following questions:
 - *How have you and your organization been advancing recommendations from Maine Won't Wait?*
 - *What tools and resources are you using to implement the recommendations?*
 - *What are the biggest hurdles you face in implementation of action items?*
- Some key themes and takeaways from the conversation included:
 - Many communities, organizations, and agencies are strapped for capacity with competing challenges of facing increased workloads, lack of staff time, and uncertainty about funding and financing sources.
 - Across the complex issues the group is addressing, there is emphasis on integrating feedback from communities, best available scientific data, and collaborative planning processes to identify priorities.
 - Town of Damariscotta has been working on a significant infrastructure project to address flooding impacts and has a comprehensive plan that includes and informs resilience.
 - Bowdoin College is wrapping up a research project on municipal capacity across the state of Maine, with data on digital services that will be published this fall.
 - SCEC is working with the fishing community on a Fishing Family Forum this fall.
 - MGS, DMR, and IFW are working together on mapping dunes and coastal bluffs, and the Interagency Inland Flooding Working Group is discussing inland flood data, analysis and community outreach platform needs.
 - SMPDC is conducting a needs assessment with member towns to identify where skill-building and capacity-building can be supported.
 - LUPC is updating their Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP).
 - There are opportunities to learn from other states and from each other's organizations to identify new funding streams, data trends, and places for collaborative trainings and resource sharing.
 - Rhode Island and Massachusetts have each established new funds for large-scale resilient infrastructure projects. Staff from the New England Environmental Finance Center, Maine Climate Council, and NOAA CRRC affiliate technical assistance will be meeting to discuss and can share a report back at the next CRWG meeting.
 - The University of Pennsylvania has been conducting research on wastewater adaptation and is using data from Maine to develop suggestions that will be shared with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.
 - The Wells Reserve has a "Resilience Training Academy" for coastal resilience skills and is hoping to partner on future trainings with other groups.
 - Public private partnerships can create options to address significant climate impacts such as losses from flood damages.
 - Private industry groups and the Superintendent of Insurance are discussing opportunities for flood insurance education.
 - Northern Light Health has partnered with a casualty insurance firm on an annual climate risk assessment and is advancing projects on hardening buildings as well as promoting psychological resilience.

- Organizations continue to work hard to recognize progress where it is being made.
 - Mental health is now included in the June 2025 update for the list of eligible Community Resilience Partnership Actions (informed by CRWG recommendation).
 - MEMA/USGS received funding for 5 new stream gages.
 - SCEC is partnering with the Island Institute, NREL, and Versant on grid resilience and supporting rural Maine with vulnerability planning and energy efficiency measures.
- Many working group members are focused on developing actionable tools and ensuring that resources have a wide reach to address community needs and concerns.
 - MPHA has created an [inventory of state health plans](#) with recommendations for efficiency in use of resources, capacity, and funding.
 - [Community Health Worker Trainings](#) are available through the New England Public Health Training Center.

Next Steps and Resources

- [Maine Office of Community Affairs](#) will launch a community funding portal this fall
- Dignity-Informed Engagement, [Serving with Dignity Guide](#)
 - Contact Tora Johnson, tjohnson@sunrisecounty.org with questions
- Community Resilience Partnership, [Community Action Grants](#) Deadline August 29th
- Island Institute Article, "[These are the days in Maine](#)"
 - Contact Susie Arnold, sarnold@islandinstitute.org, with questions about the science of hope theory or STS survey results
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Award, Technical assistance available for all participating partners
 - Contact Abbie Sherwin, abbie.sherwin@noaa.gov
- [Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Extreme Heat Communications](#)
 - An Extreme Temperature Resilience Guidebook will be published in early August
- [Maine Public Health Alliance Climate Resilience Materials](#)
- [Rhode Island Resilient Rhody Infrastructure Fund](#) (enabling legislation passed, fund established but not yet operational)
- [Mass Ready Act & Resilience Revolving Fund](#) (fund proposed in recently passed legislation)
- "[The role of municipal digital services in advancing rural resilience](#)"
 - Documents and data to be available this fall. Contact Eileen Johnson, ejohnson@bowdoin.edu, with questions
- Meetings – Contact Hannah.Silverfine@maine.gov for calendar invitations
 - Next Maine Climate Council Meeting, September 8th
 - Next Community Resilience Working Group Meeting, October 17th