

## **Coastal and Marine Working Group Working Waterfront & Infrastructure meeting #4**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2024, 1:00 pm**

**Next meeting: Thursday, February 8, 3:00 pm.** [Click here to join the meeting](#)

### **Agenda:**

- Recap last week's Climate Council meeting
- Governor's State of the State address is today
- Scheduling the equity survey
- Fisheries and Aquaculture subgroup conversations
- Community Resilience conversations
- Discuss the strategy template

### **Attendees (\* = CMWG member):**

- Bill Needleman\*
- Nick Battista\*
- Ben Martens\*
- Jessica Joyce\*
- Kathleen Billings\*
- Natalie Springuel
- Olivia Richards
- Monique Coombs
- Melissa Britsch
- Steph Sun

### **Climate Council meeting recap (special session on January 23)**

- Kathleen Billings spoke about impacts to Stonington
- The meeting highlighted the importance of resiliency for the climate council work
- For the CMWG and the climate plan update, we are allowed to create more strategies with respect to resilience. We don't need to feel limited to one strategy as emphasized before

### **State of the State address**

- The Governor's State of the State address may mention WWFs
- The state may be moving faster (and faster than this group) about WWFs. There are a lot of moving parts. We may have to adapt our strategies to other work that is ongoing and make sure we complement those efforts.
  - o Shift in our group's strategy.
- Comment: FEMA and SBA visiting towns. Water-based activities can't retreat away from the water. At least not completely. Some support activities can migrate and should be allowed to do

so. Access must be maintained. We need to keep repeating this and emphasize the risks of doing nothing.

- Concern about loss of access due to gentrification.
- Comment: One takeaway from the Climate Council meeting – what is necessary on the waterfront and is water-dependent vs water-privileged? These storms could be a way to make more access by pushing back the things that don't need to be on the water. Taxes, zoning, etc. could be valuable tools. The CMWG and climate council can consider ways to creatively do this.
- **Issue:** we understand WWF issues, but they aren't necessarily broadly understood. The document we are working on could talk about a WWF assessment or characterization as a way to share what we know.
- **Issue:** when we talk about WWF jobs, we are talking about jobs at the WWF (like moving bait on a dock). But there are other jobs that are supported elsewhere – boat owners, sternmen, etc.
  - Do policymakers understand the networked aspect and spread of the working waterfront beyond the physical infrastructure?
- “Resilience” is a widely used and understood term. More so than in the past.
- What is the role of WWFs in the transition of communities/stuff/people away from the coast? Landowners will want to get value from coastal property if other users retreat. Part of managed retreat is figuring out what to do with vulnerable properties.
  - We can put these ideas in the strategy template recommendations
- We can also make recommendations more broadly to the state – like the State needs to make land use planning tools and info for people to use
  - We need to think through managed retreat. What will it look like? How do we add value and keep value as things change?
- We need to put WWFs in other strategies and also create our own strategies for working waterfronts.

**Strategy template discussion (current draft: [2024 Working Waterfront Deliverable - Coastal and Marine WG - v2.docx - Google Docs](#)):**

- Last time, we decided to separate our recommendations into recommendations for public and private properties
  - There are some challenges specific to private WWFs
- **Question:** Do we need to prioritize the actions? There are a lot of them. *This wasn't directly addressed in the conversation.*
- **Question about the actions:**
  - How many people have contributed to the table thus far? *Only a few people had done so.*
  - The actions are pretty new, but some people left comments from past conversations
  - The information in the template is a first attempt at new strategies and actions based on prior conversations.
- **Question:** *Before we dive into the actions, how do people feel about the strategies?*
  - Consensus on splitting out public and private waterfronts. Too tricky to lump.
  - There are currently two new strategies, but they might not quite be right. Do we need one strategy with more actions? Do we need to reword things?
- We can now do more than one strategy.

- Question: Could we do three strategies if we need? Yes, especially if it helps us clarify our thoughts. Things might get rolled up later.
- Question: *How are we defining “working waterfronts?” Are we only talking about commercial fishing and aquaculture, or do we need to broaden things further?* There was an argument that we should be more inclusive and add marine construction, boatyards, and similar activities. We don’t necessarily need to define “working waterfront” for the climate plan, but we should be inclusive of water-dependent uses beyond commercial fishing and aquacultures.
  - Water-dependency and commercial activity are critical, in addition to CF/AQ uses.
  - Participants noted that the proposed strategies specifically called out commercial fishing and aquaculture, while the proposed actions were more inclusive of other water-dependent activities and infrastructure.
  - **Action:** make the strategies broader to include more marine-dependent uses and focus on working waterfronts broadly
  - Other participants noted that properties used for CF/AQ are different than marinas or boatyards and people may think of them differently.
  - If we zoom out from focusing only on commercial fishing and aquaculture activities, we could include water-dependent businesses as a larger bucket/description of what needs to be at a working waterfront.
  - Issue: where do we put our effort? There are a lot of WWF activities and we don’t want to exclude them. But where do offshore wind or yacht clubs fit? They have access to resources that smaller businesses might not.
    - One type of working waterfronts is under the most pressure – the seafood industry and seafood infrastructure part.
    - Question: The part connected to the food system is most at risk of going away. Do we need to call this out specifically?
  - The conversation clarified that we will likely need unique strategies for working waterfront infrastructure and working waterfront businesses. We want to support both working waterfronts and the businesses that rely on them.
  - **Note:** There was discussion about how to word the strategies and actions and how to be inclusive while ensuring that resources go to the groups that need it most. These conversations will likely continue.
- **Summarizing the recent conversation**
  - Proposed new strategies/buckets to organize our thoughts
    - WWF Infrastructure: making resilient
      - We need resilient infrastructure. This is a broad category and includes public and private infrastructure, as well as other types of infrastructure, like the road network.
    - WWF Businesses: preserving and making resilient
      - Outside of the infrastructure, we need to have a conversation about working waterfronts and the resilience of the commercial fishing and aquaculture businesses that rely on them. These businesses are

threatened by climate-related ecosystem changes as well as infrastructure issues.

- WWF Access: preserving and making resilient
  - This needs to include planning for access and conversations about the roles of land use and zoning. This is also a distinct issue and conversation. The managed retreat conversation and the role of WWFs in maintaining value goes here. Acquiring and protecting key resources goes here, too. We should talk about how to prioritize protection, like by thinking about climate impacts.
  - *Water dependency + commercial activity = Working waterfront.*
- Issue: we need to be clear about our definitions. What is WWF, water-dependent, etc. When people are trying to update land use zoning or other similar things, they need clarity. It's hard to do.
  - Could we have a priority system? Needs may be different in Portland vs. Stonington.
  - Other issue: People can still sell their properties. How can we be sure that uses are maintained over time?
- Question: Process question about the template: who is actually writing and editing the final updated plan?
  - The template is good for wrangling ideas. The final document will benefit from sidebars, definitions, anecdotes, etc. Do we get any say about these? A WWF sidebar would be amazing in the final plan!! **Action: Ask Laura**
- Discussion about the need for a working waterfront inventory
  - Participants made a plug for Jessica and Monique's local working waterfront inventory template. We just lost a TON of infrastructure, but we can't say for sure since we don't even know what we lost. We NEED to know what we still have. We need a WWF infrastructure baseline. Data collection of some sort needs to happen. What WWFs do we have? Where? What are the main threats and vulnerabilities?
  - It's hard to distribute money if you don't have an inventory.
  - Make a WWF inventory an action. Emphasize that we need this to prepare for our response to future disasters. *Put this in the promote access/preservation bin?* It needs a resilience component, too.
  - Question: Is the need for an inventory something we should connect to the CMWG monitoring subgroup? **Action: Nick and/or Bill bring this up to the monitoring subgroup**

## Wrap-up

- Are we heading in the right direction?
- Please edit and comment!!
- **Action**: Edit the template strategies and actions and try to get this in a good place for the next meeting. Next time, try to confirm that we are talking about the right stuff. (All)
- Do we have a word count ceiling? Don't need to worry right now.
- Is there a program to track ownership of waterfront properties? Agreement that we need an inventory; wondering if there are other sources and existing data.
  - Local activity? State activity? Both?

- Comp plans and harbor management plans have some information that could transfer