



Shore and Harbor Planning Grants

Town of Gouldsboro

Planning for Change Along Gouldsboro's Shore (Fiscal Year 2022, project awarded 2021)

"In working toward resilience, everything is connected to everything else." – Bill Zoellick, Gouldsboro Shore Coordinator



Gouldsboro community resilience workshop and open house, May 2023. Photo: Bill Zoellick

Project Description

Gouldsboro had three objectives: 1) Address the loss of shore access for shellfish harvesters, 2) identify where the town is most vulnerable to infrastructure damage from severe storms and sea level rise, and 3) engage town residents in both issues. The project required dedicated effort from many volunteers, in addition to support from town staff and hired consultants.

Address the loss of shore access for shellfish harvesters

- The town and project volunteers worked with shellfish harvesters to identify critical harvest areas and access points. Using that information as well as publicly available information about conserved lands and property boundaries, they created maps to identify opportunities to create or protect access to the most important harvest areas.
- The town worked with Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), Frenchman Bay Conservancy, and property owners to acquire properties and easements to provide shore access. They also worked to create a template for shore access license agreements between the town and property owners that will reduce barriers to providing access over private property.

Identify Vulnerabilities to Sea-Level Rise and Severe Storms

- The town hired FB Environmental to complete a [Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan](#) to identify the areas that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts and recommend steps to address vulnerabilities at each site. This report will help the town prioritize their efforts to increase resilience.

Engage Gouldsboro's Residents

- The project team created and continues to maintain a website and associated electronic newsletter to report project progress and events: [Gouldsboro Shore – Keeping Gouldsboro's shore at the center of the community](#).
- The project team organized several events to increase community knowledge about softshell clams and the local clam harvesting industry. These included an introduction to clam digging at a town mudflat and a clam-focused outreach event that included clam recipes, clam chowder, steamed clams, and information about green crabs, shore access, efforts to increase local clam populations, and coastal erosion.
- The project team created a [Scuttlebutt](#) guide to explain that Gouldsboro is a working waterfront community and what to expect while living there.
- The project team organized and led a community workshop and open house to enable residents to discuss and offer their thoughts about the Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan and other community resilience concerns.

Project Results

The project was extremely successful. In addition to the final vulnerability report, website, Scuttlebutt guide, and securing harvester access, the project team has contributed to journal articles and is working to increase awareness about shellfish and other marine resources and their importance to the local economy. They are also collaborating with other statewide efforts to protect shellfishing access and raise awareness of the importance of walk-in access to the intertidal zone.

Future Plans

The town and project volunteers are continuing their work to maintain shellfishing access, address vulnerability issues, and engage the community. The town formed a Coastal Resilience Committee and joined the Maine Community Resilience Partnership to organize and implement the coastal resilience actions identified in the Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan. They are initially focusing on roads and other infrastructure threatened by storms and sea level rise, but are aware of the interconnectedness of coastal resilience challenges and are continuing efforts to support marine resource harvesting and other community needs.

Lessons Learned

Gouldsboro improved its ability to engage residents in learning about and planning for climate impacts on the town and their properties. The project team advises communities to consider the following:

- Spend as much effort planning how you will stimulate people to talk as you do planning what YOU want to present. Record what they say and then show it back to them.
- When possible, go to meet people where they are already meeting rather than asking them to come to you. (Some of our most well-attended and valuable meetings were with a homeowner's association and the Gouldsboro Historical Society.)
- Couple meetings with food, preferably food that is at least as interesting as the subject of the discussion.

- Reach out to other communities working on the same issues, sharing and learning together. (Collaboration with communities along the coast significantly strengthened Scuttlebutt and our MPR article on shore access.)
- Build and maintain a website that provides good information and stories.
- Don't get stuck in your silo. In addition to the risks posed by storms and rising sea levels, a resilient community must attend to food insecurity, affordable workforce housing, inequitable access to broadband, and ensure that people are safe and warm and have transportation when needed. In a resilient community, groups are working on all those issues. Make sure you are in touch with each other.
- Make sure that residents have opportunities to be involved in the work. (This is easier when people understand that issues are connected and efforts in different areas build on each other.)
- Nurture a broad volunteer base and call on them.
- Work with and provide information and pictures to a local waterfront reporter
- Progress on responding to the impacts of climate change (or changes in home affordability or food security) is both slow and fast. Working toward structural changes that will have long-lasting, significant impacts goes slowly. We also must address the needs that exist now.



*Road damage from June 2021 storm in Birch Harbor. **Photo:** Dale Church
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