

New Hampshire

**Coastal
Adaptation
Workgroup
5-Year Intentions**

September 2023





Acknowledgements

The work of the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup takes place in our coastal watershed, which is located on N'dakinna, the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook and Wabanaki Peoples past and present; some of these peoples are currently lacking federal recognition. We acknowledge and honor with gratitude the aki (land), nebi (water), olakwikak (flora), awaasak (fauna) and the aln8bak (people) who have stewarded N'dakinna throughout the generations. This land continues to be unceded.

CAW offers this land acknowledgement with a commitment to examining our individual perspectives and privileges, acknowledging historic injustices, understanding how patterns of harm continue to show up, and building authentic collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through a focus on reciprocity and sovereignty.

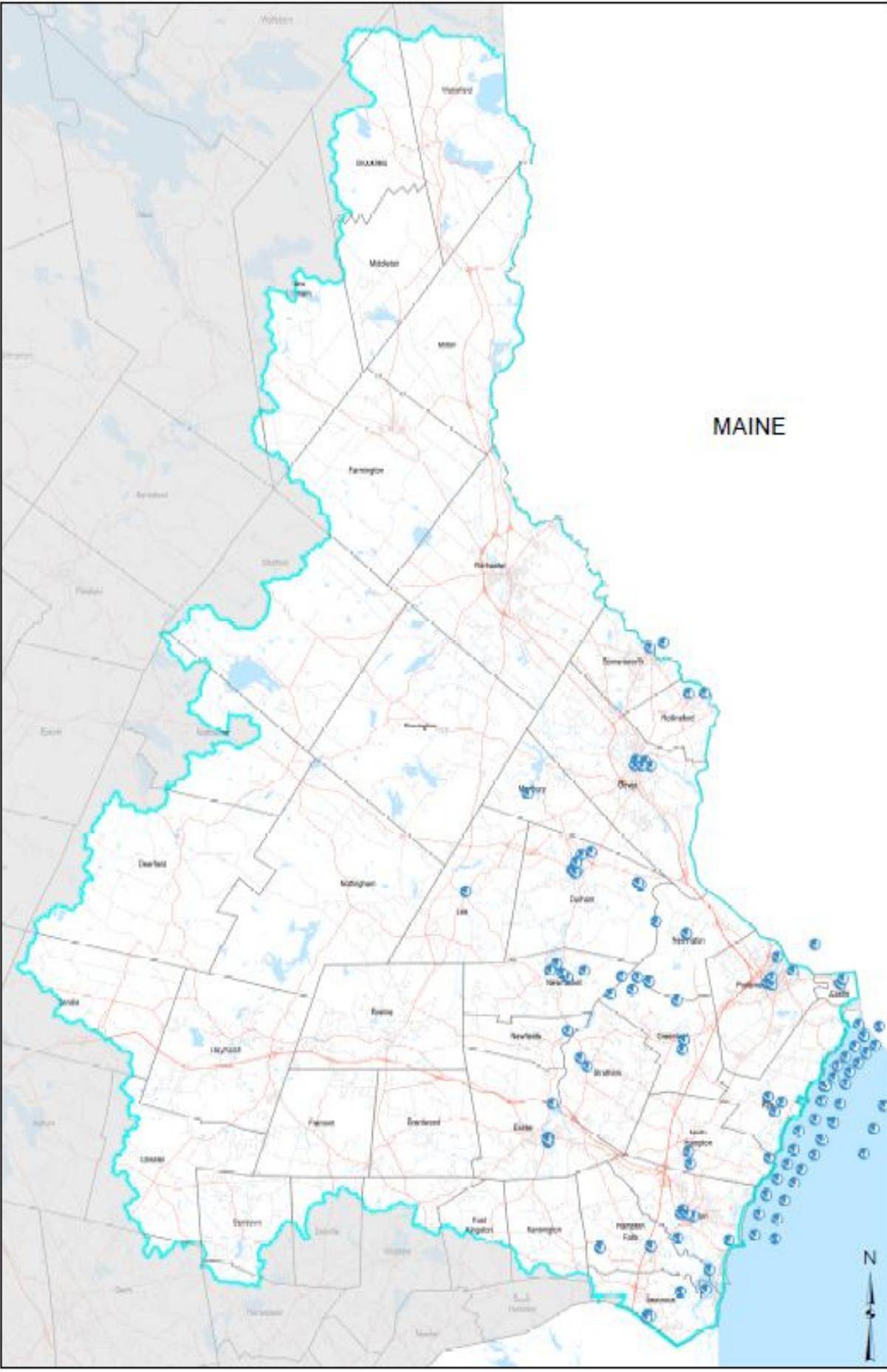
The strength of our network is truly in the strength of our relationships. The thoughtful and collaborative development of CAW's 5-Year Intentions would not have been possible without the participation and generous contributions from the CAW community. Thank you to all CAW members and leaders who shared their time, experience, and expertise in this new endeavor over the last year.

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Contents

Overview of the Region	7
Mission + Vision	8
Guiding Principles	10
Developing CAW's 5-year Intentions	12
5-year Intentions Summary	14
Evolve Our Practice	15
Advance Knowledge and the Field	16
Catalyze Principled Climate Adaptation	17
Enable a Thriving Workgroup	19



THE COASTAL ADAPTATION WORKGROUP'S PROJECT MAP

Overview of the Region

The New Hampshire coast is a vibrant place to live, work, and play. The 17 coastal zone communities are home to 11 percent of the state's population, several popular beaches, and an economy that supports over 100,000 jobs (NHCRHC 2016). Community members and residents have deep ties to this place and the people who call it home. Beyond the Atlantic Coastline, two nationally-recognized estuaries support coastal ecosystems. The Great Bay and Hampton-Seabrook Estuaries include many diverse habitats, including salt marshes, mud flats, oyster reefs, sand dunes, and eelgrass beds that provide critical flood protection and habitat functions.

The region is already subject to significant coastal flood hazards. These hazards, which include groundwater rise, sea level rise, coastal storms, coastal erosion, extreme precipitation, and freshwater flooding, are expected to increase in frequency and severity in the years to come. Moreover, coastal hazards and the risk they pose to natural resources, built infrastructure, and social well-being are intertwined and interconnected with converging issues of housing and food insecurity, mental and public health, and racial and social justice.

In the small geographic area of New Hampshire's coast, there are strong connections among community leaders and adaptation practitioners. With coordination, partnership, and support, relatively small coastal communities have taken steps to increase understanding about present-day impacts, proactively plan for future risks, and build relationships to foster sustained and equitable achievement of community goals. Since 2009, CAW member organizations have worked together and partnered with communities on over 100 projects totaling more than \$7 million in grant funding. The leadership of these communities and the knowledge shared across jurisdictional boundaries has strengthened relationships, regulations, plans, and projects for the entire coastal zone.

Mission + Vision

The mission of the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup is to assist communities in NH's coastal watershed to prepare for the impacts of extreme weather and long term climate change by providing resources, facilitation, and guidance that enhance readiness and resilience.

The New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup envisions coastal watershed communities that are resourceful, ready and resilient to extreme weather and long term climate change.



Image Credit: Tim Briggs



Image Credit: Gabby Bradt



Guiding Principles

These principles communicate CAW's shared values and guide CAW's collective decisions. They cannot be separated; these principles are to be understood and honored as a whole. CAW members will hold one another accountable and update these principles to reflect our evolution and learning overtime.

CAW creates community.

The strength of our network is in the strength of our relationships—to people, places, and ecosystems. Each of us holds a critical piece of the network because we bring different experiences and expertise. We welcome and treat everyone with dignity and respect. We provide a generative place for CAW members to grow as people and as practitioners. We commit to enhancing CAW's diversity of tactics, knowledges, and ways of being so that we can better reflect and serve New Hampshire's coastal watershed communities.

CAW is adaptive.¹

Change is constant. We are open and responsive to change. We shift with shifting community concerns, strengths, and priorities while staying true to our guiding principles. We evolve with evolving knowledge of climate change impacts. We commit to maintaining flexibility in our approach, responding to change in the communities we serve and staying in touch with our mission and vision.

¹ This principle was inspired by and adapted from adreinne maree brown's Principles of Emergent Strategy.

CAW values data.

Informed planning and adaptation decisions consider the best available climate data. We support, leverage, and share science and research. We help communities understand and apply scientific and technical information on the ground. And, we recognize that we are not the only knowledge holders. We commit to bringing our approach to understanding the world around us into mutual and ethical conversation with other ways of knowing (e.g., experiential knowledge and indigenous knowledge.)

CAW invests in process.

We work with intention, humility, and integrity. We elevate and engage an individual's and a community's assets, capabilities, strengths, and aspirations because we believe that these are the foundation for thriving and resilient communities. We recognize work rooted in relationships and relationships rooted in trust take time. We commit to building trust, strengthening relationships, engaging communities as co-producers, practicing transparency, sharing decision-making power, and learning as we go.

CAW catalyzes action.

We connect community members, local organizations, and decision-makers with information and tools to be effective change agents. We uniquely provide space and resources for peer-to-peer learning, information sharing, relationship building, idea generation, experimentation, and collective action. We consider the full suite of adaptation options and approaches, including nature-based solutions, and recognize that adaptation approaches will vary based on the goals, preferences, and concerns of a community. We commit to harnessing the unique potential of collaboration to spark meaningful progress that is greater than the sum of our parts.

CAW embraces complexity.

We cultivate a culture of curiosity. The confluence of systems and crises requires us to ask questions about how we got here and to work across the intersections of issues and disciplines when determining where we are going and how we get there. The challenges and opportunities before us require that we be in principled conversation with diverse perspectives.² We commit to building our capacity to identify root causes, recognize injustices, build consensus, and attend to the complex nature of social and ecological challenges because the collective work of our time is to cultivate healthy and vibrant communities and ecosystems.

² The idea of principled conversation is inspired by N'Tanya Lee's concept of "principled struggle" through which we can honestly disagree and ask questions to deepen understanding.

Developing CAW's 5-Year Intentions

CAW formed in 2009, precipitated by the fallout of the Mother's Day and Patriot's Day storms and enabled by a relatively small geographic scope and strong connections among coastal resilience and adaptation practitioners. CAW is an award-winning collaborative that has grown to include over 30 organizations and municipalities working to assist NH's coastal watershed communities in preparing for the impacts of extreme weather and long-term climate change. CAW focuses on meeting specific community needs, as identified and defined by the communities themselves. CAW provides consistent and coordinated capacity to communities that are small, governed mostly by volunteers, and facing many compounding challenges. As climate change collaboratives and networks have emerged around the country and the world, the CAW model has proven to be an effective and sustainable approach for addressing the challenges posed by climate change (ISC 2019).

Through its success, CAW has always operated as an informal network with no dedicated staff, no long-term strategic plan, and very limited funding. However, as momentum on coastal resilience has intensified, with more communities engaged, and with new funding opportunities available, CAW is in a unique position to plan forward. This planning forward allows CAW to prioritize, but not limit, how the network and its members focus their time, energy, and resources over the next five years. Therefore, beginning in March of 2023, CAW members came together for three half-day retreats to develop 5-Year Intentions.



Retreat 1

Setting guiding principles to anchor future work

In the first retreat, participants used storytelling to generate a list of over 50 principles that are rooted in common experiences. These principles were organized and synthesized to communicate shared values and aid in future decision-making.

Retreat 2

Generating realistic and ambitious goals

In the second retreat, CAW members developed goals which are rooted in CAW's strengths and opportunities with recognition of areas for growth or change.

Retreat 3

Developing strategies to help ideas come to life

In the final retreat, CAW moved from the conceptual to the practical. Participants identified specific activities, key partners, funding mechanisms, and measures of success that would enable forward progress toward ambitious goals.



5-Year Intentions

The following intentions will guide CAW's work over the next five years. They are intentionally broad, flexible, and directional. They are supported by specific activities in spaces where CAW is already a leader and in spaces where CAW hopes to grow.

Evolve Our Practice

Pause, learn, and grow in ways that expand and challenge our thinking individually and collectively so that we can affect meaningful and long-lasting change.

Advance Knowledge and the Field

Provide a forum for generative exchanges of information, resources, and accomplishments among local adaptation practitioners, community leaders, and local decision-makers.

Catalyze Principled Climate Adaptation

Bring together existing partners and nurture new partnerships for collaborative and emergent progress toward just, healthy, and vibrant communities and ecosystems.

Enable a Thriving Workgroup

Enhance and sustain the connectivity, health, and impact of CAW so that we can continue to be a sustainable and collaborative community of leaders, learners, and practitioners.

Evolve Our Practice

Pause, learn, and grow in ways that expand and challenge our thinking individually and collectively so that we can affect meaningful and long-lasting change.

The Coastal Adaptation Workgroup will build our own knowledge and capacity to lead, participate, and support equitable climate adaptation and resilience in the region. The goal of laying this groundwork will be to identify and consider who lives, works, and recreates in CAW members' service areas. With this knowledge, present and future initiatives can focus on addressing root causes of vulnerability while planning for and with members of our communities who will be most affected by climate change.

Strategies

Develop and launch a learning series to help CAW members advance just and equitable coastal adaptation and climate resilience.

CAW will engage an outside consultant to develop a learning series focused on (1) understanding the root causes of social vulnerability, (2) leading equity-centered community processes, and (3) measuring equity. The consultant will launch the learning series with pilot participants to inform the roll-out of a voluntary program available to Full CAW membership. This series can be made further available through a train-the-trainer model so that learnings ripple beyond CAW's immediate network and through regional funding and technical assistance opportunities.

Identify factors that contribute to vulnerability and resilience for people who have faced discrimination and marginalization in New Hampshire's coastal watershed.

With guidance from an outside consultant, CAW members will lead community conversations with people or communities who are disproportionately impacted by climate change due to life circumstances that systematically increase their exposure to hazards or make it harder to respond. These conversations will help CAW members strengthen connections and gather information on the conditions and capacities that create vulnerability for people in their services areas, as well as opportunities to strengthen resilience.

Advance Knowledge and the Field

Provide a forum for generative exchanges of information, resources, and accomplishments among local adaptation practitioners, community leaders, and local decision-makers.

CAW makes meaningful progress towards its mission by engaging and sharing information and resources with key stakeholders in the region and beyond. Climate Summits, CAW Talks, and Full CAW meetings feature some of the latest research as well as learnings from adaptation projects underway in New Hampshire's coastal communities. The ability to continue providing these unique services will help to lift all boats in the field.

Strategies

Sustain existing and evaluate additional learning opportunities and discussion groups.

CAW will continue to host CAW Talks and Full CAW programming. CAW will also explore additional learning opportunities and formats that equip members with timely adaptation tools, skills, and capacity. CAW will continue to host the bi-annual NH Climate Summit with new goals of focusing on emerging coastal adaptation priorities, creating a space for cross-disciplinary knowledge sharing, celebrating community champions, and demonstrating CAW's role as a regional leader. In this role, CAW will maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Maine CCAP to align programming and exchange learnings.

Provide community leaders and local decision-makers with tools, funding, and connections to take informed action.

Over the next five years, additional staff will enable the network to enhance existing communication and capacity-building services. Additional staff will track, share, and help members apply for funding. They will also design and manage a member database to foster connection and generate organic partnerships among the network. And in partnership with CAW Outreach, staff will maintain the project portal, resource library, and website. CAW Outreach, specifically, will continue to advise member-led projects through best practices in community engagement.

Catalyze Principled Climate Adaptation

Bring together existing partners and nurture new partnerships for collaborative and emergent progress toward just, healthy, and vibrant communities and ecosystems.

The strength of our network is in the strength of our relationships. CAW strives to harness the unique potential of these relationships to spark meaningful progress that is greater than the sum of our parts. Over the next five years, CAW intends to expand assistance to communities beyond the coastal zone and provide stronger coordination that will help members pool resources and expertise to broaden their impact to the regional scale.

Strategies

Support emerging needs in coastal and inland watershed communities through Great Bay Adapts.

Through Great Bay 2030 and funding from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, CAW will facilitate the development and implementation of a technical assistance program that supports climate adaptation planning and action within and across Great Bay 2030 communities. The program will be tailored to align with the interests, goals, and capacity of these communities and their partners. This work will be led by a Watershed Resilience Manager, with support from CAW leadership and the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP).

Provide dedicated capacity and leadership to coordinate shared climate adaptation goals across New Hampshire's coastal watershed.

In addition to supporting emerging needs within communities in CAW's service area, dedicated attention will be paid to fostering meaningful collaboration and coordinating regional efforts. Over the next five years, CAW intends to leverage federal funding to bring on additional staff who can lead a regional assessment of needs and vulnerabilities, develop a prioritization criteria for projects with regional impact, provide grant assistance to CAW members, and further enable a thriving workgroup by providing facilitation and administrative support.

Catalyze Principled Climate Adaptation

Pilot "small CAWs" as communities of practice among members who share a common priority, challenge, or geography.

CAW is ripe for generative member-led spaces that are dedicated to discussing topics of shared interest, generating best practices, or experimenting with new ideas. For example, science and research practitioners may use this space to support one another in community engaged research or the use of knowledge co-production techniques. Municipal and regional planners may use this space to approach complicated issues of climate migration, considering both sending and receiving communities. Small CAWs will serve as incubator spaces for the network.

Over the next five years CAW will research existing models, develop a right-sized approach, and issue a general solicitation for topic areas. CAW will initially pilot 3 small CAWs and evaluate the process, structure, and outcomes to determine whether to sustain this generative space in future years.



Sustain a Thriving Workgroup

Enhance and maintain the connectivity, health, and impact of CAW so the network can continue to be a sustainable and collaborative community of leaders, learners, and practitioners.

At this moment in its trajectory, CAW has a unique opportunity to build sustained capacity and enhance its impact as a regional network. This requires evaluating and supporting the purpose, performance, operations, and health of the network overtime. The review and update of existing tools, initiatives, and processes as well as the addition of new staff will enhance CAW's ability to make communities more ready and resilient for impacts of extreme weather and climate change.

Strategies

Grow CAW's membership and pipeline for leadership.

CAW strives to be a network with an inclusive representation of the present and future workforce, the communities we serve, and the partnerships we cultivate. To achieve this vision, CAW will identify barriers to the full participation of existing members and recommend changes to improve transparency and support equitable engagement. Individual CAW members will also build mutual relationships and extend membership to new partners, including but not limited to students, municipal officials, and peers working in housing, racial, and social justice.

Sustain the connectivity, impact, and health of the network.

Annual assessments will help CAW track its evolution overtime while staying accountable to its members and mission. This work will begin with the review of existing network evaluation models. After learning best practices, CAW staff and interested members will develop key indicators of network connectivity, health, and impact and pilot an annual evaluation. Alongside this effort, CAW staff and leadership will operationalize commitments to equity and justice throughout the network's policies and programs. Finally, staff will evaluate sustainable funding sources to support the network beyond the next five years.

Enable a Thriving Workgroup

Right-size existing processes and tools for tracking and sharing progress of CAW projects.

Over the years, CAW members have developed several databases to track, record, and report project accomplishments and outcomes. These databases are most useful and impactful when they meet the interests, capacity, and needs of CAW members. With 5-year intentions, CAW is primed for a thorough review and update of existing databases. CAW Outreach will lead the work of evaluating and recommending updates to improve existing or build new tools that are easy to operate, regularly updated, aligned with CAW's 5-year intentions and publicly accessible to share notable progress.

Leverage communication tools to raise awareness of CAW's work, highlight local stories of climate adaptation, and spread the word about relevant events and resources.

CAW will leverage additional staff capacity or the expertise of a communications-focused internship to audit the CAW website, improving accessibility and overall user experience. This additional personnel will also help to develop an annual communications calendar around anticipated programming and material. Such a framework will allow CAW to be proactive and inclusive in the planning and distribution of social media, website, and newsletter content.

CAW will also revisit the design of the annual Rising Tides Photo Contest. After many successful years of engaging members of the public in this campaign, now is a time to pause and specify the goal and target audience. CAW Outreach will take time to review similar models across the region, learn about target audience needs, and make informed decisions about future programming.