



# Sustaining Champions of Climate Adaptation in Coastal Communities: A Northern New England Study

**Alexandra Philip**, N.H Sea Grant Doyle Fellow

**Julia Peterson**, NH Sea Grant and UNH Cooperative Extension

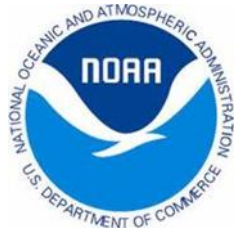
**Chris Keeley**, NH Sea Grant, UNH Cooperative Extension, and Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve



**University of New Hampshire**  
Cooperative Extension

# NH Coastal Adaptation Workgroup Partners

Federal   State   Regional   Municipal   Academic   Non-profit   Business



# + CAW Engages with Coastal Community Leaders through....

- Workshops and Forums
- Community Specific Projects





# Climate Adaptation Community Champion: Definition



**An individual who promotes the adoption of climate adaptation strategies at the local level through direct (elected, appointed, or volunteer official) or indirect (volunteer or active community member) influence**







# Climate Adaptation Community Champions: Three Levels



Policy champions can occur on **three** levels (Devlin-Foltz and Molinaro 2012)

- **Level I:** Educates self about the issue – a “potential champion”
- **Level II:** Educates others about the issue – a “new champion”
- **Level III:** Influences action and change through policy or other means – a “champion”





# Study Overview: Objective



**Identify the role climate adaptation community champions play in adopting climate adaptation strategies in local coastal communities and understand how professional climate adaptation assistance providers can best support these champions.**





# Study Overview: Research Goals



1. Understand the role of local climate champions
2. Discover who the champions consider their allies
3. Identify major achievements and barriers in adopting climate adaptation strategies

# + Communities represented:

- Amesbury, MA
- Hampton, NH
- Rye, NH
- Dover, NH
- Newburyport, MA
- Seabrook, NH
- Durham NH
- Newfields, NH
- York, ME
- Ellsworth, ME
- Portsmouth, NH
- Exeter, NH





# + Findings

# + **Finding 1:** Champions are most concerned about climate impacts on their economies, public safety, and critical infrastructure



- Sea-level rise
- Flooding
- Increased frequency of severe storms

*“Cost, public safety, public health, quality of life, desirability of location, being able to buy and sell homes- the benefits of adaptation occur on so many different levels.”*



## + **Finding 2:** Local adaptation projects may help create new champions

- **Finding 2.1:** Champions become educated about climate change issues through websites and workshops
- **Finding 2.2:** Champions educate their communities about climate change issues
- **Finding 2.3:** Many champions have added climate adaptation to their community's master plan



## + **Finding 3:** Most champions say public awareness is their largest achievement in climate adaptation efforts

*How did they gain public awareness?*

- Adaptation projects
- Town involvement
- Media





# + Finding 4: Lack of resources is a major barrier for champions in adopting climate adaptation strategies

- Technical resources
- Funding
- Time constraints
- Lack of assistance



## + **Finding 5:** Champions need projects brought to their community and additional technical support

- Additional technical support for specific projects
  - GIS and mapping professionals
- Access to local data
  - Storm-surge data, storm-flood information, flood maps
- Opportunities to participate in specific projects
  - Projects with professional, technical, and grant support



**\*Connect champions with available resources\***

## + **Finding 6:** Champions want additional education and outreach opportunities for their communities

- Education is necessary in their community
  - Need to target the *general public*
- Facilitation for public forums



\*Continue workshops for a new audience\*



## + **Finding 7:** Champions could use additional support from grassroots organizations

- Smaller climate adaptation projects
- Volunteer- driven projects
  - Storm drain data collections





## + **Finding 8:** Champions need climate adaptation professionals to support their work

- Champions say that without their allies, the work they do would not be possible
  - Members of NHCAW
  - Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions
  - UNH and UMaine





## Finding 9: Communities without planners need more support



*“We don’t have a town planner so that department is sort of rudderless boat in terms of looking ahead and planning for the eventualities to come”*





# What Champions Need

- Projects
- Public Education and Outreach
- Technical Support



+

# Thank you!

