

# Interim Report

*Compiled by NH Listens for the Town of Exeter  
For the Climate Adaptation Planning for Exeter (CAPE) Project*



## Community Conversation on Floods, Rains, and Rivers: What does it mean to you to prepare Exeter for a changing climate?

Held Wednesday, April 10, 2013—Exeter High School

### Summary of Themes

#### *Vulnerability*

- Participants shared concerns about the vulnerability of different areas in the community. Dams (especially the Great Dam) and culverts were said by many to be vulnerable. Some wanted to get rid of the Great Dam entirely.
- Swazey Parkway was a commonly mentioned area as was Court Street—people were concerned that both of these areas could become unusable in a heavy flood. Downtown businesses were seen as a major concern. Lots of land owned by Phillips Exeter Academy was also mentioned as being at risk.
- Manufactured housing was a concern both due to the low-lying location of much of the housing as well as the ability of homes to stand up to heavy flooding.
- There was concern that things like hunting, skiing, and fishing may become less profitable (as tourism) in the future.

#### *Drinking Water and Sewage*

- People are already seeing a deteriorating water quality and are concerned that an increase in pavement and fertilizer use will only cause greater loss of water quality.
- Sewer management was brought up. People wanted to make sure that the town had an adequate way to dispose of sewage and to deal with sewage in the event of a flood or major storm. Wastewater treatment plants were a concern in terms of placement and capacity.
- Regardless of the source of the pollution, something has to be done to clean up the river. Participants were concerned about the pollution that originates from other towns and areas.

#### *Safety and Health*

- In the event of a major flood/storm, people are concerned that there would be little way to evacuate the town in a timely manner. PEA students would also present a special challenge as many of them are not from the area. The Seabrook plant was also mentioned as an area of concern.
- Safety for everyone, particularly the elderly and/or disabled was mentioned by several groups.
- Participants noted the possibility of an increase in invasive species with increased water temperature. People see a greater risk of Lyme disease and mosquito-based diseases.
- Electricity—People are worried that a long-term loss of electricity from a storm or other event would leave a section of the population vulnerable. For instance, elderly people who rely on oxygen need electricity to survive.



## Problem Solving/Adaptation/Future Development

- Several groups mentioned the need for people to work together and to find a real incentive to solve these challenges. While not all were in agreement over climate change and its causes, the recent impacts were acknowledged. Participants thought giving people economic reasons for making proactive changes now may save the town a lot of money/damage down the road. Systemic change was mentioned repeatedly.
- Education was also an important part of getting people invested in making change. Many felt that the community had a lack of understanding regarding the impacts of a changing climate and that education could help bring about change.
- One of the barriers to change could be the fact that people would be hesitant to do anything to change their home (cost, property tax increases as a result of improvements).
- Some mentioned that one of the ways to adapt to climate change would be to improve infrastructure. Focus on low-impact development, especially when it comes to runoff.
- Funding was brought up several times. It was noted that many of the changes discussed would cost a great deal of money and that the community had to make some value decisions on where to invest.
- People agreed that although large solutions may take a long time to implement, there are some easy things people can do in everyday life to help things (like not leaving an engine idle and using water gardens).

## Map Exercise Results

In the beginning of the April 10<sup>th</sup> event, each small group was provided a map of Exeter. Participants were asked:

- 1) To identify and locate on the map areas impacted by extreme weather and changes in climate. The things that were mentioned were categorized as relating to **People, Infrastructure, and Natural Resources**.
- 2) To determine **the most important vulnerability** identified.

The areas below are listed in order of importance and frequency as conveyed by participants on April 10<sup>th</sup>.



### PEOPLE

- Court Street Area
- Loaf and Ladle
- Water Street
- PEA Campus
- Gilman Park Homes
- Princess Way
- Exeter River Landing
- Brentwood Rd
- Downtown Mills



### INFRASTRUCTURE

- Water Treatment Plan and Reservoir
- Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Great Dam
- String Bridge
- Swazey Parkway
- Great Bridge Transportation Corridor
- Bow Street
- Larry Lane freshwater pump station
- Pickpocket Dam
- Gas line



### NATURAL RESOURCES

- Exeter River and Reservoir
- Squamscott River (water quality)
- PEA conservation land and trails
- Wetlands (down from Riverwoods and recycling center)
- Farmland
- Powder Hill Road wetlands
- Brickyard pond
- Colcord Pond

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