

Public Workshop #1



Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency Initiative

Project Name Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency Initiative
Date: June 29, 2021
Meeting: Jefferson – St. Lawrence Region – Public Workshop #1
Attachments Presentation

1. Introduction of Project Team

EDR (prime consultant): Jane Rice, Sam Gordon, Erica Tauzer
EcoLogic (subcontractor to EDR): Liz Moran, Sharon Anderson, Michelle McGinnis
Cameron Engineering (subcontractor to EDR): Michael Keane, Andrew Martini, David Tepper
NYS Department of State: Karen Catcher, Nancy Martel

Steering Committee members in attendance were recognized by adding “Steering Committee Member” to their Zoom name.

2. Introduction to CLEAR

The project team introduced the CLEAR initiative, goals, process, deliverables, timeline, and responsibilities of those involved in the plan. Presentation slides are attached. Participants were given a chance to ask questions.

3. Interactive Group Activity

The project team discussed resiliency and its relationship to risk, vulnerability, and exposure. The resiliency planning themes developed by working with Steering Committee members were introduced. Participants were asked to elaborate and contribute to this list using a Google Jamboard. Results of the activity are summarized below.

<p>Natural Systems & Dynamic Shorelines</p> <p>Q1: What are the most significant threats to the health of your community’s shoreline?</p> <p>Q2: What is specific to your shoreline that adds to or reduces your community’s vulnerability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My understanding of Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties is that over the past 100 years increasing shoreline development within dynamic shorelines has been promoted by local communities to improve economies and has led to cumulative impacts along these shorelines as the flood zone and coastal erosion areas have changed over time.• Decreased health of barrier bars is probably the continued colonizing (getting electric/water/septic) of the fragile barrier bars. This simply encourages more population of the barrier bars. Also, hardening of shorelines interrupts the balance of littoral drift. Less dune development, more exposure to wave action and wave run up.• Over development of shoreline areas and the removal of natural shoreline features in favor of lawns to the waterline increase runoff and erosion.
---	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most significant may be most costly: WWTP (or septic) failure and water system failure. These contribute to human as well as environmental health and welfare. Also, roads and buildings are a huge cost to rebuild or repair. • Excessive erosion flanking built shorelines/breakwalls • Threats to the health of natural shorelines in these counties include increased erosion (due to shoreline hardening and increasing high wave events/storms), and flooding. Wetlands are impacted by extreme low and high water and dynamic wetland boundaries may need updating. Additional fill and development further threaten the health of wetland resources. • Most costly is flooding of WWTP, water systems, roads, and buildings. Also, loss of tourism. • Flooding/shoreline erosion. • Varying shoreline elevations. • Development on the shoreline in a town that has no zoning and limited land use regulations: As the region becomes more popular, landowners will be tempted to subdivide and build closer and closer to the water, making themselves vulnerable to fluctuations. • Erosion and flooding. • Repeated high wind/water events: bureaucratic boondoggles for assistance. • Miles of exposed shoreline directly in the path of the most storm events. • Structures built very close to the shorelines. • Pollution, heavy boat traffic, overfishing, apathy. We are a wealthier community and proactive in some measure. • Competing goals: natural systems need protection but are reason why people 'inundate' the waterfront. Resilience for areas where there can be many people and others that are reserved for
<p>Public Safety</p> <p>Q1: What are the most vulnerable infrastructure assets in your community during storms or high/low water levels?</p> <p>Q2: Please include any threats to public safety associated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable infrastructure assets include route 3 and access roads that lead to shoreline properties, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, and swimming beaches. • Threats to public safety can include drinking water contamination, increased pathogens at beaches, and damages to shoreline access areas. • Docks, boat launches. • Sewer plants, septic systems, ad water intakes can be affected by extreme high and low water levels. • During both extreme and high water, emergency services such as fire and rescue are impacted. • Power at docks and fuel docks are a real problem during extreme high water.

<p>with infrastructure vulnerabilities (e.g., road closures, utility outages, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is electric protected and flood proofed? • Widening road (Denner Rd) – to accommodate all the excessive fishing boat traffic. • Roads located within feet of the shoreline/road closures/no route to homes/no emergency vehicle passage.
<p>Communication & Education</p> <p>Q1: Does your community have effective communication between full-time and seasonal residents or visitors? If not, what are the barriers to effective communication between residents and visitors?</p> <p>Q2: Does your community have effective coordination with neighboring communities, as well as with the County and State? If not, what are the barriers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be challenging to bring people to the table to learn about issues and actions needed, especially in summer when they want to enjoy their time. Need to meet them where they are to communicate. • Jefferson and St. Lawrence Coastal Erosion Hazard areas communities that lead permitting may benefit from coordination with NYSDEC and NYSDOS. • Proper communication during emergency events – chain of command, triage, etc. • Communication is episodic along the shoreline. It has been crisis driven. Hard for individual property owners to keep up to date on programs and resources. • Difficult to communicate to property owners regarding difficult choices. • Hard to compete for people’s attention, barriers exist between community year-round members, much less seasonal/year round tourists. • Need to provide a engaging vehicle for communication. • Communities have utilized a scapegoat to avoid making hard decisions. • Need clarification for the public – why isn’t the simple solution to high and low water events changing the water management plan by the IJC? Most folks we encounter blame the IJC out of hand. • Communication between individual towns and county government can always be improved. Presentations/correspondence to individual towns might be helpful. • Local officials are often too busy to even attend these meetings. How do we communicate with those folks and help them understand and adopt a plan? • Coordinated messaging throughout the region, to counteract misinformation. • We don’t share as effectively as we should – but we do have a good relationship with the local community (the issue is that leadership rotates every few years) – should appoint a liaison who is more of a constant. • Though communication channels do exist, not much dialogue happens between seasonal and permanent residents. Note the absence of attendees despite good publicity for this event.

<p>Community Infrastructure</p> <p>Q1: What important infrastructure systems (e.g., roadways, docks) are vulnerable to local hazards?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Island populations – can emergency response boats launch safely in high/low water conditions? • As you get closer to the dam on the lake St. Lawrence portion of the river – accessibility is more of a concern. • There is an issue at the end of the season where boats may not be able to be taken out of the water. • High water events can create difficulties in getting boats out of the boathouses in the spring. • Docks and boat launch areas in Henderson and Alexandria Bay were inundated in 2019, limiting access and recreation. Low water can also limit recreational access by boats within the inlets and harbors. • From my understanding septic systems and wells were inundated in 2019 flooding (ex. Cape Vincent), and water intakes are threatened by low water (ex. Sacketts Harbor, Town of Alexandria). • Septic systems on islands – many were inadequate before the high water flooded them out. • Docks, septic systems, power lines, fueling stations, wastewater treatment systems. • Our town doesn't have much commercial waterfront, beyond some rights of way at the end of a road that is in fact a boat launch. These were flooded and unusable in 2017 & 2019, and this year are difficult to use. • Docks, water-side fueling. • I understand that after a hurricane in 1956 (?) the City of Toronto bought lowlands that were impacted and turned them into public parks. We could do that... A lot of private landowners would be angry, but it would save a lot of heartache in the future. • Septic systems. • If fixed docks become submerged, a slip and or navigation hazard. • Water wells or pipes may be facing erosion and inundation. If water can overtop wastewater pipes, too much lake water in pipes. • Numerous private septic systems very near the shore. • Few roads exist to outermost locations, so if one is impassable, no way home, no emergency vehicles. • Is electric high enough and protected?
<p>Built Environment</p> <p>Q1: What are the primary vulnerabilities to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces at commercial and multi-unit residential development • Marina buildings, gas pumps and tanks, waste discharge should be added to this list.

<p>your community's build environment (e.g., flood-prone housing, stormwater issues, erosion, etc.)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each community has a local Flood Damage Prevention Law, which requires the community provide a floodplain permit for ANY man-made change to the floodplain. For instance, new or substantially damaged (or improved) buildings must be built at least 2 feet above the Base Flood Elevation. Many communities do not enforce these regulations. • Flood-prone housing/housing built within extreme water levels not elevated/floodproofed • There are many island and water front homes that are vulnerable to extreme high water levels. • High and low water both affect usability of local islands, including damage to docks and sometimes boats. • Erosion, washout of sand and rocks. • Flood-prone septic and electric systems. • Erosion of beach and park areas; total destruction of private homes and land.
<p>Economic Resources & Tourism</p> <p>Q1: How do high/low water events impact your local economy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional docks seem to be more at risk than floating docks that will move with water level. • Debris and cladophora (algae) washing up on shoreline during high water events impacts recreational use. • Shoal markers can be moved by strong currents. • During low-water currents changed – current can speed up during these conditions – this can effect shipping (this also happens during high water) • Reports of water levels outside of “typical” send potential visitors to other areas costing tourism-based businesses to suffer. • High water – continual rebuild of docks, slips, boat launches to meet conditions (building UP), low water – take down and rebuild of same features, excessive expense for businesses. • Huge impact based on access to local marinas and to islands – cost of rebuilding docks is significant and necessary. • Extreme high water kept a lot of boaters and islanders from using their property which crushed local businesses. Very low can have the same effect. • Tourism suffers greatly during high water events, effecting businesses and the tax base. Many cultural activities are cancelled. • Tourists, fishermen and recreational boaters stopped visiting the area when the water was high, crushing the local economy. • Access to boat launches or navigation may be impossible; water may rise to overtopping protection stone and keep people away from area or if low water, may not have enough water to get to the ‘main water recreation area.’ • Some of the local businesses can't afford adjustments for high/low water - the gas dock was impacted.

Public Workshop #1



Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency Initiative

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some of the local leadership discouraged people from coming when the water levels were too high or too low, but businesses really needed the business!
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can a more strategic view of the issues take place to look at the hierarchy of users on the river. For instances, does shipping needs take precedence over everything else? Could that be changed in order to better moderate water levels?

5. Next Steps

Our second public workshop will be September 2, 2021.

All attendees were encouraged to participate in the September public meeting and spread the word about the CLEAR initiative.

6. Q&A/Comments

- Need a major community education campaign.
- Distrust in public institutions and the media continues to plummet. Combatting that is not easy. How do you pierce through the lack of trust and get it to the people that would benefit from this education campaign?
- Since 2017, people have consistently placed blame on various situations and institutions/people. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River is a massive system. The idea that someone can control this when we're living in different times. I like how you stressed that this is the new normal in the presentation. New normal now consists of extreme highs and lows. The idea of resiliency and learning to cope with this new normal of extreme highs and lows, as well as communicating this message, is a large task.
- Communication and education are needed to convince others that action needs to be taken. Placing blame/finding scapegoats encourages inaction.
- When trying to get people to join in and listen tonight, I had to remove all language that related to the fact that this is a NYSDOS program. The message needs to come from local community members. Citizens have a huge responsibility to spread this information ourselves. Consultants need to provide the expertise, but we need to become the voices.
- It would be nice to see more of our local representatives at events like these. To what degree are those that represent this region involved in this initiative?
- Not only is communication a barrier, but we need people to be available for that communication. I think having in-person public meetings could make a difference, but there needs to be additional effort beyond the hosting of these meetings. Communication is great during extreme/emergency events but in between is non-existent. People only seem willing to come when there's money at the table, but otherwise not so much.