

Meeting Notes



Project Name: Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency Initiative
Date: April 28, 2021
Meeting: Jefferson -St. Lawrence Region – SC Meeting 1
Attachments: Attendance Sheet + 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, and Chris Bauer

2. Introduction of Steering Committee

SC members in attendance introduced themselves and their affiliations. During the self-introductions, SC members were asked to respond to the following: *"On a scale of 1-10 rate your community's ability to withstand and recover from a major flooding event (1 being not at all prepared, 10 being solidly prepared)."* A range of responses were offered; the majority fell between 5 and 7. While SC members noted the progress made in response to the high-water level events of 2017 and 2019., the consensus was that challenges remain. Several members noted high variability across the shoreline regions. This variability was noted for islands as well; some are well prepared while others are more vulnerable.

3. Presentation by EDR

Erica Tauzer and Sam Gordon reviewed CLEAR program's objectives, timeline, and desired outcomes. The presentation included three specific tasks (homework assignments) for members of the Steering Committee.

1. Complete a brief on-line survey <https://forms.gle/ovdRGKVx5dqvH6Wy6> The survey is designed to gather information and local knowledge on the following
 - a. Lakeshore issues affecting the community
 - b. What areas/components of the community are most vulnerable to changing water levels?
 - c. Existing resources that could be enhanced or expanded
 - d. What does the community need to become more resilient (tools, etc.)?

2. Send photos that illustrate extreme water level events
3. Prepare for 'Look and Listen' Tour (**scheduled for Wed. May 19th at 10 am**) by exploring the interactive map
<https://edrdpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ba81c23a0d974fa5aea33bb5ca8a04a8>

4. Discussion (comments and responses paraphrased)

Question/comment 1: Interested in hearing that ecosystems are included as AOCs for this initiative. Resiliency can mean a lot of different things to different people. How would you define resiliency?

Response: Ability of coastal communities to respond to hazard events where they can quickly recover the economy, community, and ecosystem. Understand that a good part of resiliency is dependent on ecosystem viability.

Question/comment 2: So many properties along the river are built at low elevations, including historic properties, residences, and businesses. How can these structures ever be made resilient given their location?

Response: There are significant issues here that need to be explored with the communities. What is the appetite for resilient strategies for each community? The concept of Managed Retreat is complex and there is not an easy, universally acceptable answer. Highlights the need for local voices and working directly with communities to understand what can be done- either to protect specific assets in place or identify alternatives.

Question/comment 3: Most people on the Steering Committee understand the breadth and complexity of this issue. To what extent is the project going to give us help communicating this message to our communities? Many homeowners are resistant to the idea of complexity, quick to blame on mismanagement on Plan 2014. Will there be time to think through the inspiration/education piece of this?

Response: Short answer, yes. Came into this recognizing the need for an educational component. We look forward to working with you as local representatives on approaching this challenge.

Question/comment 4: You hit on something important by talking about the complexity. Need to be careful about terms we use about "convincing anyone". That is where we will get the most pushback. Consultants will be viewed as outsiders; it will go over poorly. It is going to be incredibly important to finesse the message by saying there is no right

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answer and that we are working collaboratively with all groups and all interests to try and find some relief strategies to deal with water level situations. This group cannot solve climate change or high and low water levels but should work with the community that has to live with all those effects. There is still a sense, 70 years post NYPA and Seaway installation, that government came and took our land. It is a strong sentiment and is important to understand as we craft our message.

Response: The CLEAR initiative will not focus on the “why” of fluctuating water levels, only the reality of the need to prepare for the future. The message will focus on working toward effective, community-led strategies for improved resiliency, not engage in debates of causes.

Question/comment 5: Totally agree with above statement. And sadly, the reverse is true — that second homeowners do not properly listen to full-time residents, who have more severe interests. It is a two-way street of needing to respect and listen and collaborate.

Question/comment 6: Curious to better understand whether future REDI funding will be directly or indirectly tied to the endorsement of the CLEAR plan. What is the incentive for a municipality to buy-in to the process and strategies outlined in the plan moving forward? LWRPs are successful because they are driven by the funding that comes available when a community adopts a plan.

Response: Purpose of CLEAR is to assist in development of local strategies. DOS is coordinating with other state agencies on this effort; there are various state programs/agencies that can help to support implementation of strategies moving forward. Could apply for an LWRP to implement strategies. Point of the program now is to identify those strategies. State’s interest is to help communities prepare and ultimately require less funding to respond to future extreme events. REDI funding is being used for REDI infrastructure projects. There is no funding under CLEAR at this point, but there are avenues for communities to look to other funding sources for implementation.

Question/comment 7: Simplify resiliency a bit. Resiliency is boiled down to administration (policy side), education (inspiration and awareness), and implementation. Planning needs to think about how we can possibly implement strategies. A lot of plans do not get implemented. The third leg of implementation is important to developing an effective strategy.

Copies To: All members of the Jefferson-St. Lawrence CLEAR Steering Committee, Consultant Team, and NYSDOS representatives

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These meeting notes were prepared by Michelle McGinnis of EcoLogic. If there are any discrepancies, please notify our office within three business days of receipt.