



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

July 14, 2017

The Beaches Conference

Wells, ME

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+ Primary Audience for the Study



- And other technical assistance providers



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



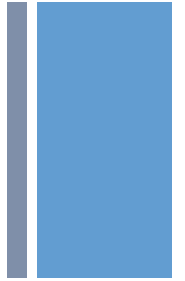
Policy champions can occur on **three** levels (Devlin-Foltz and Molinaro 2012)

- **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.





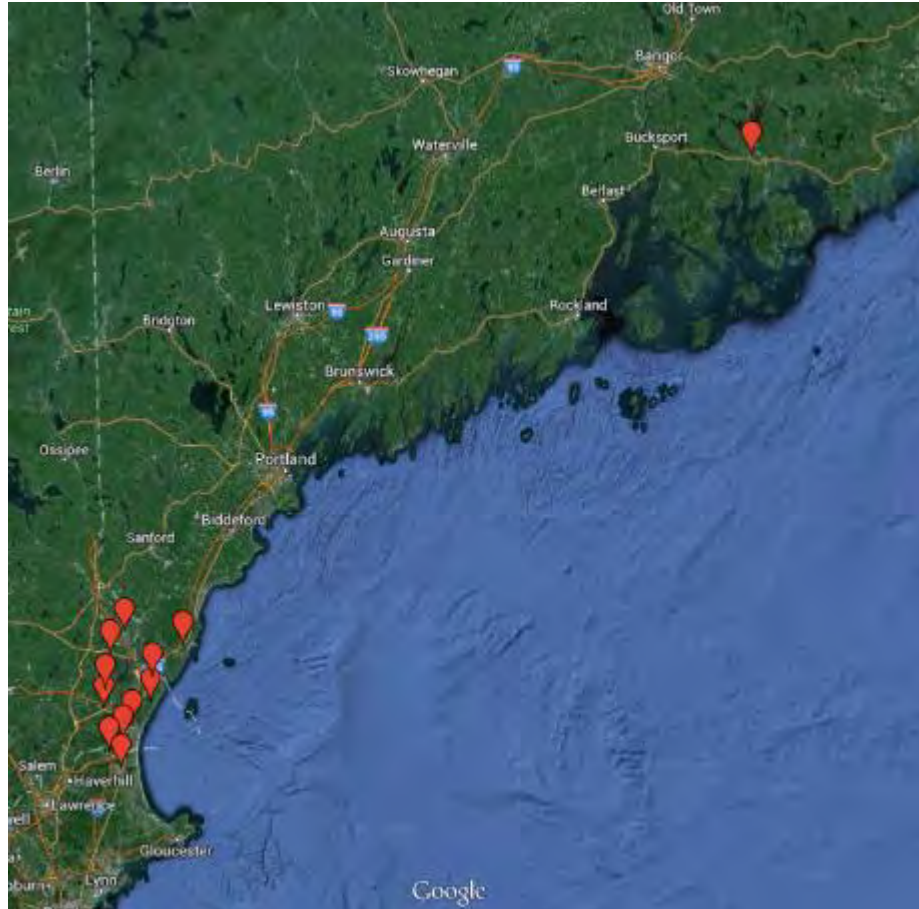
Study Overview: Research Goals



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





Participants:



- Town and city planners
- Members of the organization Storm Surge
- Members of conservation commissions
- Planning board members
- Environmental planners
- Town administrators
- Community development directors

+ 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



+ **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



+ 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



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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”



+ Conclusions and Recommendations

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What Champions Need

- Projects
- Public Education and Outreach
- Technical Support





The Importance of Champions



- Leaders in their community
 - Supported by professional climate adaptation assistance providers
- Move forward with climate preparedness efforts
- Play an essential role in promoting and adopting climate adaptation strategies

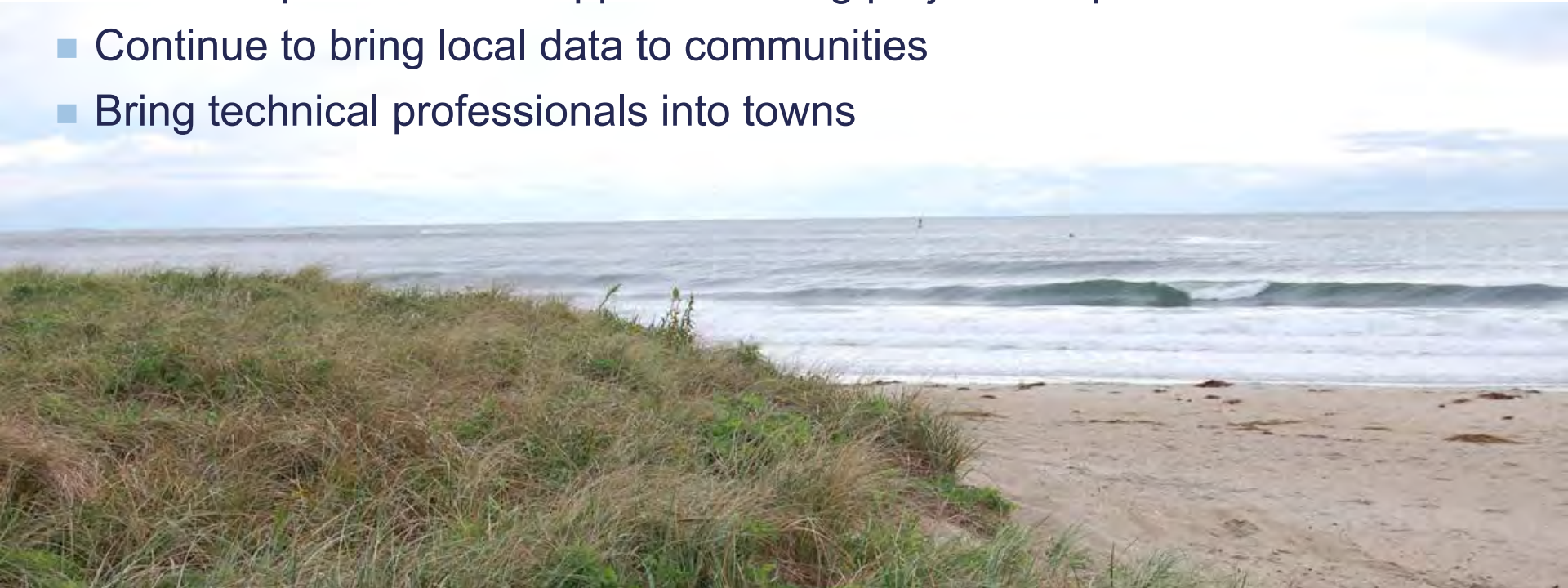




Recommendations



- Need for communities to be connected with climate-adaptation projects and additional technical and information support:
 - Continue to bring climate-adaptation projects to communities
 - Continue professional support following project completion
 - Continue to bring local data to communities
 - Bring technical professionals into towns





Recommendations



- Education may be an important catalyst in climate preparedness efforts in communities, but some towns do not have the resources to meet their education needs
 - Continue CAW workshops
 - Continue to provide education in towns





Recommendations



- Enhance online education tools
 - <http://www.nhcaw.org>
- Connect champions with available resources



+ Opportunities for Additional Research



- How can we create new champions?
- How can we support emerging (Level I) champions?
- How can we best meet the new education needs?
- What is the role of the master plan in adaptation efforts?

+ How has CAW responded to these findings so far?

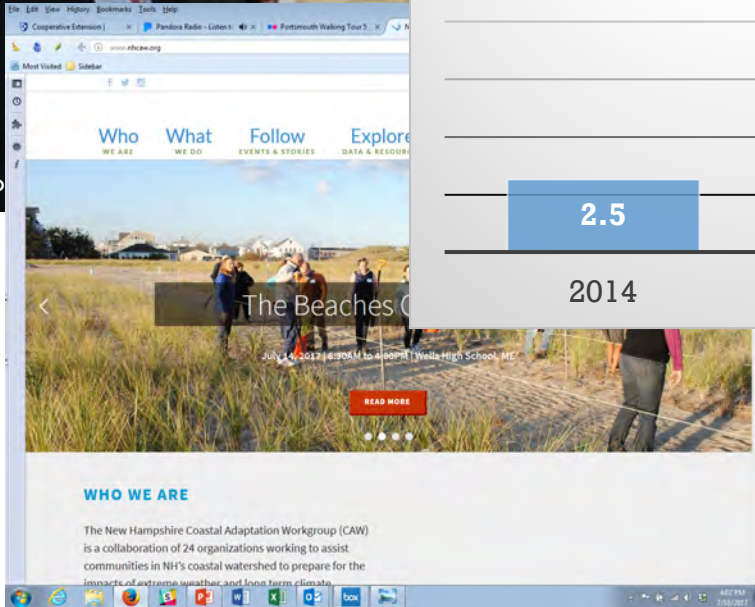
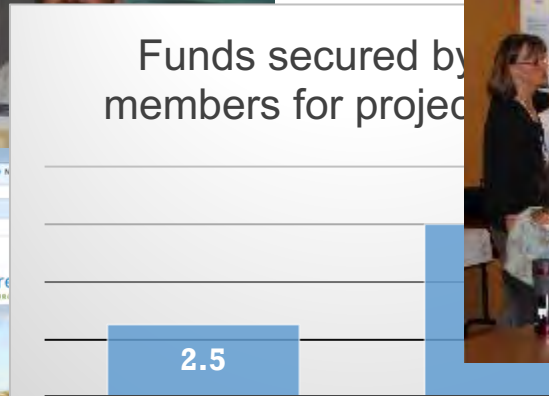
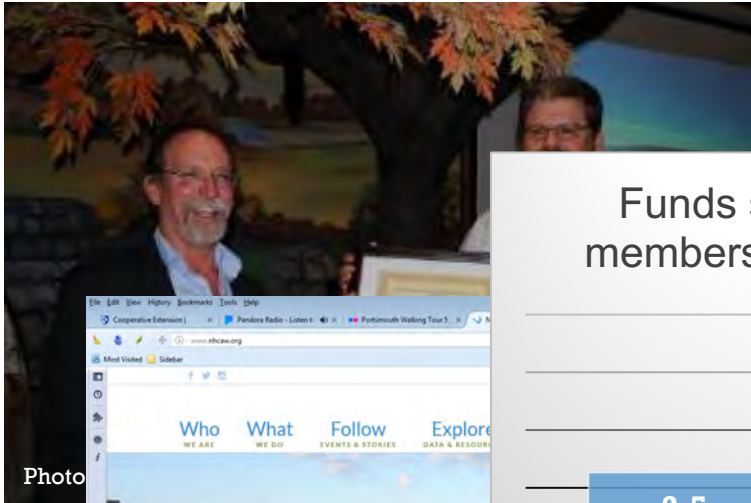


Photo by Kirsten Howard

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Thank you!

