

Storm Response + Preparedness in Maine's Working Waterfront Communities

10 Community Conversations Reveal Local Heroes and Statewide Needs

November 2024 to February 2025

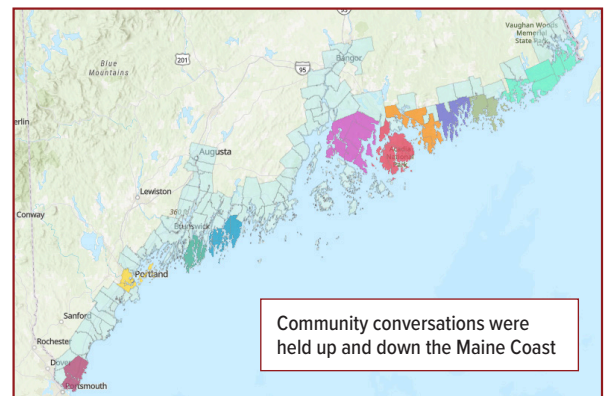
The winter 2023–2024 storms devastated the state's waterfront, and over a year later, communities are still working to rebuild and prepare for future storms.



After the storms, working waterfront community members, emergency responders, the Governor's office, state agencies, and neighbors mobilized with unprecedented local and statewide efforts. However, **a key gap emerged: a space for communities to come together to reflect on storm response and make plans for the future.**

In response, 10 regional community conversations enabled people to:

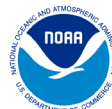
- ▶ **Reflect on Resilience:** Share experiences and lessons learned from rebuilding working waterfronts.
- ▶ **Identify Gaps:** Discuss resource needs and challenges in storm preparedness.
- ▶ **Foster Collaboration:** Build connections across towns, sectors, and organizations for future support.



Insights and stories documented through these conversations will guide future decisions for Maine's coastal communities as they prepare for storms. **Details can be found at seagrant.umaine.edu/workingwaterfrontstorms or by scanning the QR code.**



Maine Sea Grant, working in partnership with Maine Coastal Program, Island Institute, and UMaine MARINE, received funding from the National Sea Grant Office to plan these convenings in response to the January 2024 storms. Each convening was organized collaboratively with local leaders and contacts. We are grateful for their help!



KEY TAKEAWAYS

450 participants
40+ coastal towns



Community assets were celebrated



Recognizing people who stood out as heroes throughout the storms, including volunteers, emergency response personnel, local contractors, harbormasters, non-profits, and many others. These community heroes met the needs head-on during the crisis and were instrumental in getting Maine's coast back to work in time for the upcoming fishing and boating seasons.

Local and regional preparedness initiatives are underway, but many remain in early stages and need additional support, capacity, and funding



Local efforts that need support include inadequate **communications networks** (communications at all levels were the single most common theme discussed throughout the series), **insufficient data and information to help better prepare for storms** (e.g., projected flooding), and **significant local capacity shortfalls**.

Local and regional gaps in critical resources and actions hinder future preparedness and demand additional support

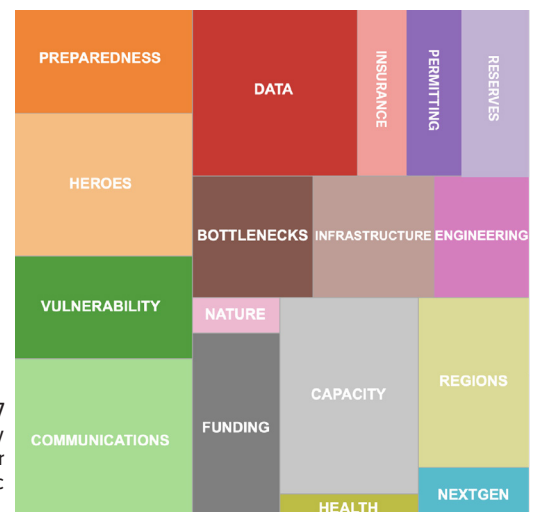


Participants spoke of **permitting barriers in rebuilding**, infrastructure challenges (e.g., electrical failures, road washouts leading to isolation, and more), and the imperative for **cross-town and regional collaboration** in order to secure funding and address capacity needs prevalent throughout the coast (but felt especially acutely on islands, in Maine's small coastal towns, and Downeast).

Significant gaps and needs beyond local control severely impact local and regional realities



This included **data gaps** (from outdated flood maps to sea-level rise projections) derailing effective planning for future storms, **infrastructure rebuilding and permitting bottlenecks** that involve state and Federal agencies, and **significant funding shortfalls**. Participants spoke of the needs for **dedicated working waterfront reserve funds** to support future emergency response, as well as **prioritization of particularly vulnerable waterfront properties**. They flagged that issues like housing shortfalls, demographic shifts, and decades-old maintenance backlogs render working waterfronts even more susceptible to storm damage.



A graphic shows the 17 leading topics raised by participants. A bigger box signifies the topic was raised more often.