

Storm Response and Preparedness in Working Waterfront Communities

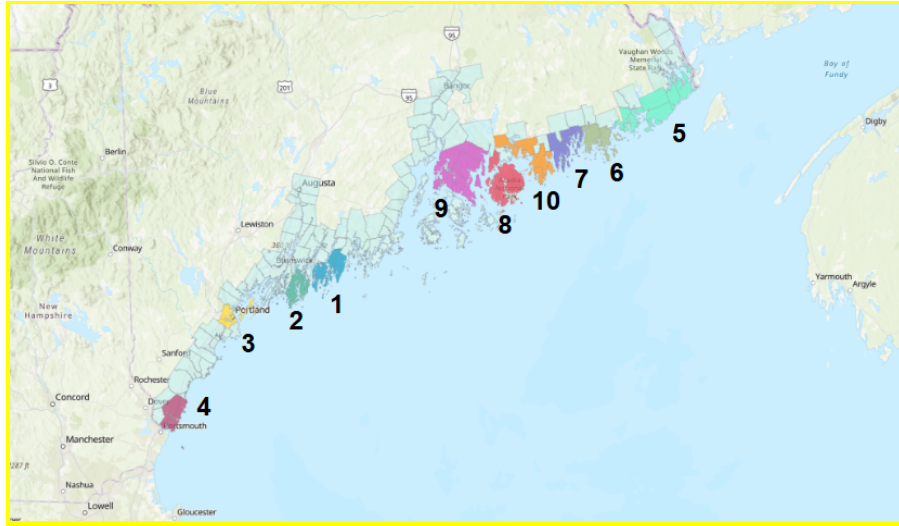
A series of ten community conversations along the coast of Maine, Winter 2024-2025

Summary Notes of Regional Community Conversation # 2 of 10

Phippsburg/Georgetown/Arrowsic

The Grant Building, 31 Centre Street, Bath, ME 04530

November 20, 2024, 5-7 PM

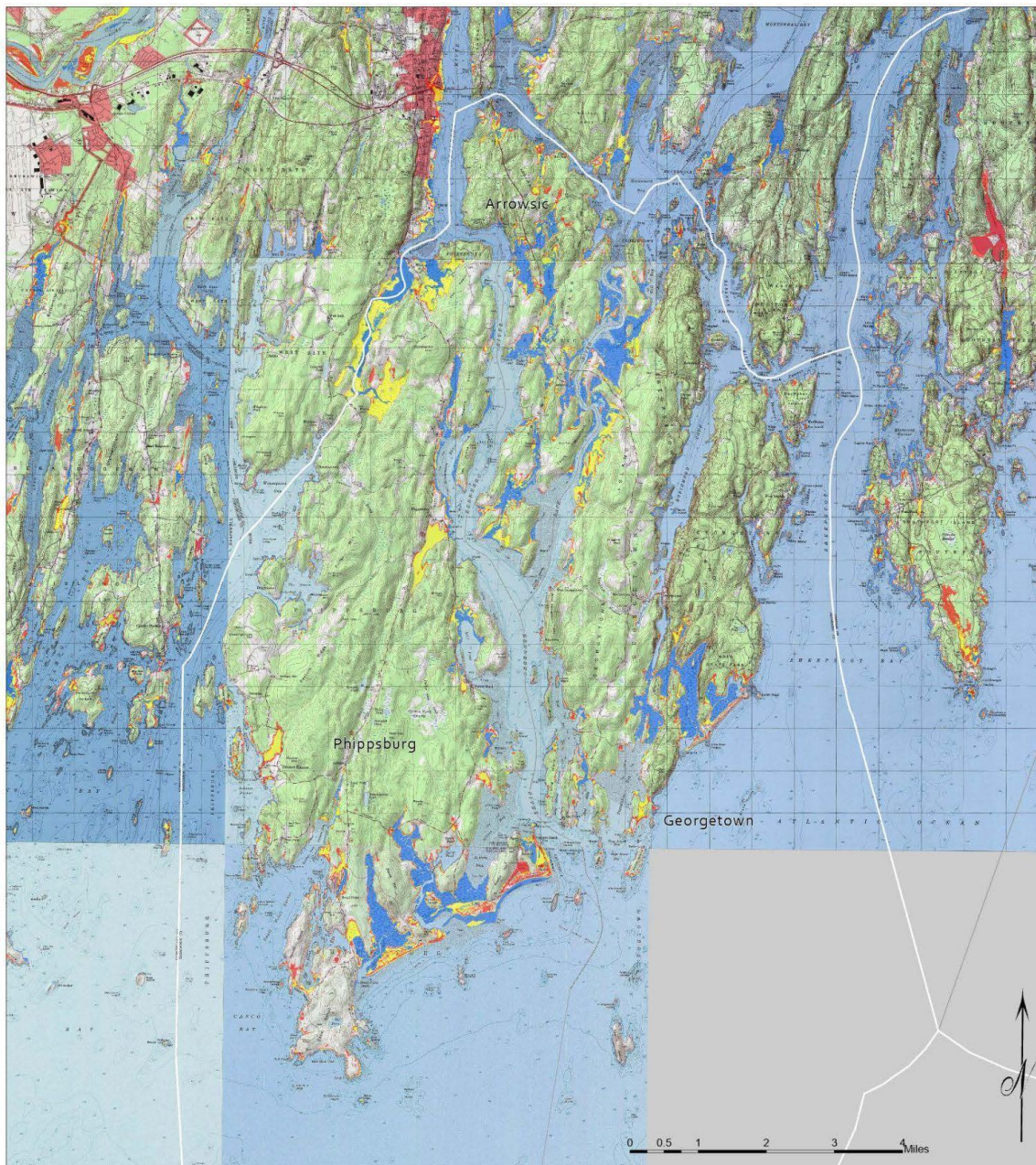


The goals of this series are to:

- Create space for community members across diverse sectors to take stock of their working waterfronts within the context of the community's resilience since the storms.
- Share resilience and working waterfront planning work across the region: recent, underway, or planned.
- Learn about resources for public and private working waterfront resilience.
- Identify systems and networks that would be useful to have in place locally to support working waterfronts in anticipation of future storms.

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 is organized collaboratively with local leaders and contacts. We are grateful for their help!





Source: Maine Geological Survey
This map represents the approximate extent of inundation on the Maine coast during a Highest Astronomical Tide. The Highest Astronomical Tide is the elevation of the highest predicted astronomical tide expected to occur at a specific tide station over the National Tidal Datum Epoch (currently, 1983-2011).

Subsequent feature classes represent approximate static inundation after scenarios of 3.9ft and 8.8ft of potential sea level rise, or storm surge, on top of the Highest Astronomical Tide. Mapping was produced in 2018 by P. A. Slovinsky, S. Rickerich, and C. H. Halsted of the Maine Geological Survey.

Phippsburg, Arrowsic, Georgetown Region

- HAT Plus 8.8 Feet
- HAT Plus 3.9 Feet
- Highest Astronomical Tide

For the online version of this map go to <https://tinyurl.com/mainesealevelrise> or use this QR code

Maps prepared by College of the Atlantic GIS laboratory, October 2024, as part of a series of community conversations on Storm Response and Preparedness in Working Waterfront Communities. Project supported by Maine Sea Grant, working in partnership with Maine Coastal Program, Island Institute and UMaine MARINE, with funding from NOAA Sea Grant.



Regional map with sea level rise projections ([PDF version](#)). For an online version of this map and the ability to zoom in to any region on Maine coast, go to <https://tinyurl.com/mainesealevelrise>. Source: Thank you to the College of the Atlantic GIS lab for data and cartography.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

During the winter 2023/24 storm season, a stream of photos filled newspapers, broadcast news, and social media depicting stark destruction of the state's waterfront infrastructure, from east to west. People throughout the state's coastal and working waterfront communities saw their businesses, bluffs, shorelines, wharves, piers, docks, and homes turned upside down by the sea. A year later, the impacts are ongoing, as people and institutions grapple with how to rebuild, rethink, and prepare for the next storms.

In the immediate aftermath, groups that support the state's working waterfront (Island Institute and Maine Coast Fishermen's Association) stepped up with rapid grants to help businesses perform emergency repairs. The state responded shortly thereafter with a \$60M storm relief package to help Maine businesses and communities recover. This funding resulted in \$25.2M awarded to 39 communities through the Infrastructure Adaptation Fund, \$21.1M granted to 68 working waterfronts through the Working Waterfront Resiliency Grant, and \$8M granted to small businesses and non-profits through the Business Recovery and Resilience Grants (with an additional \$2M available now). The Governor also created the Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resiliency Commission to analyse storm response across the state and the state's policies and practices. In November, the Commission shared their near-term recommendations in an Interim Report, and is now working towards creating a long-term rebuilding and resilience plan for the state, to be released in May 2025.

Climate impact readiness was also featured prominently in the recently updated state climate action plan, "Maine Won't Wait." This past Summer, Maine's Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) was awarded a \$69M climate resilience grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to help protect Maine's communities, environment, and working waterfronts from extreme storms, flooding, and rising sea levels.

At the county level, the emergency management community sprang into action immediately after the storms and continues to support municipalities and people through storm-related crises and pre-storm planning. The Community Resilience Partnership (CRP) is growing rapidly throughout the state's coastal communities and receiving additional funding and capacity. Overall, the 2024 storms catapulted a fever of attention on the status of people, businesses and the coastline's ability to thrive into the future.

This series of ten regional conversations invites people who live and work in coastal communities to come together to support the economic, physical, and cultural vitality of working waterfront communities, by exploring how to integrate people's diverse expertise, depth of knowledge and lived experience to bolster regional response and preparedness. We are focusing on working waterfronts specifically in this series, but working waterfronts are part of larger communities and they play an important role in our culture, history, families, and economy. These conversations are intended to help make connections between working waterfronts, emergency management and resilience planning in the short-, mid-, and long-term.



SUMMARY OF KEY TAKEAWAYS (from this regional event)

- **Community Assets:**
 - Listserv communication networks (e.g. fire department list)
 - Town-led outreach/education for new residents
 - Working waterfront and public access inventories underway
 - Neighbors-Helping-Neighbors programs
 - First responders, emergency managers, and Red Cross collaborations
- **Things to Improve:**
 - Harnessing local helpers
 - Supporting those who do not ask for help
 - Sharing information about who is responsible for what aspects of response and rebuilding
 - Connect with local legislators
 - Increase community involvement in hazard mitigation planning process
 - Increase mainstream news coverage of storm events
 - Education about staying out of the way during storms
 - Broader email alerts
- **Gaps/Needs (Local):**
 - Accessible communication networks (two-way communication, digital vs. in-person, supporting local champions, etc.)
 - Guidance on how to put a community response network in to place
 - Communications plan for when power goes out
 - Identify and address vulnerabilities that come with less year-round residents
 - Establish general assistance funds at town level, remove barriers to access to emergency funds
 - Idea: work with propane companies to install remote sensors on propane tanks that will help with advance planning to fill tanks before storms
- **Gaps/Needs (Statewide):**
 - More resources/guidance for how to address coastal flooding
 - Information about how to evacuate in an emergency, how to shelter in place
 - Define who is responsible for what aspects of preparedness, response, and rebuilding
 - Better clarity of the role of (and how to work with) various state agencies, including DEP, DOT, and general assistance through DHHS
 - Emergency funding with lower barriers
 - Work with cell companies for emergency alert systems during storms
 - Develop funding stream for keeping working waterfronts working
 - Address insurance shortcomings
 - Address permitting challenges

FULL MEETING NOTES

Taking Stock: Each town to share status of community climate resilience efforts, with a focus on working waterfront resilience

Phippsburg

- Herb Thomson (Member of Climate Resilience Committee): Phippsburg created a climate resilience committee a couple years ago, which was a narrow charge at first – to look at sea level rise impacts on infrastructure. The group then expanded more recently to other climate-related issues:
 - They joined the climate resilience program led by the state (Community Resilience Partnership)
 - Conducted a sea level rise and vulnerability gap analysis (contracted FB Environmental) and received a grant from Casco Bay Estuary Partnership to fund a climate resilience coordinator position (Morgan Glynn) to address the gaps.
 - Working on a proposal to conduct a climate vulnerability assessment.
- Merry Chapin (Member of Climate Resilience Committee and Chair of the Marine Subcommittee of the Phippsburg Comprehensive Plan Committee):
 - A key focus of the Climate Resilience Committee is working waterfront (working waterfront) issues.
 - The group is working on the Marine Resource subsection of their town's Comprehensive Plan. Weekly 2hr meetings for the last several months.
 - Received a \$10K Shore Up grant from Island Institute, which funded an FB Environmental study which resulted in these recommendations:
 - Incorporate public access data collection into town-wide resilience efforts (working with shellfish commission)
 - Incorporating working waterfront concerns into ongoing vulnerability assessments (working with Monique Coombs, Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, MCFA)
 - Work on a town working waterfront Inventory
 - Monique Coombs from MCFA invited Phippsburg to be one of the 8 communities participating in a new Saltonstall-Kennedy grant program to address coastal resilience challenges, which will include building out a working waterfront inventory
 - Use recommendations from Casco Bay resilience working group to strengthen resilience planning
 - Support investigations into non-point source pollution affecting quality of Phippsburg mud flats (working with Ruth Indrick at KELT (Kennebec Estuary Land Trust) to do water quality testing twice/month
 - Other activities:
 - Interviewing harvesters and fishermen to learn about their interests and concerns
 - Surveyed voters on voting day (360 responses) – all but 9 either supported or strongly supported the climate committee's efforts
 - Talking with Morse High School Vocational Director about starting a marine program (could also accept students from surrounding towns)
 - Applying for an Island Institute Fellow to work on the Phippsburg waterfront – raising funds to support this position

- MCFA encouraging Town of Phippsburg to adopt a Right-to-Fish policy (like [Harpswell's](#))
- Would like to do a [Scuttlebutt guide](#) (with MCFA) to share information with new residents about living in a working waterfront community

Georgetown

- Jessica Weller (Chair of Georgetown Conservation Commission)
 - Hosted a zoom event with KELT to discuss storm readiness in Midcoast Maine
 - Nancy Kinner (member of the Conservation Commission and Co-Director of the University of New Hampshire's Coastal Response Research Center) – is helping with storm planning
 - Part of the 5-town group that enrolled in the Community Resilience Partnership together (with Phippsburg, Arrowsic, Woolwich, and Westport Island)
 - The funded Community Action Grant project was to conduct an energy audit and create a plan of their town buildings
 - It was helpful to be able to share challenges and resources with the other communities
 - Wrote a Climate Action plan in 2015 and revised in 2022; plan to revise again
 - Brand new Reid State Park group that has helped to recover from recent storms
 - Neighbors-Helping-Neighbors program – facilitating community outreach and resource-sharing during hard times (e.g. sharing generators, filling sand bags, etc.)
 - Arrowsic and Georgetown working on a grant together to look at groundwater quality and quantity – an outgrowth of the 5-town collaboration
 - Next steps: focus on supporting emergency management and planning
- Tyler Washburn (Georgetown Town Administrator, lives in Harpswell)
 - First responders and emergency managers working together to manage disasters
 - Close connections with EMA – emphasized importance of empathy and listening, and connecting others with resources
 - Noted value/sensitivity of local connections to long-term family and community properties

Arrowsic

- Ruth Indrick (Project Director at KELT and member of Arrowsic Shellfish Conservation Committee)
 - Also part of the Community Resilience Partnership
 - Engaged community effectively – 80 out of 500 people engaged
 - Town prioritized developing a Climate Action Plan (completed earlier this year) with Viewshed consulting firm
 - Conducted community outreach and created a climate committee as result of the plan
 - Focus on water availability for groundwater and drinking water (working with Georgetown)
 - Other priorities are addressing vulnerabilities in two tidal road crossings that flood, and secured funds from state DOT bond for planning and hydrologic modeling

Sagadahoc County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)

- Philip Davis (Director, (207) 443 8210)) and Hannah Dickinson (Deputy Director, (207) 443-8211))
 - Main role: Planning and training exercises to help communities prepare
 - Open 24 hours a day, and continue to be available

- EMA office is only 2 staff (Hannah and Phil) – available to meet people in person
 - Try to help direct people to other resources for things outside their purview, help “navigate the puzzle pieces”
- December and January storms
 - Link with FEMA and SBA and connecting with community leaders to focus help on critical areas of need
 - Worked through existing local connections to make arrangements for the FEMA and SBA staff to do their assessments; had to adjust as conditions and schedules changed
 - Led emergency response and support during and as a follow up to storms; tried to support individual needs and meet people with unique circumstances
 - Worked with American Red Cross

American Red Cross Northern New England Region

- [Eric Lynes \(eric.lynes@redcross.org\)](mailto:eric.lynes@redcross.org) and [Sophie Piconi \(sophie.piconi@redcross.org\)](mailto:sophie.piconi@redcross.org)
- For Emergencies CALL (800-733-2767), Central and Mid Coast Maine Chapter, Topsham (800-464-6692)
 - Humanitarian (disaster) service component; in every community in the US, and they are the local people in this area
 - When there is a disaster → towns contact EMAs, and EMAs call Red Cross to provide support and resources for disaster events (fire response, shelter, feeding, cleanup, disaster mental health support, etc.)
 - 90% of resources are volunteers – can pull resources from across the nation (e.g. brought 143 people to Lewiston last year)
 - Standing resources in local areas – an organization of people – long arm of the Red Cross – can have folks available at a moment’s notice
 - “A prepared community is a safe community” – invited new volunteers to join Red Cross support – neighbors helping neighbors
 - Provide free preparedness trainings

Looking Forward: What systems, networks, and resources do participants think are needed to better prepare for future storms (or wish had been in place before the January 2024 storms)? Brainstorming community assets to meet gaps and needs.

Community Assets

- Communication networks - Listservs
 - Georgetown - Fire Department’s list (used to help communicate for sand bag effort, Age-Friendly Georgetown - rides to groceries, medical appointments, Lowes – and “Job Squad” who do odd jobs for people (fixing things, changing lightbulbs, climbing ladders, etc.)
- Outreach/Education
 - Georgetown - town put together “New Mainers” resources bags with translated materials and information

Things to Improve

- Phippsburg - Two-way communication system - Has been thinking about not only the proactive outgoing communication, but also “how folks can communicate back” to report on their needs

and conditions – looking for resources to support a two-way communication system that you can sign up for

- County EMA said their communication system offers ability to communicate back and forth with emergency responders ([RAVE Mass Notification System](#))
- Rep from Harpswell Aging at Home group - recommended connecting with county EMAs - noted that privacy laws can be a barrier to supporting networked communication about needs, but emergency management can help with this
- Fire Depts might have capacity to do some of this
- Phippsburg - To add to emergency outreach/communication - information on best practices and “not-to-do’s” during an emergency - including going to high damage areas to observe, “rubbernecking” on roads that are needed for emergency responders
- Connection and collaboration with local legislators

Gaps/Need (local control)

- Phippsburg - Looking for guidance for how to put a community response network into place (after hearing about Georgetown’s Reid State Park group that has helped to recover from recent storms)
 - Look into regional [Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec](#), is also [state-wide initiative](#)
- When power is out and cell service is down, need to have capacity to contact all of the critical service providers – need to plan ahead in low service communities for how to retain connections
- Phippsburg - Community Fund - Looking for resources and connections to start thinking about how to support those who haven’t been able to qualify for other relief, and/or to keep working waterfront properties from being lost to private development - community observation: not everyone is comfortable admitting that they need help in an emergency or longer-term response to hardship
 - Harpswell - established a “General Assistance Fund” - outreach from Neighbors-Helping-Neighbors group helping to raise donations and build fund
- Difficult to get propane just before, during and after storms
 - One person mentioned their remote sensor on a propane tank that will help with advance planning to fill tanks before storms (company has access to sensor data)
 - Caution from EMA: need to have clarity re: cost of emergency fuel and who bears the cost, so those plans are in place ahead of the emergency
 - Some communities have emergency funds, but processes to receive funds are long and cumbersome; need expedited process for emergencies
 - Harpswell has a general assistance fund, and because neighbors-helping-neighbors program is raising awareness, people are donating to it
 - United Way of Midcoast Maine also provides financial help for heating fuel (faster than Liheap)
- Phippsburg - Still having water difficulties with wells (especially in Popham area)
- Community vulnerability
 - As a result of high property turnover > to gentrification of communities > fewer year-round residents who can provide support services and build community
 - Linked with affordable housing and AirBnB transitions of properties that might otherwise house local residents
 - One person noted that Arrowsic recently passed an ordinance related to AirBnB properties, and Phippsburg is working on one, too

- Concerns with living on a peninsula with vulnerable exits – how to evacuate in an emergency, and how to safely shelter in place (e.g. official shelters have rules for what they need to have, need to get fuel, medications, food, etc., in)

Gaps/Needs (state control)

- Still having challenges with tidal flooding, and need more support to know what resources are available to help address these issues (very expensive to address)
- Expand sharing platforms for resources
 - More in-person outreach/connection - Audience member noted that many people on working waterfronts don't have computers and cannot access materials via QR codes, etc.

Resource Sharing

The slides presented tonight (which include a few additional informational slides and updates added since this event) are available here: [Storm Response and Preparedness Slides](#).

This resource document, [Resources for Storm Response and Preparedness in Working Waterfront Communities](#), was shared during each of community convenings throughout Maine coastal and working waterfront communities from November 2024 to January 2025. This document has been updated with additional resources that were mentioned in this event and will continue to be updated with information from the full series. That document is intended to be used into the future and shared broadly.

The presenters tonight included:

- General Resources: Olivia Richards, Island Institute (Slides 14 - 18)
- Red Cross Northern New England Region
 - Eric Lynes (eric.lynes@redcross.org) and Sophie Piconi (sophie.piconi@redcross.org)
 - For Emergencies CALL (800-733-2767), Central and Mid Coast Maine Chapter, Topsham (800-464-6692)
- Sagadahoc EMA (Slide 12)
 - Director: Philip Davis, (207) 443 8210; and Deputy Director: Hannah Dickinson, (207) 443-8211, (scema@sagadahoccountyme.gov)
- UMaine Engineering Technologies: Jim Bryce, Advanced Structures and Composite Center (tidc@maine.edu) (Slides 19-25)
- Current Use Tax Program and StrengthenME: Jessica Joyce, Tidal Bay Consulting (jessica@tidalbayconsulting.com), (207) 200-8795 (Slides 26-37)

NEW and highlighted resources

(These are new resources that participants talked about tonight and that are being added to the resources document)

- [Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec](#) and Maine's Age Friendly [state-wide initiatives](#)
- Upcoming StrengthenME [Webinar Series and Trainings](#) - Run through February 2025 - Virtual - FREE attendance - Register for Zoom link
- [ShoreUp Grants](#), Island Institute

- Applications are ongoing. Funding can be used to assess, implement and/or plan for sea level rise. Relevant projects might include risk assessments, infrastructure and natural resource planning, and community engagement programs related to sea level rise. Maine island and coastal municipalities are eligible, businesses are not eligible. Contact shoreupgrants@islandinstitute.org
- [Spiritual Care Services Maine](#) chaplains are available to provide free, anonymous spiritual and emotional support 24/7 to Mainers, as part of the StrengthenME program. See slides 38 and 39 for more information and contact information.

Other significant anecdotes from the night

- Staff member of Maine Coast Fishermen's Association noted the generational loss of properties (especially in Harpswell) and the resulting gentrification of the communities – which often means fewer year-round people who can provide support services and build community – leaves communities more vulnerable

Closing and Next Steps

- Reminder to follow the work of the [Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resilience Commission](#) as they finalize their work and move forward with recommendations
- Notes from each meeting will be compiled with key points shared and funneled into various policy conversations
- [Invitation to evaluate](#) this session to provide feedback and suggestions for how to improve

Acknowledgements

- Site Host: Jeanne Toomey, Union and Co. Co-working space
- Local contacts who provided help with planning the convenings:
 - Emily Farr, Francis Eberle, Jessica Joyce, Monique Coombs, Herb Thomson, Marissa McMahan, Meg Rasmussen
- Maps: Gordon Longworth, College of the Atlantic GIS Lab Director
- Food: Sisters Gourmet Deli and Wild Oats Bakery and Cafe
- Thanks to those who have helped organize this convening locally, and to larger advisory board who have guided the design and planning of the larger series
- Project funded by the National Sea Grant Office
- Thank you to all who presented tonight! (listed in Resource Sharing section above)

Attendee information

Number of attendees: 42

Municipality	Approximate # Attendees
Arrowsic	1
Georgetown	8
Phippsburg	12

Neighboring Communities (Bath, Woolwich, Brunswick, Harpswell)	6
Other/Not Reported	15

Sector/Occupation	Approximate # Attendees
Staff or volunteer on municipal committees	16
Emergency management, social services, public safety	7
Elected Official	3
Service provider	4
Non-profit	7
Consulting	1
Spiritual services	1
Other/Not reported	3