



Coastal Issues Caucus: Summary and Strategies

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1.0 Introduction

In February 2012, the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium (NJS GC) held the first series of Coastal Issues Caucuses to gain feedback on coastal community issues. The meetings were held in Asbury Park, Toms River, and Wildwood and were attended by a variety of municipal, county, and state officials representing a number of coastal regions throughout New Jersey. The caucuses proved to be an excellent way to bring together different community stakeholders to start a discussion on coastal related challenges and to promote thoughtful consideration of some of the potential solutions available to these communities. Some of the resultant ideas and comments will be used in the development of the future programs and activities of NJS GC's Coastal Communities Agent. Although participants from each region had issues specific to their own context, in general participants felt that stormwater management; fertilizer training and education; beach maintenance and dune management; offshore energy development; and tourism and coastal heritage were the most important issues relevant to our mission. The Coastal Communities Agent and other extension staff will pursue some of the project ideas that came from the meetings and hope to conduct similar caucuses in the future to promote continuing dialogue between the organization and its coastal constituents. In addition, the information listed here will be used to finalize items in the Coastal Communities Agent's work plan for 2013.

2.0 Priority Issues Identified

2.1 Stormwater

Although the specific stormwater concerns of participants at different regional caucuses are contextual, the challenges associated with stormwater in general, particularly those of public education and outreach, were common to participants at all of the caucuses.

Future steps

- Verify the need to assemble and distribute a cohesive set of stormwater educational materials to municipalities that are targeted at educating the general public
- Depending on assessment, package and distribute stormwater educational resources to municipalities
- Investigate strategies to increase funding for stormwater management
- Pursue the development of training for instate stormwater regulations and site review compliance for municipal officials in partnership with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program
- Encourage meeting of Monmouth County stormwater coordinators to increase county-level coordination

Potential partnerships:

- RCE Water Resources Program
- Sustainable Jersey
- NJ League of Municipalities
- NJS GC Education Department
- New Jersey Marine Education Association
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)
- Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)

Possible case studies: Ship Bottom street-level adopt-a-drain

2.2 Fertilizer Training and Education

Intimately linked to the problem of stormwater pollution, the misuse and over-application of fertilizers by both home-owners and professional landscapers were cited as major challenges at all caucuses. Attendees discussed the possibility of focusing on training via fertilizer retailers, suggesting that store employees could receive some training in the proper use of fertilizers to pass on to homeowners. For those stores without employees directly assisting customers in the sale of fertilizers, educational material could be distributed to the retailers for redistribution to customers at the time of purchase of fertilizer products. Furthermore, businesses and municipalities need easier access to landscaper certification for fertilizer application provided by the Professional Fertilizer Applicator Certification and Training ([ProFACT](#)), sponsored by Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

Future steps:

- Develop a database of retailers and methods of contact
- Contact fertilizer retailers to assess interest in program or to see if programs already exist
- Depending on interest, develop employee training programs or materials to be distributed
- Increase communication with businesses regarding fertilizer regulations and application
- Distribute materials in stores

Potential partnerships:

- Fertilizer retailers (Home Depot, Lowe's, garden centers, hardware stores)
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- Landscaping businesses
- Municipalities
- Master Gardeners

Possible case studies: Brigantine's education program for local hardware store

2.3 Beach Maintenance/Dune Restoration

While issues relating to beach maintenance, replenishment, and dune restoration were of interest to attendees at each caucus, again the relevance of each issue varied in different contexts. For instance, while Cape May Point expressed concern about the need for regular beach replenishments, Wildwood is experiencing problems related to the growing size of its beaches. While it is outside the capacity of NJSGC to address each of these concerns, we will attempt to either identify resources or other organizations that can better assist our constituents in dealing with issues relating to beach maintenance and dune restoration.

Future steps:

- Consider coordinating the composition of a dune management guide for New Jersey
- Coordinate a workshop educating municipal officials on best management practices (BMPs) related to dune restoration and beach maintenance
- Encourage researchers to address problems of beach accretion and erosion in Cape May County

- Coordinate a roundtable in Cape May County between local municipalities, government agencies, and researchers to discuss beach maintenance problems
- Public education on storm damage reduction projects (beach replenishment) and coastal processes

Potential partnerships:

- NJDEP
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Stevens Institute of Technology
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Plant Materials Program
- Monmouth County Park System

Possible case studies: Sea Girt beach maintenance program, Cape May Point artificial reef program

2.4 Offshore Energy Development

While the exact fate of offshore wind farms in New Jersey has yet to be decided, many coastal municipalities and counties would like to receive information and updates about the current state of offshore energy development in New Jersey. Furthermore, NJSGC will investigate ways to educate the public about the benefits and drawbacks of offshore energy production and the ways in which the public might be affected.

Future steps:

- Provide municipalities with updates about offshore wind energy development when they are available
- Devise public education and outreach programs about offshore energy development

Potential partnerships: NJDEP

Possible case study: Offshore energy production in Maine

2.5 Coastal Heritage/Ecotourism

The caucuses indicated a general interest in using and distributing information that NJSGC has available on its [Coastal Heritage website](#). Several attendees expressed interest in adding new destinations and locations to the website or linking the site to other county or local tourism websites. At one meeting, the fact that Dupont plans to take over the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, formerly managed by the National Park Service, was brought up and NJSGC will look into whether or not our materials can be used to supplement the NJ Coastal Heritage Trail. Some attendees expressed interest in receiving printed materials from NJSGC promoting ecotourism in New Jersey and Wildwood participants in particular seemed interested in pursuing more organized approaches at increasing ecotourism in the region (i.e., Cape May Ecotourism Conference, Watchable Wildlife Conference).

Future steps:

- Distribute NJSGC resources on ecotourism and coastal heritage to interested groups

- Possibly update our Coastal Heritage website to include new sites
- Contact Dupont about adding NJSJC information to the NJ Coastal Heritage Trail
- Connect municipalities with similar interests and/or experiences (local treasure trails, seasonal public transportation plans in shore towns)

Potential partnerships: Dupont, Lighthouse Challenge

Possible case studies: Belmar Treasure Trail, Asbury Park's summer shuttle

3.0 Strategies Identified to Address Issues

3.1 Develop Case Studies

The caucuses helped identify the need to research, compose, and distribute relevant case studies to coastal municipalities throughout the state. The case studies can illustrate anything from creative and effective approaches that towns, counties, or other NGOs have used to address common coastal problems to examples lessons learned from the unintended consequences of certain projects. The emphasis on the need for the distribution of case studies indicates a broader need for communication among all level of government, civil society, and the private sector throughout coastal regions in our state.

3.2 Increase Partnerships and Coordination with Key Groups

NJSJC will increase collaboration with the coordinators of other events and activities to distribute educational resources to different segments of the general public. Furthermore, we will pursue those partnerships listed in Section 2 and will increase the coordination of our efforts with additional groups. One concern expressed at two of the caucuses was difficulties in communication with the NJDEP. NJSJC will try to facilitate more productive communication between municipal and county representatives and the NJDEP. We will also seek ways to better connect our extension agents with specific groups that would benefit from their services and include their contact information and areas of expertise below.

3.3 Encourage Relevant Research

All of the caucus attendees have been added to our mailing list for the release of our Request for Proposals for research projects funded by NJSJC; the next one will be released in the fall of 2012. This will give our constituents the chance to have a greater say in what research projects they would like to see developed by encouraging researchers to take on relevant projects. Finally, NJSJC will create connections between researchers, scientific, and technical experts and those constituents in need of the expertise and resources they can provide.

4.0 New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium Extension Agents and Contact Information

Although a number of the issues discussed at the meetings are beyond the scope of the Coastal Communities Agent's work plan, the technical expertise and qualifications of other NJSJC extension professionals, which are focused more specifically on certain coastal issues, leave them better equipped to deal with such issues, as described below. Also included in this section is the contact information for all NJSJC Extension and Communications staff.

The skills and experience of NJS GC Water Resources Agent, Amy Boyajian, also of Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program, make her particularly well-suited to assist in the development and distribution of stormwater resources and the creation of training programs. She has extensive experience in the design and installation of rain garden demonstration projects and other nonstructural solutions to stormwater issues. NJS GC will work in close collaboration with the RCE Water Resources Program to enhance and extend their efforts to coastal areas and new audiences, rather than duplicating their innovative programs.

NJS GC Coastal Processes Specialist Dr. Jon Miller, also of Stevens Institute of Technology, is well-equipped to help municipalities address some of the issues and challenges stemming from beach replenishment, dune maintenance, and research needs.

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