



# 2016

## Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership



**Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment Grant Program  
Summary Report (2015-2016)**

**Funded by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and housed at the  
University of New Hampshire**

## SUMMARY

The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) initiated the Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment Grant Program in 2015. The program provided a grant opportunity for projects in the 42 New Hampshire and 10 Maine communities within the Piscataqua Region watershed. Grant projects were associated with recommendations from the 2015 Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment. Eleven communities applied for and received assistance through the program (2015-2016).

## BACKGROUND

PREP, recognizing the role of local source protection measures and actions in protecting coastal and estuarine resources, developed the PREPA Grant Program using the Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) as a model. The goal of the program was to assist communities in implementing natural resource protection strategies at the local level with the assistance of technical assistance providers throughout the region.

To begin the PREPA grant program, PREP issued a Request for Proposals on April 10, 2015. Applications were accepted until June 5, 2015, and communities, acting through their planning boards and conservation commissions, could apply for assistance related to the community specific recommendations from the 2015 Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment. These recommendations also align with 15 action plans within the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) (2010) (Appendix A).

Topics included:

- Adopting stream and/or wetland buffers
- Increasing buffer or setbacks for wetlands, streams, buildings or septic
- Adopting fertilizer application setbacks
- Adopting model stormwater management regulations
- Adopting model conservation subdivision regulations
- Completing a climate vulnerability assessment
- Completing a Natural Resource Inventory
- Assess eligibility/apply for the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System

PREP along with a subcommittee reviewed the community applications between June 5 and June 30, 2015. Award announcements were sent July 1, and project start dates were set for August 1, 2015. PREP, communities, and consultants for the individual projects typically participated in project planning including identifying opportunities for public education and outreach—a requirement of all projects. PREP managed contract agreements with communities and consultants and paid for services. Community boards were engaged with consultants throughout the project period assisting with project-specific needs such as organizing project meetings, public meetings, public hearings, site visits, collecting and reviewing existing town data and plans, and reviewing draft language for regulations. Final products and reports were generated by each community and provided to PREP.

A total of \$84,445.40 was allocated for the PREPA Grant Program projects; however for some projects budgets were overestimated and opportunities for cost saving arose. Ultimately \$75,864.14 was spent for the eleven projects. Each project was required to provide 1:1 match with

25% in nonfederal dollars and 75% from in kind services. Communities went above and beyond this requirement and leveraged \$96,073.89 in match funding (a surplus of \$20,209.75). Funding for the PREPA Grant Program was from a US Environmental Protection Agency National Estuary Program grant awarded to PREP through an agreement with the University of New Hampshire.

## RESULTS

Eleven projects were implemented through the PREPA Grant Program (2015-2016). Berwick, Exeter, Greenland, Hampton, Kittery, New Castle, North Hampton, Rollinsford, Rye, Somersworth, and Stratham applied for and received assistance through the program. Conservation commissions, municipal staff, and consultants working directly with communities submitted applications. Projects fell under 5 categories:

1. Land conservation planning (1)
2. Wetland/stream buffer protections (3)
3. Fertilizer application (1)
4. Stormwater management (3)
5. Climate change/vulnerability assessment (3)

Projects ranged in cost from just over \$4,700 to \$10,000. Cost of the projects for PREP totals \$75,864.14 (this does not include the cost of PREP staff time to manage the program and assist with project implementation).

The projects resulted in the following products and outcomes:

- Wetland evaluation conducted for one community and assistance provided for designating one wetland as prime wetland in one community (*note—the prime wetlands designation process is still underway and is expected to be revisited in the community in 2017*).
- Development of new or revised regulations improving wetland protection, stream buffer protections, fertilizer application, and/or stormwater management (*note—some regulations developed through the PREPA Grant Program are still in process of being adopted, or implemented by communities*).
- Development of a Natural Resource Inventory/Assessment including co-occurrence maps to prioritize conservation lands in one community.
- Two communities prepared materials for applying to the FEMA Community Rating System.
- Assessment of 1' to 3' diameter culverts in one community as an initial step toward a climate vulnerability assessment.

The eleven projects are summarized below. Final reports for each of the community projects are maintained on the PREP website (<http://preestuaries.org/prepa-final-reports/>).

### BERWICK

Project	Shoreland Zoning Updates
Applicant	John Stoll, Community Development and Planning Director
Consultant	N/A
Cost	\$3,458.50 (\$907.50 PREPA grant; \$625 cash and \$1,926 in-kind from Town of Berwick)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	The Town of Berwick reviewed draft regulation updates for increasing shoreland setbacks for primary structures to 100 ft., adopting a 100 ft.

	fertilizer application buffer on lakes and ponds, and adopting a managed buffer width of 100 ft. The town approved the ordinance updates, excluding adoption of a 100 ft. fertilizer application buffer. Despite opposition to the fertilizer application buffer, the Town of Berwick was able to adopt best management practices for fertilizer to improve local protection of the Salmon Falls River (drinking water source for Berwick).
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**EXETER**

Project	Exeter's Healthy Lawns Clean Water Initiative
Applicant	Kristen Murphy, Natural Resource Planner
Consultant	N/A
Cost	\$20,598.78 (\$6,000 PREPA grant; \$1,500 cash and \$12,098.78 in-kind from Town of Exeter)
Timeframe	July 1, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	The Exeter Healthy Lawns Clean Water (HLCW) Initiative was organized by a group of concerned citizens and Town staff committed to working toward a reduction in excess nitrogen entering streams and rivers from fertilizer runoff. The group developed a zoning regulation limiting fertilizer use adjacent to water resources, and encouraged a change in lawn care practices through a comprehensive education and outreach program which included hosting a lawn care forum to discuss best management practices (May 4, 2016), a demonstration day for residents to learn about fertilizers, water quality, and basic skills in preparing soil samples, calibrating a spreader, selecting fertilizers, and good cultivation practices (May 14, 2016), and a Lawn Care Lunch and Learn for some of the largest turf managers in Exeter.

**GREENLAND**

Project	Stormwater Management Regulation Update
Applicant	Mark J. Fougere, AICP Town Planner
Consultant	Assistance from Julie LaBranche, Rockingham Planning Commission
Cost	\$4,022.48 (\$2,011.24 PREPA grant; \$2,011.24 in-kind from Town of Greenland)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	Used the Southeast Watershed Alliance model stormwater regulations as a starting point for updating current stormwater regulations in the Town of Greenland. A draft document has been completed and is awaiting approval from the Planning Board.

**HAMPTON**

Project	Eligibility assessment and preparation for applying to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System
Applicant	Jason Bachand, Hampton Town Planner Rayann Dionne, Conservation Coordinator
Consultant	Julie LaBranche, Senior Planner and Project Consultant, Rockingham Planning Commission
Cost	\$20,186.14 (\$10,000 PREPA grant; \$2,157.36 cash and \$8,028.78 in kind from Town of Hampton)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-October 1, 2016

Description	To determine if the Town of Hampton is eligible to join the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS). The Town of Hampton submitted a letter to FEMA expressing interest in joining the CRS program and is awaiting a scheduled verification visit once all of the documentation needed to fulfill the 6 pre-requisites and those credible activities are met. Project time was focused on repetitive loss pre-requisites including repetitive loss mapping, repetitive loss area analysis, and outreach to those repetitive loss residents including two public outreach workshops. Currently it is estimated that Hampton may qualify as a Class 8 (with approximately 1,160 points for eligible activities) that would provide a 10% reduction in premiums for National Flood Insurance Program policyholders.
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**KITTERY**

Project	Assessing Culverts for Climate Change Purposes in Kittery, Maine
Applicant	Jessa Kellogg, Shoreland Resource Officer
Consultant	FB Environmental
Cost	\$20,162 (\$10,000 PREPA grant; \$10,162 cash and in-kind from Town of Kittery)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	Part of a larger climate vulnerability study looking specifically at stream and river crossing culverts between 1 ft. and 3 ft. in diameter on Town of Kittery maintained roadways. Preliminary field assessments have indicated many of the smaller culverts are undersized leading to a potential threat to human health and water quality. The assessment prioritized culverts for future repair or replacement.

**NEW CASTLE**

Project	New Castle Wetlands Conservation District Buffer Protection
Applicant	Tracy Degnan, Conservation Specialist
Consultant	Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD)
Cost	\$27,947.26 (\$10,000 PREPA grant; \$3,703.42 cash and \$12,416.12 in-kind from Town of New Castle; \$1,827.72 in-kind from RCCD)
Timeframe	July 1, 2015-September 1, 2016
Description	The project team worked to increase buffers to 100 ft. (from 50 ft.) for four freshwater wetlands and increase protection for the Lavenger Creek salt marsh through prime wetland designation. Although neither warrant article was voted to move forward to a Town Meeting vote, public education and outreach benefitted all residents. Both land use boards (Conservation Commission and Planning Board) are addressing impacts to water quality and wetlands through proposing zoning ordinance changes for impervious surfaces and lot coverage definitions and updating stormwater management regulations. Plans for prime wetland designation for the Lavenger Creek salt marsh are in place for 2016/2017.

**NORTH HAMPTON**

Project	North Hampton Stormwater Regulations Update
Applicant	Jennifer Rowden, Senior Planner
Consultant	Rockingham Planning Commission

Cost	\$9,522.15 (\$4,745.40 PREPA grant; \$1,500 cash and \$3,276.75 in-kind from Town of North Hampton)
Timeframe	September 30, 2015-September 30, 2016
Description	Project to better protect water quality within the Town of North Hampton and the broader watershed by adopting model stormwater regulations developed by the Southeast Watershed Alliance. The Planning Board has held multiple work sessions to review the SWA model, discuss impacts to the town, determine what level of stormwater regulation is politically feasible, and the overall impacts related to implementation of the MS4 permit. Rockingham Planning Commission drafted stormwater regulations based on the SWA model to fit within the context of the town's existing regulations. The draft is awaiting a postponed public hearing and is anticipated for late 2016.

### **ROLLINSFORD**

Project	Develop and Adopt Stormwater Regulations for Town of Rollinsford, NH
Applicant	Suzanne Huard, Select Board Chair
Consultant	Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Cost	\$10,494.17 (\$5,000 PREP grant; \$3,050 cash and \$2,444.17 in-kind from Town of Rollinsford)
Timeframe	August 2, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	Developed a final draft of stormwater management regulations for Planning Board review. The project team conducted a public session to discuss the project and proposed stormwater management regulations on September 19, 2016. The draft regulations are awaiting review from an engineer prior to Planning Board approval.

### **RYE**

Project	Eligibility assessment and preparation of applying to the FEMA's Community Rating System
Applicant	Kimberly Reed, Planning and Zoning Administrator
Consultant	Julie LaBranche, Senior Planner and Project Consultant, Rockingham Planning Commission
Cost	\$20,000 (\$10,000 PREP; \$2,500 cash and \$7,500 in-kind Town of Rye)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	To determine if the Town of Rye is eligible to join the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS). The Town of Hampton submitted a letter to FEMA expressing interest in joining the CRS program and is in the process of working towards "good standing" with the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA will schedule a visit once FEMA provides a letter of "good standing" in the NFIP program and all of the documentation needed to fulfill the 6 pre-requisites and those credible activities are met. Project time was focused on repetitive loss pre-requisites including repetitive loss mapping, repetitive loss area analysis, and outreach to those repetitive loss residents including two public outreach workshops. Currently it is estimated that Hampton may qualify as a Class 8 (with approximately 1,328 points for eligible activities) that would provide a 10% reduction in premiums for National Flood Insurance Program policyholders.

**SOMERSWORTH**

Project	Somersworth Natural Resource Inventory
Applicant	Shanna B. Saunders, Planning Director
Consultant	Kyle Pimental, Principal Regional Planner Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Cost	\$15,384.03 (\$7,200 PREPA grant; \$8,184.03 cash and in-kind from City of Somersworth)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-October 1, 2016
Description	Development of large-scale co-occurrence maps as part of a Natural Resource Inventory including data layers such as wildlife habitat, soils, and aquifers overlaid within City boundaries. The assessment will be valuable in guiding short and long term land conservation priorities by identifying which areas of the City are most appropriate and highest priority for conservation.

**STRATHAM**

Project	Stormwater Management and Wetlands/Vernal Pool Protection Standards Update
Applicant	Paul Deschaine, Town Administrator
Consultant	Robert Roseen, Horsley Whitten
Cost	\$21,148 (\$10,000 PREP \$11,148 cash and in-kind match Town of Stratham)
Timeframe	August 1, 2015-December 31, 2015
Description	Proposed update to the towns regulations and ordinances to improve water resource protection and in particular increase buffers to 100 ft. for tidal wetlands, increase septic and structure setbacks to 100 ft. for freshwater wetlands, adopt fertilizer setbacks for all water bodies, and adopt model stormwater management regulations. Although proposed updates did not occur in 2015, the Planning Board has requested further development of the regulations with additional stakeholder input in the fall of 2016.

**NEXT STEPS**

PREP solicited feedback from communities as the PREPA grant projects were nearing completion. Feedback from communities and consultants from each of the PREPA grant projects has provided suggestions for improvement to the program which PREP will take into consideration should this—or a similar—local technical assistance grant opportunity arise.

## 2010 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

### Water Resources

- WR-8: Research and promote stormwater best management practices that remove nutrients;
- WR-11: Promote low impact and low nutrient commercial and residential landscaping techniques;
- WR-20: Increase implementation of household hazardous waste and pollution prevention programs in the Piscataqua Region watershed and include pharmaceutical and personal care product disposal;
- WR-25: Support municipal implementation of Phase II stormwater requirements for MS4 communities and BMP outreach and education for municipal staff in communities that are not required to comply with Phase II regulations;
- WR-35: Promote adoption of bridge and culvert design guidelines that accommodate aquatic passage, hydrologic connectivity, and increased stormflows due to climate change;

### Living Resources and Habitat Restoration

- LR-9: Assess, prioritize, and restore shoreland and riparian buffers;
- LR-10: Conduct stream/road crossing inventories in all significant estuarine tributaries to identify, prioritize, and correct crossings that are aquatic species passage barriers or have significant negative impacts on the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of waterways;
- LR-9: Inventory, map, and implement restoration of rare habitats and habitats for rare, threatened, or endangered species;

### Land Use and Habitat Protection

- LU-2: Employ BMPs and LID approaches in new, existing, and re-development to minimize stormwater runoff impacts and limit changes to pre-development site hydrology;
- LU-8: Identify and protect highest value wetlands within Piscataqua Region watersheds by improving municipally based assessments, zoning, and regulation or through land conservation;
- LU-10: Develop and implement consistent municipal ordinances to protect 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> order streams and buffers throughout the watershed;
- LU-12: Assist watershed communities in adopting local land conservation plans and natural resource inventories that incorporate regional land protection priorities, species, and habitat information, and wildlife habitat connectivity concepts;

### Watershed Stewardship

- WS-3: Develop and implement outreach and education programs on natural resource planning issues to municipal boards;
- WS-5: Support coordinated communication to coastal watershed stakeholders about activities that implement the PREP CCMP;
- WS-7: Develop support for nutrient load reductions in the Piscataqua Region Watershed.