

CLIMATE CHANGE & OUR COAST: SOCIAL ASSET MAPPING IN THE TOWN AND DISTRICT OF YARMOUTH

PROJECT UPDATE JULY 2011

Dalhousie University is working with the Town and the District of Yarmouth on a series of projects for the Atlantic Climate Adaptation Solutions (ACAS) program. ACAS is a collaborative initiative involving government and non-government partners, working to enhance Atlantic Canada's resilience to changing climate and weather events.

We are two of the Dalhousie students working on the projects. In particular, our role is to explore the potential social impacts of climate change. We are doing this by investigating community priorities, social assets, and vulnerable locations and populations. In June, we held workshops in the Town and District of Yarmouth. Residents provided us with information about important social assets in their communities, areas where water levels have risen over time, areas that are impacted by storm surges, and areas where the coastline is being eroded. We also had several meetings with municipal planning and engineering staff, as well as Council members.

Many topics of importance and concern were raised during our discussions and meetings. Certain topics have already emerged as priorities as they continue to be mentioned frequently:

- **BEACHES:** Residents indicated overwhelmingly that beaches are important assets – both for existing residents and as an attraction for people moving to or visiting the area.
- **COMMUNITY HALLS:** Residents also indicated that community gathering places, such as fire halls and church halls are important both for social events and in emergency situations.
- **SCENERY AND COASTAL ACCESS:** The peninsulas and islands of the Yarmouth area make it both scenic and vulnerable. Residents identified trails, viewpoints, and driving routes along the coastline as key contributors to their quality of life. However, the bridges and low coastal roads connecting these places could be at risk of being cut off by flooding and erosion.
- **FISHING:** Another issue in Yarmouth is the importance of the fishing industry and related infrastructure, which have both economic and cultural significance. Wharves, boat launches, and mooring areas can be threatened by storm surges and coastal flooding.

Following the community workshops, we asked participants to complete a survey about their priorities regarding social assets. So far, the response has been good. The online version will remain open until August 15. The more responses we get, the more representative our data will be of the local community. The survey can be accessed at: <https://surveys.dal.ca/opinio/s?s=11896>

We will be returning to Yarmouth between July 24th and 28th. This trip, we will set up booths at the Yarmouth Town Hall, the Yarmouth Public Library, the Lake Milo Aquatic Club, Yarmouth Mall, and the Shore Grocery in Port Maitland. The booths will give passers-by the opportunity to participate in the study through mapping social assets, filling out the survey, and discussing with us any ideas or concerns that they have. Part of this trip will also be dedicated to meeting with community support groups in order to get a better understanding of vulnerable locations and populations. We are hoping to involve more people in the project and to get people talking about climate change and adaptation.

We will have our data collection completed by the end of August 2011. In the Fall of 2011 and Winter of 2012, we will continue work on data analysis. The final project will be completed in March 2012.

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