



Updating New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan

Greater Seacoast Community Conversation in Hampton, NH

*Summary Report by NH Listens, January 2024
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Purpose and Background

In August 2023, New Hampshire was granted federal funding to update New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The four-year program runs from 2023-2027. Objectives of the plan are to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions while supporting the creation of good jobs and lowering energy costs for families.
- Empower community-driven solutions in neighborhoods overburdened from pollution and impacts of climate change by directly seeking input from those communities.
- Deliver cleaner air by reducing harmful air pollution in places where people live, work, play and go to school.

These plans are part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. **They lead to additional implementation funding that will support community-engaged projects** with an effort to focus on Justice40 investments among the sectors of air pollution and greenhouse gas reductions ([see more on Justice40 here](#)).



Figure 1. Community Conversation in Hampton, NH, January 17, 2024

New Hampshire Listens is working on behalf of the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to design and facilitate community engagement—an essential component of NH's Priority (PCAP) and Comprehensive Climate Action Plans (CCAP).



Each climate action plan requires meaningful community engagement. The design and initial efforts to identify climate action priorities must actively involve the participation of people who live in communities that experience a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards that affect their quality of life [...] There is much to talk and engage about across New Hampshire!

(NH DES - <https://www.des.nh.gov/climate-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>)

Between December 2023 and early February 2024, NH Listens hosted a series of conversations and gatherings that offered time for people to learn, listen, and talk with each other to help develop a priority climate action plan for the state. From these conversations, NHDES will identify priority projects and linking measures based on community engagement along with a series of analyses by (March 1, 2024; [see more about the CPRG process and training/technical tools](#)). The PCAP allows the state to apply for implementation funding from the federal government (April 1, 2024) to move projects forward in New Hampshire ([see more about the implementation grants](#)).

The conversations focused on talking about local issues and potential solutions in many different areas of concern:

- Agriculture
- Commercial and Residential Buildings
- Electricity Generation and/or Use
- Industry
- Natural and Working Lands
- Transportation
- Wastewater
- Wastewater & Materials Management

Goals, Facilitation, and Participation

On January 17, 2024, NH Listens, NHDES, and the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) held an in-person community conversation in Hampton, NH. The purpose of the gathering was to share information about the Climate Action Plan and have a conversation about implementation grant goals and projects that can be implemented in Greater Seacoast. This meeting continued ongoing conversations about key priorities for reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in New Hampshire. Additionally, NH Listens and NHDES were interested in identifying/building a list of local and statewide partnerships, so that projects locally and statewide include a robust mix of perspectives needed to move this work forward.

Participants engaged in a workshop that allowed them to review near-term, high priority, implement ready priorities, projects, programs, and policies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions ([see slides and transcriptions on the Carsey School of Public Policy Page](#)). Projects prepared were derived from previous online meetings, including individual interviews with statewide providers, cross-sector stakeholder conversations, and community



conversations. They were organized by sector. The sectors are as follows: Transportation, Electricity Generation and/or Use and Industry, Commercial and Residential Buildings, Natural & Working Lands and Agriculture, and Waste & Materials Management and Wastewater. Participants reviewed projects as they related to the said sectors and worked through the prompts provided.

The four overarching questions for the evening's workshop were:

- What is needed to effectively achieve this project? What would make success possible in NH?
- What successful examples have you seen?
- What prevents progress or acts as a barrier?
- Who needs to be involved? Identify partners on the ground.

During the workshops, NH Listens helped keep time, facilitated group discussion, and made sure everyone who attended had a chance to contribute. **Nineteen people attended the session.** Collectively, they identified key projects and priorities relevant to the Greater Seacoast and surrounding localities.

Participants attended from:

- Dover (x2)
- Durham
- Exeter
- Hampton (x7)
- Manchester
- North Hampton (x2)
- Portsmouth (x2)
- Rye
- Strafford (x2)

They identified with the following organizations/affiliations when asked:

- Cocheco River Advisory and Strafford Green Committee
- Hammond F. Brown
- Hampton Planning Board, Regional Planning Commission, commissioner
- NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action
- Office of Sen. Shaheen
- Office of Congressman Chris Pappas (NH-01)
- Placework
- Portsmouth Climate Action
- Seacoast Science Center
- Self
- Star Island Corporation
- Town of Hampton (x2)
- Unutil
- University of New Hampshire
- No affiliation shared (x4)

Themes and Key Points

During the workshop, community members worked together to identify priorities, barriers, and potential partnerships. Participants provided input across three rounds of small group conversation, switching sectors with each round, which provided multiple perspectives for each of the five sectors.

Transportation

- Residents talked about needed investment in developing reliable, sustainable modes of public transportation, particularly public buses, and shuttles.
- Car-free designs, including rail trails, were also a priority for both recreational and non-recreational means.
- Partnering with existing transit providers and local businesses, outdoors groups, and educators were noted.

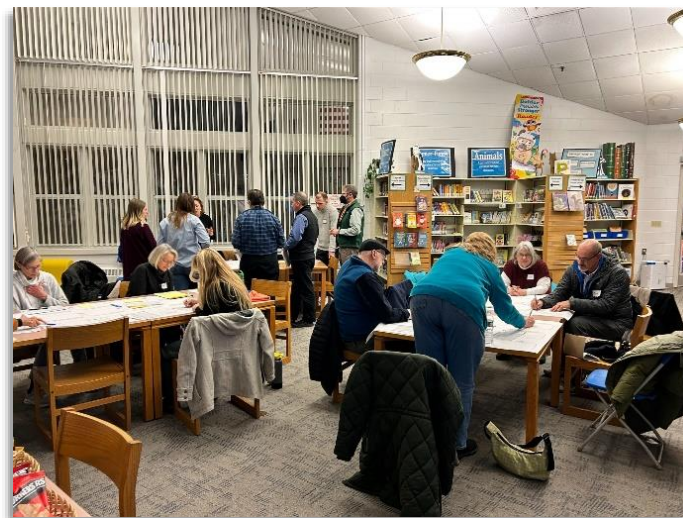


Figure 2. Community Conversation in Hampton, NH

Electricity Generation and/or Use and Industry

- Priorities under this sector include updating the grid and introducing sustainable sources of power including solar and tidal power.
- Increasing storage and diversifying means of energy storage is important, as well as utilizing underused spaces for energy generation, including solar farms.
- Participants identified potential partnerships with NH-based utility companies and private energy installers and providers (i.e., solar providers).



Commercial and Residential Buildings

- Participants identified success in these areas as effectively repurposing existing buildings to address needs in a particular community (such as using a former commercial space as a residential one, or vice versa).
- Weatherization programs were also discussed, with potential projects to incentivize weatherizing new and existing buildings being spotlighted.
- Residents identified partners like owners of commercial and residential buildings, builders & contractors, and environmental groups.

Natural & Working Lands and Agriculture

- Residents in Greater Seacoast want to prioritize green spaces (i.e., parks and community gardens) and utilizing underused spaces, like parking lots.
- To mitigate negative externalities caused by flooding in the region, participants noted projects that could support flood-related adversities.
- Partnerships with conservation organizations, local government, and developers are key.

Waste & Materials Management and Wastewater

- Residents discussed recycling waste back to the grid and mitigating waste on the locally.
- Programs around composting were discussed, as well as community education to inform community members about the importance and process of composting in the Seacoast.
- Partnering with the town, local businesses, and organizations that prioritize recycling and reuse (like garden clubs and composting services) was acknowledged.

Opportunities for Engagement Moving Forward

Hampton is one of the eight communities where NH Listens and NHDES is hosting in-person meetings during the first phase of engagement under the Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant. Participants spent time reflecting on current projects and discussing potential implications for the Greater Seacoast. When debriefing the activity, NH Listens asked participants to identify supplementary priorities for greenhouse gas and air pollution reduction in Greater Seacoast.

Additional priorities for the Greater Seacoast include:

- Recognizing ongoing efforts of towns in the Seacoast region creating their own Climate Actions Plans and how they can fit into NH DES' Climate Action Plan.
- Understanding how NH's Climate Plan will approach on-the-ground implementation and how communities can be involved.
- Distinguishing between private property and community-wide opportunities to focus on an equitable balance of resources.



- Providing education around the various projects, programs, and policies discussed to generate community buy-in.
- Addressing local traffic while addressing demand for housing and proximity to the beach.

Additional Resources

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. Climate Pollution Reduction Grants. <https://www.des.nh.gov/climate-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>.

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (2023). NHDES using EPA grant to update state's Climate Action Plan. <https://www.des.nh.gov/news-and-media/blog/nhdes-using-epa-grant-update-states-climate-action-plan>.

Executive Office of the President of the United States (n.d.) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: Frequently asked questions: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CEQ-CEJST-QandA.pdf>.

The White House (n.d.). Justice 40: A whole-of-government initiative. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (2023). Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program: Planning grant question and answer document. <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-11/climate-pollution-reduction-grants-frequently-asked-questions.pdf>.

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