



Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Yearly Progress Report

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023 Reporting Period

Date: June 28, 2023

Municipality: Town of Westport, MA

Local MVP Contact Name: Michael Burris

1. Please list your municipalities' top priority actions, in order of priority, identified through the MVP planning process.

The Town has two MVP reports – a general Westport report (2018) and one specifically for the East Beach Corridor (2021).

Westport MVP

Top Hazards and Vulnerable Areas:

- Coastal storms (wind, water, utility effects)
- Flooding (storm/ground water)
- Increasing temperature
- Sea level rise

Areas of Concern:

- Infrastructure
 - Power outages
 - Failing septic systems
 - Bridge/road closures
 - Culvert back up
 - Emergency service access to all parts of town
- Environmental
 - Nitrification of groundwater
 - Gradual disappearance of barrier beaches
 - No salt marsh migration (especially on islands), difficulty maintaining natural flood barriers
 - Nitrogen accumulation, groundwater quality decline
- Societal
 - Community division over environmental management
 - Difficulty enforcing existing environmental policies
 - Need for regional planning and collaboration
 - Unequal access to resources

East Beach MVP

High:

- Establish and sustain a Coastal or Climate Resilience Committee
- Develop an Emergency Access/Egress Contingency Plan
- Establish Dune and Beach Monitoring Program

- Model coastal processes to evaluate the impact of the Causeway and in-water adaptation strategies
- Elevate East Beach Road and coastal dunes on abutting properties

Medium:

- Raise awareness of permissible and non-permissible property protection strategies on the Barrier Beach
- Plan for redundancy and sustainability in the utility system
- Monitor and plan for long-term managed retreat and relocation

Low:

- Develop and implement a Climate Action Plan

2. Has your Core Team reconvened since your Listening Session? If so, describe the process and any revisions or updates your team made to the original MVP Report. Please list your MVP Core Team members and note any new members.

After the completion of the East Beach Corridor Vulnerability Study, a Climate Resilience Committee was formed in January of 2022 and meets every 2-3 months to share reports and updates from their respective subcommittees. The most recent list of MVP Core Team members, Subcommittee members and new members are as follows;

Westport Planning Office

- Michael Burris, Town Planner
- Amy Messier, Assistant Town Planner

Climate Resilience Committee:

- John Bullard – Chair
- Shana Shufelt – Vice Chair
- David Brown
- Constance Gee
- Sean Leach
- Jake McGuigan
- Ross Moran
- Raymond Raposa
- Mark Rasmussen
- David Sprogis
- Michael Sullivan
- Brian Valcourt
- Tony Vivenzio
- James Whiting
- Robert Daylor
- Donna Amaral
- Michael Yogman
- Ray Elias
- Phil Weinberg
- Jeff Cantin

Agriculture Subcommittee

- Ray Raposa, Chair

- Mike Sullivan
- John Bullard
- Sean Leach

Health Subcommittee

- Phil Weinberg, Chair
- John Bullard
- Donna Amaral
- Shana Shufelt
- Michael Yogman

Water Subcommittee

- Mike Sullivan, Chair
- Constance Gee
- Bob Daylor
- Phil Weinberg
- Jim Whitin
- Dave Sprogis
- Tony Vivenzio
- John Bullard
- Donna Amaral
- Jake McGuigan
- Laura Hadley

Infrastructure & Safety Subcommittee

- Bob Daylor, Chair
- Jim Whitin
- John Bullard
- Ross Moran
- Sean Leach
- Henry Drinker

Engagement & Funding Subcommittee

- David Cole, Chair
- Shana Shufelt
- John Bullard
- Donna Amaral
- Ross Moran
- Michael Yogman
- Jeff Cantin

Historical Structures Subcommittee

- Sean Leach
- Kit Wise
- Wendy Nicholas

3. Discuss any other work related to the MVP process or climate change resiliency in the municipality. In what ways has your municipality used the outcomes of your workshop in other planning efforts (e.g., updating existing local plans)?

The Climate Resilience Committee is in the process of drafting a long-range climate resilience action plan. The plan will be guided by four themes, preparedness, built environment, wellness, and nature, and divided into five main policy areas: natural resources, water, health, land use, and infrastructure and safety. Each policy recommendation will include goals and action steps to advance Westport's preparedness, strategic relocation, and adaptation to climate change. Each subcommittee will assist with documenting and describing Westport's vulnerabilities and developing the necessary policies to address them.

In late 2022, the Town applied for a Hazard Mitigation Grant for funds to acquire a consultant to assist with developing a hazard mitigation plan (HMP). This plan would be submitted to FEMA for official certification. Having a certified hazard mitigation plan is the necessary precursor to access funding to develop an emergency response plan. Additionally, an HMP will provide the town other opportunities for adaptation-related grant funds.

The Town is intending to submit two applications to the Coastal Resilience Grant Program. One project would study alternatives to depositing dredged material in open ocean from an Army Corps of Engineers project in the Westport Harbor. The material would likely be reserved for a thin layer deposition pilot at one of Westport's salt marshes. The second project would study Westport's salt marshes for their migration potential and prioritize them for nature-based interventions.

The Buzzards Bay Coalition is in the process of assessing the Gooseberry Island causeway impact upon coastal processes. The modeling will allow for further strategic planning infrastructure planning at East Beach for sea level rise and increased storm severity.

The Town continues to explore the feasibility and develop a plan for a community well system at The Harbor neighborhood. The wells in this area are susceptible to salt water intrusion. This project is fully funded and the consultant's work is underway.

Finally, the Town has many ongoing projects related to water quality. The Route 6 water and sewer project will enable the commercial properties and residences adjacent to Route 6 to transition from septic systems and cesspools, both of which are major sources of nitrogen contamination in the Westport River, to sanitary sewer. The Town is also working to secure funds for culvert replacement, developing a concept for nitrogen-reducing community septic system at The Let neighborhood, and assistance with MS4 permitting work.

4. Please list any grants that your municipality has applied for, or received, to implement actions from your MVP report. Please note grant awards or applications that advanced priority actions.

- Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency - Hazard Mitigation Grant

- Grant funds would be used to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan, to be FEMA-certified.
 - Priority: an HMP is the precursor for further emergency management and response planning funds
- Buzzards Bay National Estuaries Program – Watershed Infrastructure and CCMP Support Grant Program (two proposals)
 - Request funds to assist with maintenance and operations of the municipal separate storm sewer system.
 - Priority: stormwater, groundwater quality
 - Develop plans for a community, nitrogen-reducing septic system at The Let neighborhood.
 - Priority: groundwater quality
- Department of Environmental Resources – Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant
 - Data collection and conceptual culvert designs to replace 3 culverts located at coldwater streams.
 - Priority: culvert replacement/back up
- Buzzards Bay National Estuaries Program – Mini Grant Program
 - Funds for a conservation restriction at a property containing the headwaters of Snell Creek, a coldwater stream.
 - Priority: groundwater quality
- Federal Appropriations Requests with Senator Warren and Senator Markey’s offices
 - Route 6 water and sewer: extension of sanitary water and sewer service from Fall River to Route 88. Project is adjacent to an environmental justice community that has high levels of well water bacterial and PFAS contaminations.
 - Priority action: groundwater quality, unequal access to resources
- MVP 2.0
 - Priority action: societal/engagement/unequal access to resources and representation
- Executive Office of Economic Development - Massworks Infrastructure Program
 - Route 6 water and sewer
 - Priority action: groundwater quality, unequal access to resources
- Coastal Resilience Grant (two proposals)
 - Study and prioritize Westport’s salt marshes for their migration potential.
 - Priority action: Natural flood barriers, salt marshes
 - Develop a study and proposal for the United States Army Corps of Engineers to reserve material from a planned dredging operation at the Westport Harbor. The material is currently intended to be deposited in open ocean; the dredged material could be put to a more beneficial reuse through a salt marsh thin layer deposition project at a high priority salt marsh with the best chance to successfully migrate.
 - Natural flood barriers, salt marshes

5. Please list any other steps that your municipality has taken towards implementing your priority actions.

- As recommended in the TIWRMP, Westport is advancing in the process of the installation of sewer along Route 6, which will provide opportunities for economic development, reduce nutrient loading to Westport estuaries from existing septic systems and reduce public health concerns related to existing septic systems. The project is nearly fully permitted and construction is anticipated within 1-2 years.
- The Climate Resilience Committee kicked off its community engagement for the climate resilience plan at Westport River Days. More community engagement is planned as opportunities arise. The Committee will be assisted with further engagement efforts if the town is selected for an MVP 2.0 award.
- The Town is participating in SRPEDD's Priority Protection Area/Priority Development Area planning project.
- Conservation, Planning, and the Westport Land Trust continue to collaborate to identify and secure resources to preserve critical rural lands.
- Ongoing collaboration with the Westport River Watershed Alliance and the Buzzards Bay Coalition to coordinate priority initiatives.

6. Please list any potential next steps to advance priority actions during the next year.

- Apply for Clean Water and Drinking Water revolving funds to enable construction of the Route 6 sanitary water and sewer.
- If selected for grant awards, acquire consultants for an HMP, MVP 2.0, Coastal Resilience Grants, Culvert Replacement Grant, and BBNEP grants.
- Maintain compliance with MS4 permit requirements.
- Continue working with community partners to secure grant resources that can help advance priority actions.
- Ongoing community engagement for the town's climate resilience plan and continue drafting the plan document.

7. Please note any difficulties or challenges the community has identified through the MVP planning process or while seeking to implement priority actions and any steps the community has identified to address these challenges.

Given the broad priority areas, staffing is a significant difficulty. The Town's Planning Office actively searches out grant funds that enable acquisition of consultants to advance MVP priorities. However, even with consultants, it becomes time consuming to manage these projects, coordinate volunteers and community outreach, and complete administrative tasks. More resources are necessary for communities to make aggressive progress on their MVP priorities.

8. Please identify any data needs or information gaps that the state could help fill.

- Projections of how plant species are likely to change in the South Coast as the climate warms. Similarly, a list of native plant species that are adaptable to a warming climate to guide landscaping requirements in new developments.
- Projections for how floodplain delineations may change given sea level rise and increased storm severity.

- Strategies and messaging for strategic relocation/managed retreat and shifting away from making investments in communities that will likely be underwater in the long-term. This is an extremely challenging conversation.