



## Managing Growing Pains: NROC Protects Coastal Communities

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DURHAM, N.H. -- New Hampshire's population is the fastest-growing in New England, and much of that growth is happening in communities near the coast. As farms and forests are paved over for new homes and businesses, more polluted runoff spills into streams, rivers and bays, threatening the coastal ecosystem.

Fortunately, the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition (NROC) is reaching out to help seacoast communities manage their growing pains. Part of the National Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) network, NROC is a partnership of organizations including NH Sea Grant, UNH Cooperative Extension, NH Coastal Program, NH Estuaries Project and NH Department of Environmental Services. NROC partners help communities protect their wildlife habitats, agricultural lands and water resources – while still preserving each town's economic vitality and unique cultural character.

After a town has applied for and been selected for NROC assistance, NROC team members make a customized presentation to the community, using up-to-date GIS maps to illustrate the town's natural resources. Over the following year, NH Sea Grant extension specialist Julia Peterson, NROC coordinator Amanda Stone and other NROC partners work closely with board members and other community volunteers. Working together, the team develops and implements town-specific strategies for protecting the community's natural resources as it grows.

Last year, the NROC team assisted New Durham, Wakefield and Deerfield. This year, Rollinsford and Fremont residents are working with the coalition. Since 1999, NROC has worked with 15 NH towns. With NROC support, those communities have developed open-space plans, formed management subcommittees, conducted private well surveys, developed natural resource inventory maps, started water-quality monitoring programs, and raised millions of dollars in bond funds to protect the land.

Recently, NROC was evaluated by Brian Eisenhauer, a sociologist and associate director of the Center for the Environment at Plymouth State University. He praised it as an effective program. "NROC is a valuable and cost effective program that provides many benefits to communities," Eisenhauer says, "and...the resulting conservation of natural resources is achieved in an inclusive manner that empowers and mobilizes communities to engage in conservation actions."

For more information, visit <http://www.des.state.nh.us/coastal/CoastalPlanning/index.html>.