

Lake Ontario Futures Workshops Engage Stakeholders in Coastal Resiliency Planning

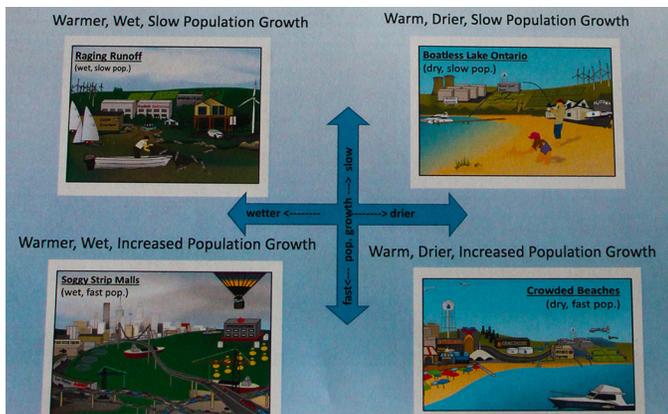
The uncertainty regarding future changes in the Great Lakes basin, due to storms, droughts, and population fluxes, poses a challenge for coastal communities attempting to prepare for the potential impact of changes to their local natural resources, environment, ecosystems, and economies. To help NY’s community leaders and citizens begin to plan for climate change and enhance community resiliency, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) engaged stakeholders in a customized process for identifying possible future scenarios and for generating ideas for adaptive planning.

Using a scenario planning process, NYSG organized four workshops to engage diverse stakeholders from across NY’s Great Lakes region to project four future states of Lake Ontario. The scenarios address high and low extremes in human demographics and climate-induced precipitation.

At the first two workshops, stakeholders addressed how the combinations of drivers may influence the future and the potential impacts of each scenario on Lake Ontario coastal communities. Participants from legislators, water resource managers, land use planners, and economic developers to agricultural, recreational and tourism industry representatives exchanged ideas from their own unique perspectives regarding watershed planning to develop draft plans for responding to the four possible futures.

NYSG asked engaged additional stakeholders at two workshops to identify, discuss and prioritize a

What kind of future does Lake Ontario have?



NYSG Associate Director Katherine Bunting-Howarth, center, talks with Yvonne Tucker of the NY Rural Water Association, and New York Grazing Coalition advocate John Kiechle at a Lake Ontario futures workshop. Photo: NYSG/Kara Lynn Dunn

“Planning informed by grassroots wisdom along with input by experts in climate, natural resources, and other fields will help communities be better prepared to adapt to the challenges of an uncertain future” – Katherine Bunting-Howarth

suite of potential adaptation actions for each future state. Recommendations addressed water/storm management, riparian buffers, wetland/stream restoration, infrastructure improvement, energy, and policymaking. State, provincial and federal agencies involved in lakewide planning and management will receive a final report with the draft watershed management and adaptation plans developed and prioritized by stakeholders through this NYSG outreach.

Partners:

- Great Lakes Integrated Sciences & Assessments Program
- Northeast Regional Climate Center
- USGS Biological Field Station
- Cornell University

Sea Grant Focus Areas for this project are Healthy NY Coastal Ecosystems & Habitats, and New York Resilient Communities and Economies

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New York Sea Grant Extension

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