

Town of Ancram Climate Smart Planning

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The Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool is a checklist to identify gaps in a community's planning process.

The Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool was used to evaluate opportunities for the Town of Ancram to improve its community's resilience to flooding and climate change. The Planning Tool reviews many long and short-term aspects of storm and climate change preparedness by reviewing Town and County planning documents, activities, and management. Documents were reviewed, and municipal staff members were consulted in the process of completing the assessment. The assessment and recommendations have been shared through meetings and correspondence with the Town Council and municipal staff.

Municipal staff engaged in the Town of Ancram Climate Smart Planning assessment:

Art Bassin, Town Supervisor
Suzan Flamm, CSC Task Force Chair
Colleen Lutz, CAC and CSC Task Force member
Monica Cleveland, Town Clerk

The completed assessment and recommendations highlight areas of opportunity for the Town of Ancram to integrate flood and climate change preparedness into its municipal operations and planning.

Areas of Strength

- The Town of Ancram adopted the FEMA approved Columbia County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, **CSC PE7 Action: Hazard Mitigation Plan (4pts)** which:
 - Successfully identifies and prioritizes climate hazards.
 - Describes the damage and cost of previous storms and disasters, past mitigation efforts, and estimates future financial losses that may result from flooding.
 - Includes municipal maps that indicate local hazard risks and identify critical facilities and infrastructure.
 - Includes adaptation strategies that have been evaluated and prioritized by cost, feasibility, timing, and efficacy.
- The Town of Ancram Comprehensive plan was updated in 2019. **CSC PE6 Action Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements (3-21 pts)**. The plan:
 - Involved a broad base of the community in its development.
 - Identifies improved community resilience to major storms and upstream passability of aquatic life in its community vision.

- Identifies climate change and its influences on flooding, storm events, and other hazards as a threat.
- Current zoning regulations incorporate flood resilience by using subdivision regulations to ensure low densities within floodplains and zoning for open space and recreation.
- The Town is part of the National Flood Insurance Program and tracks riverine repetitive loss properties within the community.
- Ancram’s Conservation Advisory Council created the Town of Ancram Natural Resources Conservation Plan. The plan identifies floodplain management as a priority and promotes the management of open space in a manner that provides flood protection. This plan also coordinates with the New York State Open Space Plan¹ **CSC PE7 Action: Conservation of Natural Habitats (4-16 pts)**. In addition to the Natural Resources Conservation Plan, the town is also included in Columbia County’s Natural Resources Inventory² **CSC PE6 Action: Natural Resources Inventory (8-10 pts)**.
- Measures have been taken to prepare for climate-related emergencies:
 - The Town has an Emergency Response Plan (2018) that describes a hierarchy of authority for emergencies and includes a list of contacts for operators of municipal facilities.
 - The town has a designated emergency operations center and designated storm shelters which are designed to withstand high winds. The primary shelter has elevated backup power.
 - The community relays weather-related threats to the public in at least two forms of communication which include a reverse 911 system and a community-wide email listserv.
 - The town has a portable communications system that connects law enforcement, rescue squads, and the highway department. This system operates under poor weather conditions and when electrical power is not available.

Areas of Opportunity

- The Town is participating in the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification program³. Climate Smart Communities certification grants Ancram increased access to funding opportunities for the implementation of projects. The Town has already addressed some of the certification requirements, including the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool **CSC PE7 Action: Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience (6pts)**.
- The adoption of the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan makes the Town of Ancram eligible to receive FEMA grants such as the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, and the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program (formerly the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program) for completion of hazard mitigation actions.

¹ New York State Open Space Plan: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/317.html>

² Greene Land Trust Natural Resource Inventory information: <https://www.greenelandtrust.org/projects/nri-and-conservation-priorities>

³ Climate Smart Communities Portal: <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/> Recommendations that correspond with CSC actions are in **bold**.

- The Town is developing a Flood Preparedness Guide for Residents and Businesses in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension that provides information about expected inundation areas, evacuation routes, location of shelters, and location of pet shelters before the threat of a storm. Consider adding a webpage to the Town website for floodplain information and disaster preparedness and including this document.

Recommendations

The following opportunities emerged under each of the sections of the Climate Smart Planning assessment:

Section 2- Vulnerability and Risk Assessment

- Train municipal employees in risk mapping tools such as lake and overland surges, shoreline change analysis, cumulative risk assessments, HAZUS-MH, etc.
- Adopt the projections of sea-level rise from the State Sea Level Rise Task Force report or more recent studies for planning purposes.
- Conduct a full vulnerability assessment **CSC PE7 Action: Climate Vulnerability Assessment (4-16 pts)** detailing the magnitude of consequences associated with current and future climate hazards.
 - Include how these events will affect internal operations, people, public health, the environment, the economy, and capital and operating costs.
 - Consider using the Department of the State’s Asset Inventory Worksheet and Risk Assessment Tool⁴. Ensure that vulnerability and risk assessments are shared with all relevant village officials and emergency managers.
- Conduct a Build-Out Analysis. Compare it to the extent of storm surge and sea-level rise scenarios.

Section 3- Public Outreach and Engagement

- Inform residents about available disaster resources through Town website **CSC PE9 Action: Local Climate Action Website (3pts)**, television, radio, social media, etc. **CSC PE9 Action: Social Media (3pts)**. Resources could include:
 - Ancram’s Flood Guide for Residents and Businesses (2021)
 - ASPCA’s disaster preparedness steps for domesticated animals⁵.
 - FEMA’s “Are You Ready” guide⁶.
 - FEMA’s coastal construction manual⁷.
- Provide residents with guidance on the development of personal and family evacuation plans or what to include in emergency or evacuation kits (included in Ancram’s Flood Guide for Residents and Businesses).

⁴ Department of the State’s Asset Inventory Worksheet and Risk Assessment Tool: <https://stormrecovery.ny.gov/community-regions/hudson-valley-and-westchester>

⁵ ASPCA Disaster Preparedness Guide: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/disaster-preparedness>

⁶ FEMA “Are You Ready” Guide: https://www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/areyouready_full.pdf

⁷ FEMA Coastal Construction Manual: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/3293?id=1671>

- Consider installing high water mark signs at public locations.
- Take steps to ensure that information is shared using multilingual and culturally sensitive approaches.

Section 4- Integration of Municipal Plans

- Create floodplain management and a stormwater management plans in addition to the local ordinances that are already in place.
- Define a plan for transportation and other needs of vulnerable populations (elderly, special needs, disabled, etc.) in event of an emergency.
- Consider adopting the International Building Code or American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) standards that promote flood-resistant buildings.
- Ensure that the Town budgets include adequate funds for costs related to adapting infrastructure for greater flood and projected sea-level rise resiliency. Incorporating adaptation considerations into an asset management or capital improvement plan is an ideal method to build resiliency into routine maintenance and upgrades. **CSC PE8 Action: Green Economic Development Plans (4 pts).**
- The State of New York has regulations to protect wetlands that are 12.4 acres or larger. Consider going beyond the Land Conservation Overlay and adopting an ordinance to protect wetlands that are less than 12.4 acres more effectively, with a minimum buffer of 100 feet. Look to Section 2.1 Wetland Protection of the New York State Department of State Model Local Laws to Increase Resilience⁸ document for more guidance.

Section 5- Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

- Develop an evacuation plan that identifies a timeframe, multiple evacuation routes, and portions of the community with special circumstances or needs (schools, nursing homes, shelters, and those without personal transportation).
- Take advantage of programs like NY-Alert⁹ and FEMA’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)¹⁰ training to better prepare for disasters.
- Consider participating in the National Weather Service Storm Ready Community¹¹ program which helps communities take a proactive approach to prepare for extreme weather and natural disasters.

Section 6- Hazard Mitigation Implementation

- Create a Climate Action Plan to enact measures and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the community’s resiliency to climate change. **CSC PE2 Action: Government Operations Climate Action Plans (12-16 pts) or Community Climate Action Plan (16 pts).**

⁸ https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/09/model_local_laws_to_increase_resilience.pdf

⁹ NY-Alert is a New York State service that alerts citizens of hazards and emergencies via email or telephone. <https://nyalert.gov/>

¹⁰ CERT program is offered by FEMA to train volunteers in basic response skills to assist in community disaster relief.

<https://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>

¹¹ National Weather Service Storm Ready Community Program: <https://www.weather.gov/stormready/>

- Provide training in retrofitting flood-prone residential buildings and NYDEC Post Flood Stream Intervention training for appropriate staff¹².
- Engage in wetland or riparian buffer restoration and protection by encouraging sustainable enhanced methods of shoreline protection encouraged through incentives or regulation. **CSC PE7 Floodplain Restoration (1-10 pts) or PE7 Action: Nature-based Shoreline Protection.**
- Consider utilizing tools such as transfer/purchase of development rights, rolling easement, or buyouts of vulnerable properties to manage development in hazard-prone areas. Support land-acquisition programs to purchase land conservation easements in hazard-prone areas. **CSC PE7 Action: Restoration of Floodplains and Riparian Buffers (2 pts).**

Potential Funding Sources

- DEC Climate Smart Communities Grant Program: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html>
- DEC Grant Applications: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/grants.html>
- DEC Hudson River Estuary Program Grants: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html>
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program: <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program>
- FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities>
- FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program: <https://www.fema.gov/flood-mitigation-assistance-grant-program>
- HUD Community Development Block Grants: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs
- NYS Department of State Grants (including Local Waterfront Revitalization Program): <https://www.dos.ny.gov/funding/>

Contact Us

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¹² NYDEC Post Flood Stream Intervention Trainings: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/86450.html>