

# **INTERIM REPORT**

**November 1, 2013**

## **COASTAL RISK AND HAZARDS COMMISSION (RSA 483E)**

### **Background and Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide an interim report on the activities and progress of the Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission. The Commission was established through the enactment of SB 163 in the 2013 legislative session which was effective July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013. The purpose of the Commission is to “recommend legislation, rules and other actions to prepare for projected sea level rise and other coastal watershed hazards such as storms, increased river flooding and storm water runoff, and the risks such hazards pose to municipalities and the state assets in New Hampshire. In carrying out tis charge the Commission is also directed to review NOAA and other scientific agency projections of coastal storm inundation and flood risk to determine the appropriate information needed to evaluate such risks. The Commission will be sunset on December 1, 2016.

### **Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission Established**

The organizational meeting of the Commission was called by Representative Christopher Muns (District Rockingham 21 - Hampton), the first named House Members as appointed by the Speaker of the House. The meeting was held in the Legislative Office Building occurred on Friday, August 16 2013 and attended by 24 of the 31 Commission members appointed as of that date by their appointing authorities. At that meeting Cliff Sinnott, member representing the Rockingham Planning Commission, was elected as chairperson and David Wood, member representing Hampton, was elected as clerk. An initial meeting schedule was established that the Commission would meet monthly, primarily in locations in the Seacoast. All meeting notices, agenda and minutes are posted in the Legislative Calendar and are open to the public.

### **Commission Membership**

RSA 483-E (Appendix A) establishes the Commission consisting of 37 members. As of the date of this report 36 of 37 members have been appointed. A Roster of current Commission members are included as Appendix B. The Commission determined at its organization meeting that members could designate alternates to serve in their absence. Four members have designated alternates, who are included on the roster.

### **Commission Meetings**

Since the initial meeting in August, the full Commission has met twice, on September 19<sup>th</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup>. The subject matter of these meeting has been primarily focused on organizational issues and fact finding regarding coastal risks and hazards. The agenda and minutes of the meeting are included in Appendix C to this report.

- **September 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting:** The September meeting was held at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye. The agenda include a brief presentation on RSA 91-A, the New Hampshire “right to know” law from House Counsel to help inform members about our obligations as a public body with respect to public access to Commission meetings and records. The main focus was a detailed presentation on and review of the science and current projections with respect to flood risk from sea level rise and storm surge. This review was provided by Dr. Paul Kirshen, member of the Commission and Professor of Civil Engineering at UNH and noted for his work in coastal flood and risk assessment. Also discussed was the venue and process for establishing and hosting a website for the Commission. It was determined that this would be done with assistance of DES NH Coastal Program staff and would be part of the existing New Hampshire Stormsmart Coast website. The Commission approved the establishment of a Steering Committee of Commission members to help organize the work and direction of the Commission.
- **October 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting:** The October meeting was held at the Great Bay Discovery Center in Greenland and included brief remarks for the Governor about the necessary work of the Commission. The focus of this meeting was to learn about the range of activities that are already underway by organizations and municipalities in the Seacoast region in response to increased risk from coastal flooding. This included presentations on pilot sea level rise vulnerability assessments in the Hampton-Seabrook area, on public outreach and education initiatives of the Coastal Adaptation Workgroup, of a Coastal Risk and Resiliency initiative in the City of Portsmouth and about an upcoming regional vulnerability assessment to sea level rise that will be carried out by the Rockingham Planning Commission in 2014. The Commission discussed what process should be used to establish a consensus on planning assumptions and recommendations on projected sea level rise. To that end the Commission authorized establishing a Scientific and Technical Advisory panel that will develop recommendations and positions for the Commission to consider.
- **Steering Committee:** An ad hoc Steering Committee of approximately 10 Commission members was established to help organize the work and direction of the Commission. The committee has begun work on establish an overall strategy and work plan for carrying out it work over the next three years. The strategy recognizes that our work will both progress in a sequence but also be iterative because climate science and related estimates of sea level rise and the understanding of associated threats are continuing to rapidly develop and evolve.

#### **Anticipated Activities and Focus in 2014**

The Commission’s initial focus in the coming year will be on fact-finding as we educate ourselves about the science and current information on coastal flood hazards and sea level rise, about the associated risks and possible responses to mitigate and adapt to that risk, and about what other states and regions and municipalities that face similar risks have done in response. With the help of our Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel we anticipate developing initial planning assumptions to be shared with state agencies and municipalities during the year. A second focus will be to evaluate the work of other states, regions and localities to be sure to avail ourselves of efforts and results that precede our own. From an organizational perspective, we will develop a work plan and strategy to map out our work and desired products to be produced over the subsequent two years.

## **APPENDICIES**

- A. RSA 483-E – Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission
- B. Commission Member Roster
- C. Commission Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- D. Stormsmart Coast – CHRC Website
- E. Key References and Links to Presentation Materials