

## NPC19 Live Feed – Monday

### SESSION: RESILIENCY PLANNING IN RURAL COASTAL MAINE

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How do you prepare communities with limited capacity – and widely disparate amounts of political will – for the rapidly changing environmental factors related to climate change? NPC19 attendees who made their way to Monday’s session learned planners in the Pine Tree State are helping rural communities move past polarizing nature of the climate debate and effectively plan of increased flooding events.



<https://www.planning.org/blog/blogpost/9174148/>

First and foremost: “It’s important to meet cities where they are when planning for resiliency,” says Abbie Sherwin, with the Southern Main Planning Development Commission. Where one community might have more resources but a sharp divide between climate change believers and doubters, another may have limited municipal capacity but very strong citizen volunteers and willingness to act.

Sherwin and her team created the Maine Coastal Resilience Checklist to help coastal communities within the state, including Vinalhaven (pop. 1,140) to South Portland (pop. 25,483), assess current levels of resiliency and establish priorities, goals, and actions for the future.

Key to the checklist’s success is not the “yes” and “no” answer portion of the process, says Sherwin. Rather, it’s the facilitated discussion surrounding the questions that are key to building stakeholder buy-in around climate mitigation.



Also critical to successful resiliency planning, according to fellow presenter Tora Johnson, with the University of Maine at Machias, is (1) providing accurate flooding projection data that communities trust, and (2) shaping the conversation around climate change in a way that empowers stakeholders rather than leading to intractability.

Despite checklist’s and case studies’ focus on coastal Maine communities, session moderator Jessica Garrow, chair of the APA Small Town and Rural Planning Division, says the practical self-assessment tool and integrated framework, and other best practices discussed, are applicable in communities throughout the U.S. dealing with increased flooding events.