



Connecticut's Climate Adaptation Academy

by Juliana Barrett and Bruce Hyde

Clean up from Sandy storm damage in Old Saybrook. Photo credit: Juliana Barrett.



Are your lilacs blooming earlier? Could be climate change.

By now, you've heard about climate change and likely seen for yourself some changes over time. Maybe your lilacs are blooming earlier each spring or you've noticed that bird migration patterns are changing. You've probably heard discussions about climate change and the polar ice caps on TV news shows. Have you wondered what's going on in Connecticut to deal with our changing climate?

Connecticut Sea Grant and UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) have teamed up to create the Climate Adaptation Academy. This unique forum is an opportunity to exchange ideas and information about climate change adaptation throughout Connecticut and with neighboring states.

Climate adaptation is another one of those terms that we often hear, but what does it mean? The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers a concise definition

of adaptation: Adaptation is the adjustment that society or ecosystems make to prepare for, or adjust to climate change. So, adaptation includes everything from migration of a salt marsh further inland, to movement of fish species further north as ocean waters warm, to a town installing larger culverts in stormwater systems to deal with changing precipitation patterns. Whether you live on the coast or further inland there are ongoing climate change impacts. Inland communities are experiencing higher air temperatures in summer. The precipitation patterns are changing, with more rain falling during short intervals followed by periods of little to no precipitation. Coastal communities are seeing the impacts of accelerated sea level rise with road flooding now occurring in areas not just during storm events but during particularly high tides.

With funding from NOAA/National Sea Grant, the Climate Adaptation Academy (CAA) began holding workshops and forums in 2014 on a number of climate adaptation



1980



2012

Compare the melting of polar sea ice in these two photos taken 32 years apart. – Photo credit: NASA/Goddard Scientific Visualization Studio.



pertaining to climate adaptation that you think would be a good workshop topic, please contact Juliana Barrett (Juliana.barrett@uconn.edu) or Bruce Hyde (bruce.hyde@uconn.edu).

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Coastal communities are experiencing floods as a result of warm temperatures with increased precipitation, sea level rise and high tides. Photo credit: Peg Van Patten.

issues including a general overview of climate change in Connecticut, flooding issues for inland communities, living shorelines, and legal issues that are arising due to climate change impacts. These workshops not only bring in experts to provide the best and most up to date information for Connecticut’s municipal officials, consultants and other citizens, but also provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, solutions and opportunities.

very complex issues. The discussions of alternative approaches, resilient landscapes and native plants, and thinking outside the usual ‘box’ has enabled me to explore different courses of action to help solve some very difficult issues on several coastal properties.”



Sandy’s damage to a seawall in Old Saybrook is seen here before and after repair. Photo credit: Juliana Barrett.

“The Climate Adaptation Academy has provided timely and relevant information on climate adaptation for my community in the work we are doing re: climate adaptation.” said Meg Parulis, Westbrook Town Planner. “ I enjoyed the variety of topic and speakers as well as the opportunity to provide input, and I’m looking forward to the next session on legal issues.”

Many of our speakers have been municipal officials and consultants with stories to share and lessons learned. We continue to collect ideas for new CAA sessions and welcome your thoughts and input. If you have a particular topic

Beth Sullivan, Avalonia Land Conservancy, agrees. “The workshops greatly broadened and deepened my base of knowledge in many areas.” she said. “Working as land trust stewards on coastal properties, we are faced with unusual and



Quite a crowd turned out for the Climate Adaptation Academy’s first Living Shoreline meeting despite the falling snow in January 2015. Photo credit: Kara Bonsack