



SEA LEVEL RISE ON BLOCK ISLAND

Judith Gray, Chair, Town of New Shoreham Sea Level Rise Committee

This information is taken from NOAA Technical Report, *Global and Regional Sea Level Rise Scenarios for the United States* (February, 2022); *New Shoreham Municipal Resilience Program Community Resilience Building Process & Workshop Summary of Findings* (September, 2021); *Corn Neck Road – Transportation Resiliency Planning Study* (December, 2017); and the *Block Island Harbors Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study* (2013).

Sea level rise driven by changes in the global climate is a risk to the coastal United States today and well into the future. Sea levels will continue to rise due to the ocean's response to atmospheric warming that has already occurred, even if no further atmospheric warming were to take place. Rising sea levels and land subsidence combine with other coastal inundation factors, such as storm surge, wave effects, rising coastal water tables, river flows, and rainfall, which are also undergoing climate-related changes. The net result will be an increase in the exposure and vulnerability of critical coastal infrastructure related to transportation, water, energy, trade, military readiness, and coastal ecosystems. So, how does a small coastal town respond?

The scenario projections of relative sea level along the contiguous U.S. coastline are about 2–7.2 feet in 2100 and 2.6–12.8 feet in 2150 (relative to sea level in 2000). The ranges are driven by uncertainty in future emissions pathways and the response of underlying physical processes. Locally, and in this century, the RI Coastal Resources Management Council's (CRMC) policy is to adopt and use the sea level change scenarios published by NOAA in Technical Report OAR CPO-1 (2012), and the sea level rise change curves for Newport and Providence as provided in the United States Army Corps of Engineers' sea level rise calculator. As of 2015, the range in sea level rise change is projected by NOAA to be a maximum of approximately 1.0 foot in 2035, 2.0 feet in 2050 and 7.0 feet in 2100. Presumably, these projections will be fine-tuned by the 2022 NOAA Report.

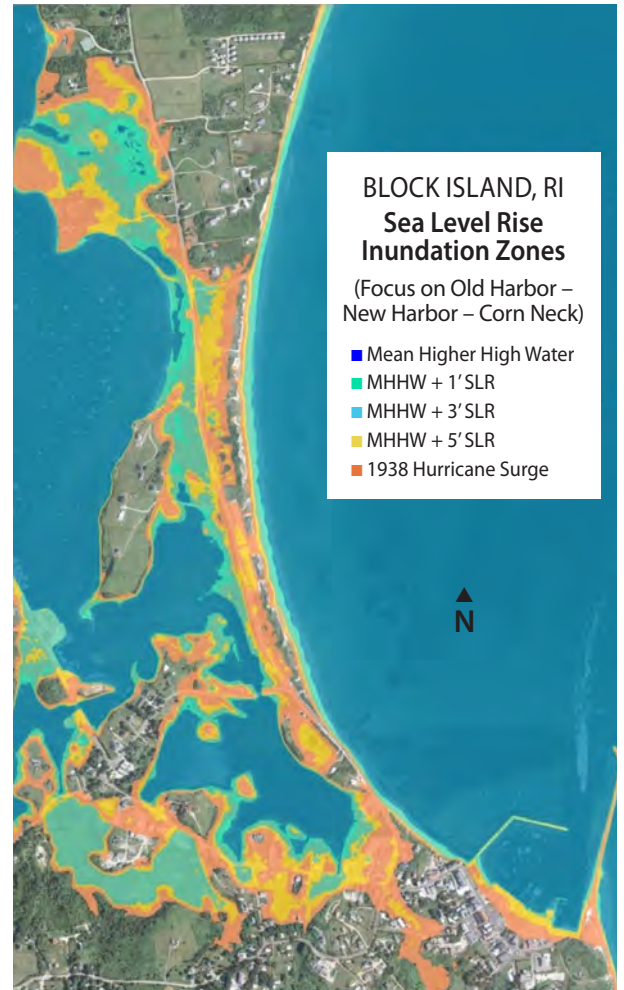


Figure 1. Inundation mapping New Shoreham GIS Dept.

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July 30, 2022

Swim the Pond-7
Andy's Way • 11:00 am
Register today.
cgsblockisland.org
Go to Events



The Great Salt Pond Swim

7

September 10, 2022

Annual CGSP Meeting
4:00 pm
Location: To be determined.
Check website for more information.
cgsblockisland.org



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On Block Island, there are many areas vulnerable to sea level rise including Crescent Beach, Corn Neck Road, Bridgegate Square, Ocean and Beach Avenues, Spring Street, the ferry docks (BI and Galilee), the Great Salt Pond, dunes, and several marshes. Low-lying areas contain critical island infrastructure (power, water, and sewage lines), businesses (gas station, grocery, restaurants, marinas, stores), and, if flooded, can cut-off access to fire/rescue services and the power company (Figure 1). The Block Island studies listed above (2021, 2017, and 2013) have full lists of vulnerabilities.

The Town of New Shoreham has identified sea level rise as an issue that requires careful planning and a lot of public outreach. In November 2021, a Sea Level Rise Committee was created to understand the potential local impacts posed by sea level rise, assess the community’s vulnerabilities, engage citizens, and assist the town to assess, recommend, and implement mitigation projects or other priority actions that will improve Block Island’s coastal resiliency.

Federal infrastructure funds are being made available for potentially relevant projects through the RI Infrastructure Bank and the National Fish and Wildlife Federation, with more anticipated. RI Sea Grant, Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and CRMC are working with us to establish the Sea Level Rise Committee and connect us with the best resources including other RI communities that are creating similar committees.

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE GREAT SALT POND DURING STORM AND TIDAL EVENTS

The CGSP is proud to join with the TNC, BI Conservancy and BIMBI in a coalition to measure the impact of climate change in the Great Salt Pond and inner ponds during major storm and tidal events (tide heights, timing, salinity, etc.). CGSP Board Members Sven Risom and George Davis are active participants on this team.



Typical tide gauge

The goal is to study tide changes in and around the Great Salt Pond and the Island, and to understand changing storm patterns (i.e. major rain events) and sea level rise. Tide gauges will be placed at four locations (Old Harbor, New Harbor (*Great Salt Pond*), Harbor Pond and Trim’s Pond). The two inner ponds are the most serious potential sources of flooding across Ocean Avenue, Beach Avenue and Bridgegate Square.

Each of these inner ponds is connected to the main body of the GSP by a single relatively narrow channel that may significantly limit water flow, so we cannot assume that their tidal behavior is the same as that of the GSP. In addition, storm water run-off is expected to increase as heavy rain events become common during major storm events.

For example, would a 4-foot sea level rise or tidal storm surge within the GSP translate into an equal rise or surge within each inner pond or something significantly less? Will the salinity significantly change in Harbor Pond during storms given storm water outflow? The equipment to be installed early this summer will allow us to monitor the waters on a continuous basis for years to come.

GREAT SALT POND SWIM - 7

The 2022 Great Salt Pond Swim this year will take place on Saturday, July 30, 2022. This is a (1) mile swim, starting at Andy’s Way, turning around at Beane Pt. and returning to Andy’s Way. The registration fee is \$60, and will be limited to 150 swimmers. This swim is an annual fundraiser, serving to support our efforts to protect The Great Salt Pond, and provide funds for additional water testing in the recreational swim areas.

We will have on-site registration this year which closes at 10:15 a.m. Please read over our swim packet for this swim which can be found on our website: cgspblockisland.org. If you have any questions please send them to: cgsp02807@gmail.com

We look forward to a great, safe swim!





THE HISTORY OF CHAMPLIN'S LITIGATION AND EXPANSION EFFORTS

2003. Champlin's Marina on Block Island files an application with the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council ("CRMC") to effectively double the size of its marina. The Town of New Shoreham, as well as a group of Block Island and Rhode Island conservation groups (CGSP, BI Land Trust ("BILT"), BI Conservancy, and the Conservation Law Foundation ("CLF")), who came to be known as the "Intervenors," file objections to Champlin's application. Even though objections are filed, the CRMC sets the application for decision by the entire CRMC in December, 2003, rather than sending it to subcommittee for hearings as required by the regulations. But for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's (known as DEM) last-minute decision to send a representative of the DEM Director to the hearing (who provided the crucial fourth vote in favor of sending the application to subcommittee for hearings), the application would have been immediately approved! (The CRMC is required to include a person from the Town of New Shoreham on the Champlin's subcommittee. Interestingly, the CRMC rejected the Town's designated representative, and named Exeter developer and Block Island summer resident Jerry Zarrella instead.)

2003-2006. A CRMC subcommittee conducts a total of twenty-three (23) hearings over an approximately two-year period. Although the CRMC subcommittee recommends substantial approval of Champlin's application, the full CRMC votes to deny Champlin's application. Champlin's appeals this CRMC decision to the Rhode Island Superior Court sitting in Providence. The Superior Court found that Champlin's rights had been negatively affected by certain procedural irregularities within the CRMC but, instead of remanding the case to CRMC to correct the irregularities, the Superior Court reversed the full Council's decision and upheld the CRMC subcommittee's recommendation for a modified expansion. This superior court decision is then appealed by CGSP, CLF, BILT, BI Conservancy, and the Town to the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

2010. The Rhode Island Supreme Court reverses the Superior Court decision to grant the application, and remands the case back to the RI Superior Court with directions that the case be returned to the CRMC for further hearings to consider a CRMC staff recommendation (the so-called "Goulet Plan") that had not been provided to all CRMC members and that had been the subject of some of the earlier procedural irregularities.

2011. The CRMC again votes to deny Champlin's 2003 application and on May 6, 2011 issues a written decision to this effect. Champlin's appeals this decision to the RI Superior Court in Washington/South County.

2012. The Rhode Island Superior Court again remands the case back to the CRMC for additional evidence regarding the CRMC's recent approval of a smaller expansion of Payne's Dock on the Block Island Great Salt Pond.

2013. The CRMC again denies the Champlin's application and states specifically that there was a "rational basis" for the CRMC's approval of the relatively modest Payne's Dock expansion.

Feb. 2020. The case effectively sits idle with the Rhode Island Superior Court in Wakefield for approximately seven (7) years. Finally, on February 11, 2020, the Rhode Island Superior Court, in a decision that literally becomes known as "the Decision," affirms both the 2011 as well as the 2013 decisions of the CRMC to deny the Champlin's application.

Oct. 2020. The Rhode Island Supreme Court grants Champlin's petition for review of the Decision, and this is the appeal that is currently pending with the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

Dec. 2020. Without notice to CGSP, the Land Trust, the BI Conservancy, or CLF, Champlin's and CRMC engage in a closed-door, behind-the-scenes "mediation" during December, 2020. On December 7, Champlin's and the CRMC announce that they have entered into a "settlement" whereby Champlin's would be allowed a 156-foot seaward expansion of piers, a 65-foot westward extension of its fuel dock, and a 20-foot eastward extension of its fuel dock. On December 23, 2020, Champlin's Marina is sold to new, Cranston-based owners for more than \$14,000,000. Neither the Town, CGSP, the Land Trust, the BI Conservancy, nor CLF have prior knowledge of or participate in the "settlement."

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2021. The validity of the behind-closed-doors “settlement” is disputed by the Intervenor to the Rhode Island Supreme Court. The Office of the Rhode Island Attorney General also joins the case as an intervenor, opposing the validity of the “settlement.”

Mar. 2021. The RI Supreme Court denies Champlin’s application and motion to approve the “settlement” and remands the case back to Superior Court for proceedings on the validity of the “settlement.” During the summer of 2021, such proceedings are conducted in the Washington County Superior Court in Wakefield.

Sept. 2021. The Washington County Superior Court approves the “settlement.”

Oct. 2021. The Rhode Island Supreme Court denies Champlin’s motion to withdraw its October, 2020 appeal of the “Decision” of the RI Superior Court, which affirmed both the 2011 as well as the 2013 decision of the CRMC to deny Champlin’s original application for expansion of its marina. The RI Supreme Court sets a briefing schedule for Champlin’s appeal of the February, 2020 “Decision.” The Supreme Court also enters into the record the Superior Court’s finding of the validity of the “settlement” between Champlin’s and CRMC, although it is unclear what effect if any this will have on the Supreme Court’s opinion of the correctness of the 2020 “Decision” denying Champlin’s application for expansion.

Apr. 2022. Oral arguments take place before the Rhode Island Supreme Court. A final decision is expected in June or July, 2022. Stay tuned!

NEW WALKWAY AT ANDY’S WAY

Andrew Starr, son of Al and Norma Starr grew up spending summers on Block Island and loved the area we now call “Andy’s Way”. Sadly, Andy passed away in 1971 as a result of a car accident on Block Island and his family, in tribute, developed a plan to honor Andy. The Starr family purchased a 75-foot-wide strip of the Cannon lot and worked with the town to ensure beach access at a place that Andy loved. This piece of land has become known as Andy’s Way.

Over the years, Andy’s Way has continued to provide access to the pond and is a great family beach as well as beautiful stocked clamming flats. In 2015 the Town formed a Shoreline Access Working Group that was charged to review all public beach access points and make recommendations for improvements. One of the top recommendations was to improve the access to the beach at Andy’s Way as storm water run-off had eroded the path making it tough for many to navigate.

The Town applied for and received a grant to construct a walkway down to the beach but that only covered part of the construction costs. In addition to helping move the project along, the Committee for the Great Salt Pond was able to donate \$15,000 to the project through generous memorial donations to honor Jon Emsbo.

The walkway is approximately 100 feet long and wide enough for emergency beach vehicles and wheelchair access. It was designed to follow the curve of the land and the old path in order to minimize disruption. As importantly, the storm water run-off is now engineered to flow under the walkway and work with the environment. As you can imagine, the Town worked closely with the DEM and CRMC to ensure the best environmental design.

The CGSP is proud to work with the Town and other conservation organizations to ensure continued beach access on Block Island. We hope you will come to Andy’s Way when you are next on the island and enjoy the lovely walkway.



New walkover at Andy’s Way



COMMITTEE FOR THE GREAT SALT POND PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT

This will be the third year that the Committee for the Great Salt Pond sponsors and runs this popular and FREE event. The Contest was created during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its purpose was to give the public an outdoor activity that would be “fun” but “safe.” We wanted to get people outdoors and down to the pristine waters of the GSP.

One of our Directors came up with the idea of a Scavenger Hunt with a camera. One simply took a picture of a pond-side object whose first letter in its name starts to spell out a location on the Pond. For example, SALT POND. A photo of a ‘seagull would give us the ‘S’; a photo of an ‘anchor would give us the ‘A,’ and so on until SALT POND was spelled out. Photos were judged and 24 hats were awarded as prizes the first year (48 last year).



CGSP Prize Hats

The Hunt will be held again this year from **July 9 until August 12**. The rules are located on our website and the phrase this year will be CLAM FLATS.

THE 2022 GREAT SALT POND BURGEE

The 2022 Great Salt Pond Burgee goes on sale at the Block Island Hardware Store, the Block Island Chamber of Commerce, Payne’s Dock, the “dingy dock”, and New Harbor Boat Basin **June 29th through July 3rd**. Three hundred are usually sold out in 3 days. This might be an inconvenient time for many members to make a purchase, so email Bruce Johnson at bdjohnsn@comcast.net and we will save one for you. Cost is \$20.



ESTABLISHING A MEMORIAL FOR A LOVED ONE

Several families, in their time of sorrow, have remembered their loved one’s many years of pleasure on Block Island and on the Great Salt Pond. They have suggested that in lieu of flowers, family and friends consider making a donation in the person’s memory to the Committee for the Great Salt Pond. This idea gives the benefactors something positive to do in memory of their friend or family member. Thank you notes are sent to each of the donors and the family is also informed of their names and addresses.

It helps the Great Salt Pond and most importantly it is a comfort to the bereaved family to know of this expression of sympathy.

COMMUNICATION

There are several ways we keep in touch with our members and friends of the Great Salt Pond:

CGSP Website

Check out our website, which is more interactive and informative: cgspblockisland.org

CGSP Newsletter

This is a publication which comes out once a year, in June, a summary of our initiatives, developments along the Pond and important current events.

On the Pond

This is our new monthly electronic publication in which we write about the Pond; its history, the surrounding environment and community, events, and inhabitants of the Pond.

Email

Questions can be sent to: cgsp02807@gmail.com

Like Us on Facebook



cgspblockisland.org

The Committee for the Great Salt Pond
PO Box 1092 • Block Island, RI 02807



OUR MISSION

To protect and enhance the environmental quality of the Great Salt Pond, including its shorelines and wetlands, and to promote appropriate and productive uses of the Pond's resources by residents, visitors and local businesses.

OUR WEBSITE

cgspblockisland.org

Visit our website where you can catch up on activities for the coming season, pay your annual dues or make a donation. There is a page dedicated to the 6th Swim the Pond event on July 31, 2021. You will be able to read all the details about the event, including registration for the swim.

FUNDING

Individual contributions, membership dues, special events, program grants. IRS 501(c)3 non-profit.

Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thank you for your support of the Committee for the Great Salt Pond. We are happy to report that the pond remains healthy, our water quality-monitoring program is active and our annual Swim the Pond continues to grow as a demonstration of how great the pond truly is.

ABOUT US

Directors

Cheryl Moore, President
Cindy Pappas, Vice President
Sven Risom, Treasurer
Betsy Pyne, Secretary
George Davis
Henry duPont
Bob Greenlee
Ed Hayde
Bruce Johnson
Trudy O'Toole
Eric Reimer
Mitchel Silberbush
Lara Andrea Taber

Members

Approximately 450

Governance

Up to 16 Directors

Committee for the Great Salt Pond

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cgspblockisland.org