



OUR PARTNERS ON THE POND SERIES

TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM SEA LEVEL RISE COMMITTEE

The **Sea Level Rise (SLR) Committee** was established by the Town of New Shoreham 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.

Making Block Island resilient to the impacts of sea level rise requires action at all levels of government as well as businesses, non-governmental organizations, and citizens. The Committee has met with representatives from the RI Department of Environmental Management, Coastal Resources Management Council, Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NOAA), and RI Sea Grant. Other coastal RI municipalities are also addressing climate and sea level rise issues and the Committee is working with RI Sea Grant to bring these communities together to share information and, perhaps in the future, to partner in funding requests. The Committee is also carefully monitoring the activities of the BI “Tide Gauge Group,” comprising representatives from local conservation groups (BIC, BIMl, CGSP, & TNC), who are purchasing tide gauges for Old and New Harbors, Harbor Pond, and Trim’s Pond for long-term monitoring.

The first meeting of the SLR Committee was held in November, 2021. Because of the complexity of sea level rise issues and the vast array of related studies and potential solutions, the Committee decided to, in addition to regular meetings, hold special sessions to bring in experts, and to speed-up the priority-setting process. Priorities for the Committee were established using a standard process of brainstorming, affinity mapping/list reduction, ranking, voting, and a lot of discussion and consensus-building, which is ongoing. The Committee’s “Preliminary Interim Priorities” in no particular order are: Corn Neck Road North of Beach Ave (including the dunes), Corn Neck Road South of Beach Ave, Bridgegate Square, Beach Ave, Ocean Ave, and Marsh Migration.

The list is longer, of course. For example, people expressed concern about Sandy Point and the Mohegan Bluffs. Nothing fell “off” the list; however, the above geographic areas/features were given highest priority by consensus. The Committee does not intend to imply that any of the listed locations has a priority over the other, especially since most are interrelated. Alternatively, “champions” are identified for each location, to watch for funding opportunities, and work with the Town on writing proposals and following through on projects. The Committee will only seek funds for projects that the Town is willing to pursue.

The Committee is committed to productive community collaboration, knowing effective communication among our population is the way to move forward, together. Given the myriad challenges associated with sea level rise, the SLR Committee is looking forward to engaging the Block Island community with each step they take.

The SLR Committee meets at Town Hall on the first Tuesday of each month at 3:00 pm and all are welcome to attend; public comments and input are encouraged.



A very high tide at BIMl, January 2022.



Three above photos: Corn Neck Road after Hurricane Sandy

The information and photographs for this article were supplied by Judy Gray, Chair, SLR Committee.

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.

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. Please consider becoming a member of The Committee for the Great Salt Pond. For information and details, visit our website at cgspblockisland.org.