

5.12.2022

*Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program
Town of Stow Final Report Summary and Action Update*

Overview

In 2018, the Town of Stow received funding through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to conduct a Community Resiliency Building workshop for the dual purpose of completing a baseline climate change and natural hazard vulnerability assessment and developing specific actions for addressing priority hazards in Stow. The effort was advanced through diverse stakeholder involvement and led by GeoSyntech consulting group. Specifically, the 2018 MVP plan addressed the following goals:

- Defined prioritized local natural and climate-related hazards of concern;
- Identified existing and future strengths and vulnerabilities;
- Developed prioritized actions for Stow; and
- Identified immediate opportunities to collaboratively advance actions to increase resilience.

Purpose of Plan Update

The Stow Conservation and Planning Departments have created the following summary of the 2018 MVP Plan, as well as a list of relevant events and efforts since that time for the purpose of re-examining the priority concerns and determining whether there is a need to update the recommended Action Steps. In addition to conforming to the original goals above, this effort will allow the Town to get ahead of the expected development of the next phase of the MVP Program by the State's EOEEA. Reconvening the stakeholders that participated in the initial effort will ensure that our vulnerabilities and recommended action steps are up to date and demonstrate to the State that the Town is efficiently applying for relevant Action Grant funding.

2018 MVP Plan Summary | Priority Vulnerabilities

The Town of Stow identified the following hazards as priority concerns:

- Drought
- Strong storms
- Extreme Temperatures

Participants then provided more specific vulnerabilities and concerns that could be created or exacerbated by the priority hazards listed above, including:

- Resilience of the town's residential and fire suppression water supplies;
- Stress on stormwater management infrastructure and culverts;
- Condition of Stow's bridges and dams;
- Long term viability of commercial farming and potential affect on future land use;

- Potential isolation and emergency access issues for certain neighborhoods and ecosystems;
- Need for improved hazard preparation and planning to improve emergency services and communication to vulnerable populations;
- Limited staff capacity to address evolving vulnerabilities.

2018 MVP Plan Summary | Strengths / Assets

Prior to identifying action steps to address the core vulnerabilities in the report, participants identified a number of strengths and assets that may direct future action steps.

- Emergency Services, including updated shelter plans, modern facilities, existence of Minuteman Airfield, historically strong emergency response capabilities, and existing fire fighting cisterns;
- Conservation areas and the ecosystem services they provide;
- Locally managed electric utility in Hudson Light and Power;
- Regional Health Care system;
- Commitment to community involvement and strong capacity of volunteers, staff and residents.

2018 MVP Plan Summary | Recommended Action Steps

Participants identified the top action steps for responding to the identified vulnerabilities and concerns:

- 1. Conducting a water supply vulnerability assessment and educating public on water supply**
Outcomes of such a study could include recommendations to implement water conservation efforts in the form of bylaws, water management programs/educational programs, greywater reuse programs, emergency water supply plans, or cistern installation plans. Additional actions could include a plan to communicate drought conditions to home owner associations (HOAs), civic institutions and other large water users in the area which could increase cooperation in conserving water during dry seasons.
- 2. Updating the hazard mitigation plan**
Increase Stow's preparedness by incorporating climate hazards and ensure that the community remains eligible for federal emergency funding.
- 3. Developing a hazard transportation and communication plan**
increase the effectiveness of emergency services by targeting vulnerable populations such as the elderly, the sick, children, people with disabilities, etc. and have specific procedures for high-priority institutions, like schools.
- 4. Developing programs to improve the viability and resilience of Stow's agricultural community**
Explore partnerships with existing agricultural organizations, agencies, and institutions be prioritized to determine how local assistance can augment State and Federal programs and be leveraged to benefit local farmers.

Updated Events and Efforts 2018 – Present

Grants and Initiatives

- Stow awarded \$157k for Healthy Lake Boon MVP Action Grant, focused on engaging citizens in understanding the water quality issues that affect Lake Boon and how climate change may affect the Lake.
- Fire Department obtains \$300K in state funding for a project to install fire protection cisterns in key underserved neighborhoods of Stow, addressing a high priority action item in the plan.
- Stow receives 2021 Advancing Climate Resiliency grant from MAPC to work with OARS on the creation of the SuAsCo Climate Resiliency Coalition. Project is funded for additional 2 years, through 2023.
- Stow awarded \$750,000 for development of design plans for Track Road Multi-Use Path.

Preservation / Conservation / Development

- Town and Stow Conservation Trust collaborate with Stow Acres and a private development to develop comprehensive conservation and development plan for 325 acres at Stow Acres Golf Course resulting in the permanent protection of the South Course with a conservation restriction, and a plan to protect the majority of the North Course by purchase. A 189 unit mixed income development is proposed on the remainder of the North Course. Project receives strong community support.
- Stow protects several key parcels since 2016 including land at Regency at Stow, Stow Acres South Course, Town Center Park and portions of Minister's Pond, 144 Red Acre Road, portions of Hallock Point, and Spring Hill. Much of this land has been protected through Planned Conservation Development, and some through outright acquisition. In each case, these natural lands help minimize runoff, recharge groundwater and create opportunities for linkage and more resilient landscapes.
- 144 Red Acre Road acquired for conservation and affordable housing, with the potential to be used as a future public water supply.
- Final permits are issued for Plantation 2, which will increase the amount of affordable senior housing by 38 units.
- The Gleasondale Bridge construction is underway with completion expected in 2024.
- Development of commercial / residential solar facilities totaling 9,500 MW/hrs. of electricity or 18% of Stow's total annual electricity usage;
- Active Adult Neighborhood Bylaw updated in 2021 with expectation for nearly 100 acres off Athens Lane to be redeveloped as 140 unit mixed income housing and >50% preserved open space.
- Eversource advances initial development of Central Mass Rail Trail and underground utility installation.

Municipal / Regulatory

- Stow forms a Green Advisory Committee, with representation from key boards and departments. Committee is in the process of developing Climate Action Plan.
- Emergence of PFAS issue increases understanding of the vulnerability of private water supply wells. Residents and Town undertake widespread well testing throughout Stow.
- In March 2021, Massachusetts Senate passes Senate Bill 9 – *An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy*, requiring the state reach “Net Zero” carbon emissions by 2050.
- MA EOEAA embarks on Clean Energy and Climate Action Plan for 2025/2030.
- Significant changes in key personnel positions in Stow have occurred, including new Town Administrator, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Superintendent of Streets and Building Inspector.
- A sinkhole in the Lake Boon Dam initiates plan for reconstruction of the dam. Design underway, construction funding expected on the 2022 Annual Town Meeting warrant.
- March of 2022, Hudson Light and Power announces “All Electric Home Incentive Rebate Program for Developers,” providing a \$2750 rebate for all electric home construction.
- Town allocates \$100,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funding for feasibility study for creating privately managed Public Water Supply for the Lower Village Business District.
- MA Legislature passes Housing Choice Initiative requiring that the Town of Stow create a by-right multi-family housing district capable of allowing no less than 750 residential units.