Coastal flooding is one of the most significant natural hazards impacting communities along Maine’s 3,300-mile coastline. The occurrence of minor and moderate coastal flooding has become significantly more frequent in the last decade. Increasing storm intensity and frequency, as indicated by a 70% increase in heavy precipitation events between 1958 and 2010, coupled with rising sea levels, will only exacerbate impacts of coastal flooding and associated threats to people, property, and the natural environment.

To prepare for intensifying threats from increasing precipitation and rising seas, local decision makers need information and tools that allow them to better understand risks and vulnerabilities posed by flood hazards and identify proactive steps to increase flood resilience. Strained resources, limited capacity, and a lack of directive are significant barriers to moving resilience efforts forward in Maine’s coastal communities. In an effort to address these challenges and assist communities with increasing their resilience, the Maine Coastal Program developed the Maine Flood Resilience Checklist, a simple and practical self-assessment tool for communities to evaluate how well prepared they are for existing and future flood hazards.

The Maine Flood Resilience Checklist is designed to be completed using a community-based, facilitated discussion process in which key municipal staff and decision makers participate in a dialogue about local flood vulnerability, how well existing planning addresses flood hazards, and ways to improve resilience. The process incorporates flexibility, allowing communities to examine hazard scenarios and impacts based on local interests, values, and context.

The questions aim to move beyond the theory of resiliency by translating indicators of resiliency into practical, actionable information. For example, an indicator commonly linked to community resiliency is percentage of non-native English speakers within a community. Rather than asking what percentage of a community’s population is made up of non-native English speakers, the Checklist poses the question of whether or not a community publishes and distributes flood hazard materials in the natural language spoken in the community. Each question is phrased in a way that it offers suggested actions a community can take to decrease flood vulnerability.

Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), which receive funding from the state to provide essential planning and technical assistance to municipalities within their respective regions, are largely viewed by Maine communities as trusted sources of information. As such, RPO staff will be trained to lead the facilitated discussion process associated with the Checklist with their respective communities.

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