

Coastal Carolina Riverwatch

North River Resilience Project

An Assessment of Resiliency Projects Prioritized by the North River Community

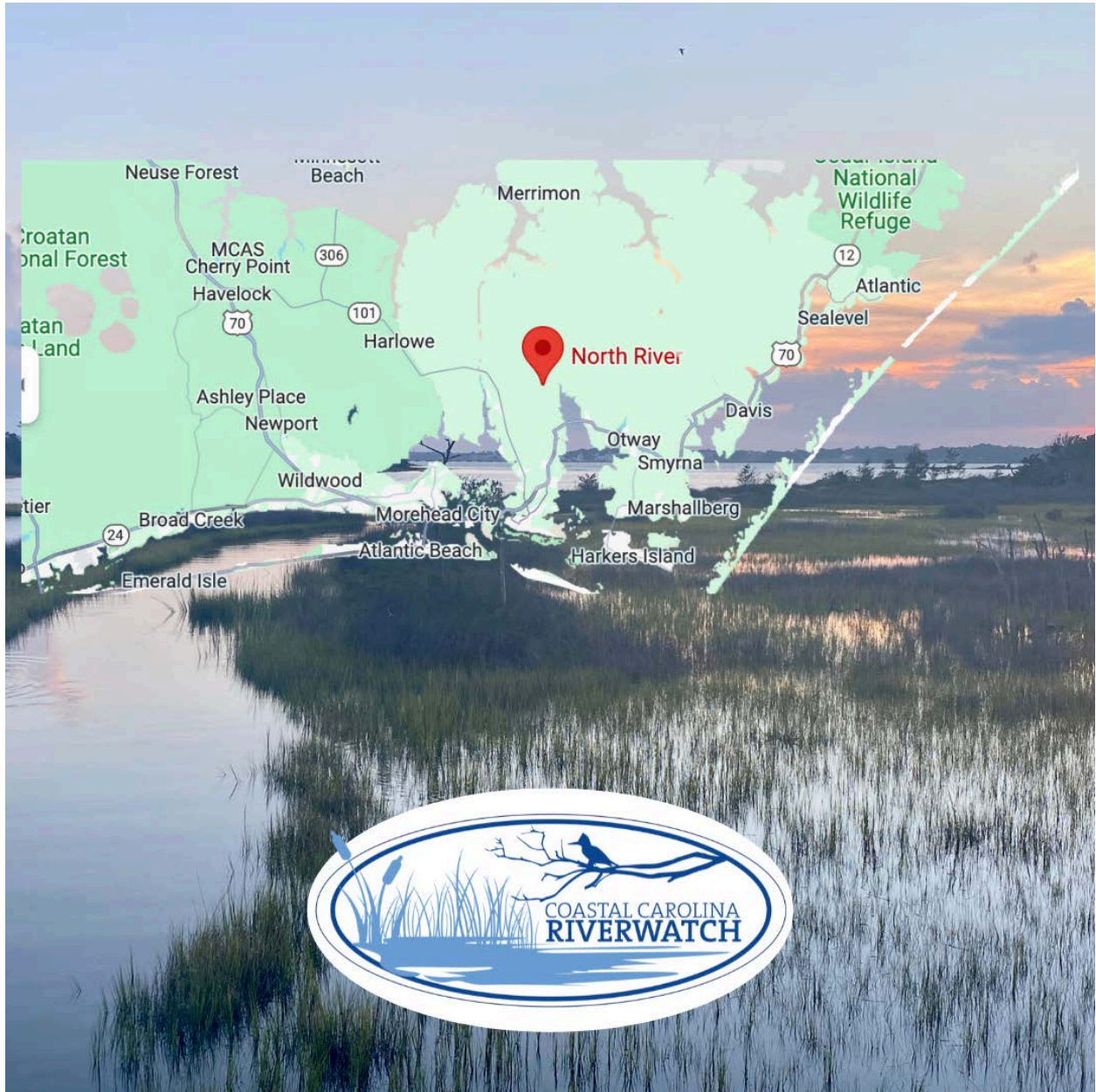


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Introduction

The Coastal Carolina Riverwatch North River Resilience Project Report presents a comprehensive assessment of resiliency projects prioritized and completed by the North River community, along with a performance report.

This report aims to highlight the significant initiatives undertaken to enhance the resilience of the North River community against environmental challenges, particularly flooding. Through collaborative efforts and strategic planning, Coastal Carolina Riverwatch (CCRW) has worked closely with community members to identify needs, prioritize projects, and secure funding to address critical vulnerabilities.

The report is structured as follows:

- An overview of the North River community and its unique challenges.
- Detailed descriptions of community engagement processes and resilience-building efforts.
- Milestones and achievements in the North River Resilience Project.
- A performance report on campaign goals, including funding support, relationship building, and community mobilization.
- A summary of the progress made and future steps to ensure sustained community resilience.
- Budget allocations and expenditures.
- References and resources to support ongoing and future resilience initiatives.

SOURCE:
Google
Maps



Coastal Carolina Riverwatch

<https://coastalcarolinariverwatch.org/>

This document is dedicated to the past, present, and future resilient generations of the North River Community.

This document was prepared by

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- **Matilda Stewart**, North River Community Leader
- **Justin Wallace**, North River Native & Eastern Carteret Collaborative
- **Riley Lewis**, Waterkeeper, Coastal Carolina Riverwatch

The document benefited from the collaboration and support of many others.

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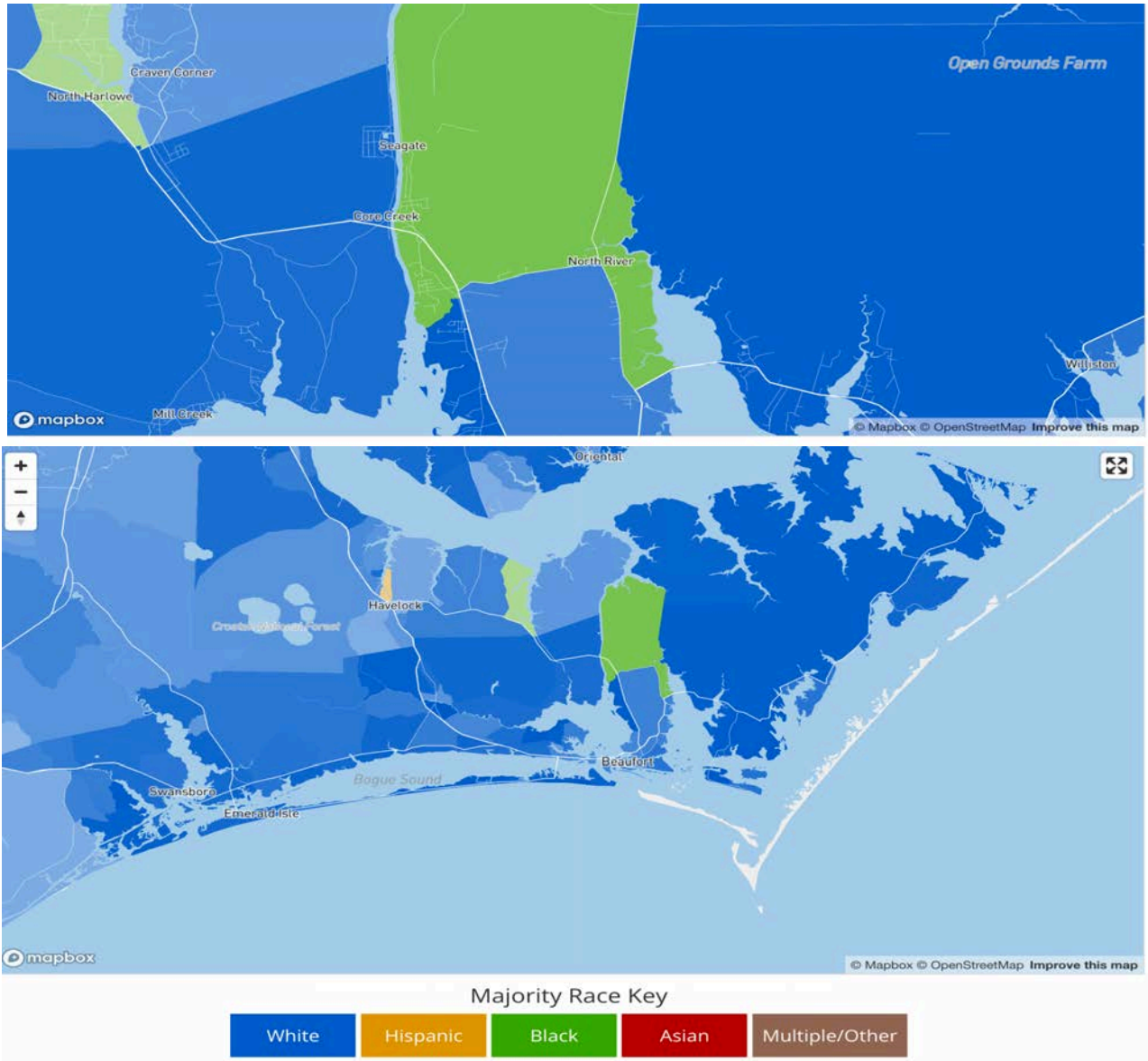
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Overview

The North River community in Carteret County, North Carolina, is an unincorporated area known for its rural charm and close-knit resilient population. The community's demographics show a significant majority of Black residents, with smaller percentages of White and other racial groups.

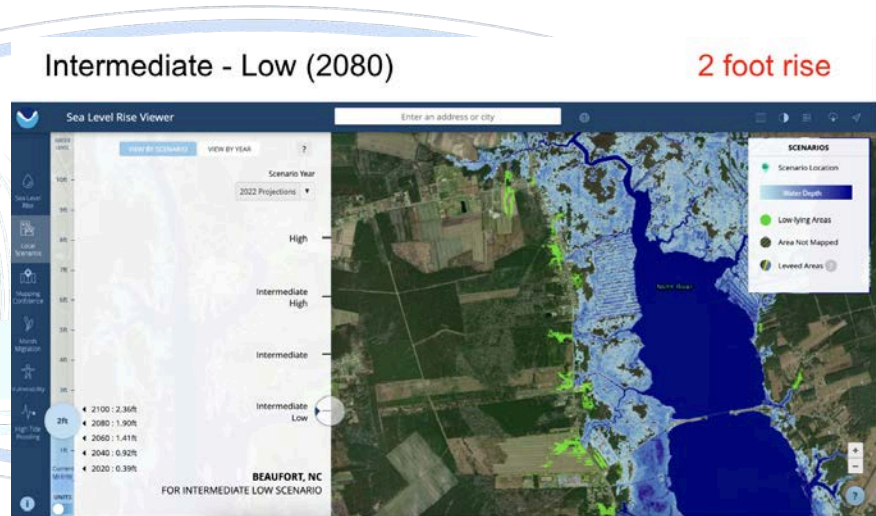


SOURCE: [BestNeighborhood](#)

The median household income in North River is generally lower than the state average, reflecting the rural and economically diverse nature of the area. The poverty rate is higher than the national average, highlighting the economic challenges faced by many residents ([NeighborhoodScout](#)) ([BestNeighborhood](#)).

The North River area faces multiple flooding challenges, including sunny day flooding, storm flooding, and the long-term threat of sea level rise. Sunny day flooding, also known as high-tide flooding, occurs during high tides without precipitation and is becoming increasingly common due to rising sea levels. This type of flooding disrupts daily life by inundating roads and overwhelming drainage systems ([Environment Blog](#)) ([WUNC](#)).

Storm flooding, caused by hurricanes and tropical storms, can lead to significant property and infrastructure damage. The North River community is particularly vulnerable to storm surges and



heavy rainfall, which have caused extensive damage in the past. The convergence of these factors, along with the long-term threat of sea level rise, poses a significant challenge to the community's resilience ([Coastal Review](#)) ([NOAA](#)).

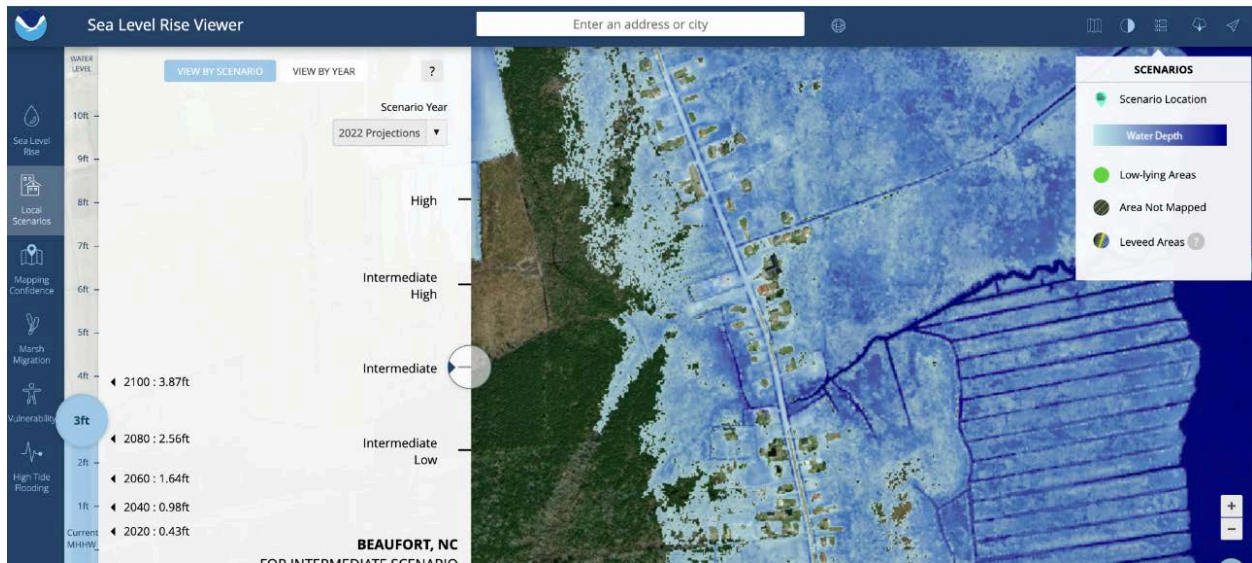
Sea level rise poses a significant long-term threat to coastal areas, resulting in the permanent inundation of low-lying regions, increased erosion, and more frequent and severe flooding events.

These challenges necessitate comprehensive long-term planning and adaptation measures to safeguard infrastructure and properties.

Sea level rise will result in the permanent inundation of low-lying areas, making them uninhabitable and causing significant erosion of coastal land. This process will force coastal communities to adapt to avoid or mitigate these risks ([MDPI](#)) ([SpringerLink](#)).

Intermediate (2080)

3 foot rise



SOURCE: NOAA Sea Level Rise Viewer

The US Geological Survey (USGS) highlights the combined effects of accelerating sea level rise and storms, which will place greater stresses on physical, ecological, and human systems along coastlines ([USGS](#)).

More frequent and severe flooding is expected as sea levels rise, with significant impacts on both urban and rural coastal areas. This increased flooding is projected to become the dominant coastal hazard, surpassing erosion in its impact on infrastructure and communities ([IPCC](#)) ([MDPI](#)).

The most pressing need identified by North River community members is the reconstruction of their community center. The vision for this center is to transform it into a resiliency hub that offers a wide range of services. These include regular health and human services, educational support services, and emergency shelter during

flooding and other emergencies. The community center will provide regular health check-ups, support services, after-school programs, vocational training, and a safe space during emergencies. This hub will serve as a central location for fostering resilience and supporting the well-being of North River residents.

Through collaboration with the North River community, Coastal Carolina Riverwatch (CCRW) has successfully identified needs and projects, demonstrating an exemplary model of community engagement and resilience-building. This comprehensive report highlights the key initiatives, achievements, challenges, and future directions of the North River Resilience Project, offering a detailed account of efforts to support and enhance the community's resilience against environmental challenges.

In August 2023, Coastal Carolina Riverwatch (CCRW) initiated a comprehensive engagement process with the North River community in response to community concerns regarding a proposed Fire Training Facility.



While working with the community to advocate and elevate voices on this issue,

Coastal Carolina Riverwatch identified this area to be a focus for the Mosaic Resiliency Project supported through Waterkeepers Carolina.

This engagement with the North River community aimed to build trust, establish goals, and collaboratively identify and prioritize community needs and projects to enhance resilience against environmental challenges.

CCRW facilitated open forums, small and large group discussions, and activities at community events to gather detailed feedback and understand the specific concerns of

the residents. This initial phase was crucial in building trust and demonstrating CCRW's commitment to addressing the community's needs.

Once trust was established, CCRW worked closely with community leaders to set clear goals for the engagement process. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the community's needs, CCRW employed a multi-faceted approach to gather input including community meetings, surveys, and workshops/events. With the collected input, CCRW, in collaboration with community members and partners, conducted a thorough analysis to identify and prioritize the community's needs. This process involved feedback analysis, community mapping to highlight areas most at risk and collaboratively prioritize projects that address critical vulnerabilities, and StoryMap development through coordination with NCDEQ for the North River, providing a centralized digital resource for ongoing information and tools designed to build resilience.

One of the significant milestones achieved through this collaborative process was the establishment of a nonprofit organization within the North River community. This nonprofit serves as a dedicated entity to apply for funding and manage projects prioritized by the community. The formation of this organization marked a crucial step in empowering the community to take ownership of their resilience-building efforts.

To support the identified priorities, CCRW provided \$3,500 directly to the North River Community nonprofit for debris removal, a critical project addressing the accumulation of debris from years of flooding. Additionally, another \$3,500 was allocated to establish a fund for cash matches required by federal grants, crucial for supporting the community's resilience goals.

In August 2024, CCRW will continue its engagement efforts by hosting Lauren Daniel, NC DEQ, to present at the North River Community meeting and review the North River Community StoryMap and other resources. This ongoing engagement ensures that the community remains actively involved and informed about resilience efforts and available resources.

Performance Report on Campaign Goals

Goal 1: Support the Community of North River in Accessing Funding for Flood Resilience Projects

Objective: Assist the Community of North River and Carteret County in obtaining funding for community-prioritized flood resilience projects through grant application support.

Initial Assessment:

North River has a historic need to raise graveyards and cemeteries and small infrastructure due to regular flooding events. The stormwater ditches that handle stormwater in front of homes are not serviced by DOT and blockages have caused prolonged flooding after rain events and high tides.



SOURCE: Raised graves at Mount Tabor UMC in North River, 2024

North River is an underserved coastal community that is unincorporated and receives no services from the Town of Beaufort, although it is included in census data as part of Beaufort. Limited services are provided by the County and no communication from the County was provided, after several attempts (in writing and by phone) since November 2023.

Damage to septic systems, homes, and roads remains unaddressed after years of sunny day flooding and significant high tides, highlighting a critical need for comprehensive project funding.

A community building, previously essential for community resilience, has been in disrepair for many years. This is a priority focus that has been identified as a priority from the majority, if not all, of community members that have been communicated with. The North River community is led by strong advocates who recently opposed the installation of a Type A Fire Training Facility in their area.

Community Engagement:

Community concerns have been prioritized, significantly influencing the needs and goals for funding and project design in North River. This prioritization ensures that the projects undertaken address the most pressing issues faced by the residents.

A key event that facilitated this process was a community festival organized by Justin Wallace from the Eastern Carteret Collaborative and a native of the North River Community. This festival served as a vital platform for residents to voice their needs and challenges.

During the festival, residents had the opportunity to discuss various issues, such as the frequent flooding that necessitates the



raising of graveyards and infrastructure, the neglect of septic systems, homes, and roads, and the dilapidated state of essential community buildings. These discussions provided valuable insights into the community's priorities and helped shape a comprehensive approach to project funding and design.

The festival also highlighted the strong sense of community and the active involvement of local advocates. Their participation in the event underscored the importance of addressing the community's concerns and demonstrated a collective commitment to improving the living conditions in North River. The insights gained from the festival are instrumental in guiding the development of projects that are aligned with the community's needs and aspirations.

Action Taken:

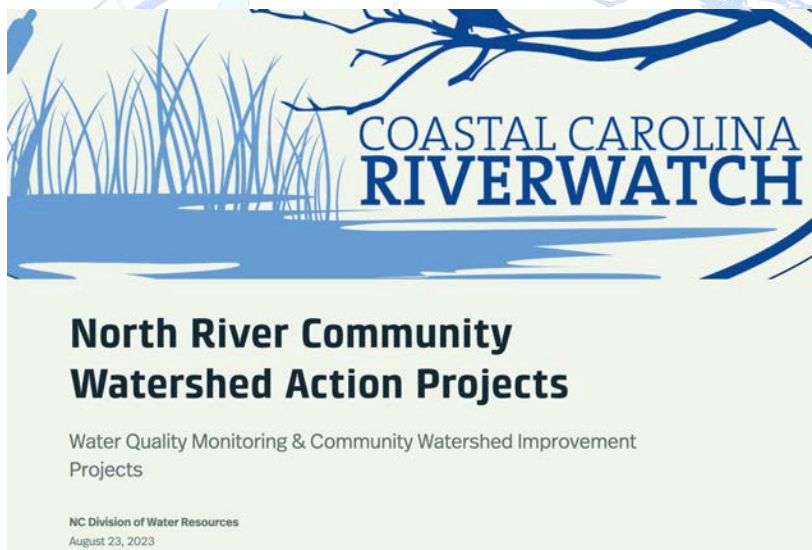
Since August 2023, CCRW staff have been actively participating in regular monthly community meetings, demonstrating their commitment to engaging with and supporting the North River community. These meetings provide an ongoing forum for dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that community members have a direct line of communication with CCRW staff.



One notable contribution to these meetings was Riley Lewis’s presentation of community flood map projections. [Click here to watch the presentation and hear reactions from the North River Community.](#)

By highlighting the areas most at risk of flooding, this presentation helped prioritize projects that address the most critical vulnerabilities. The flood maps provided visual evidence of the challenges faced by the community, enabling more informed decision-making. .

In addition to these efforts, CCRW coordinated with NCDEQ staff to develop a StoryMap about the North River. This digital resource offers ongoing access to information and tools designed to build resilience in the community. The StoryMap serves as a centralized hub for resources, helping residents stay informed and equipped



to address environmental challenges.

[Click here to view the StoryMap developed for the North River Community.](#)

Ongoing facilitation and collaboration with local organizations and community members are

crucial to ensuring that projects align with community needs. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the projects undertaken are relevant and effective.

Furthermore, collaboration with the Division of Coastal Management, Dewberry, the firm that is doing the contract work, and other entities involved in the N.C. Resilient Coastal Communities Program ([RCCP](#)) process in Carteret County has been

instrumental in advocating for projects prioritized by the North River community. By working together with these partners, CCRW helps ensure that the community's needs are recognized and addressed at a broader, regional level.

Challenges:

Many funding sources require sponsorship from a municipal or county government, creating a significant hurdle for the North River community. Despite numerous attempts to engage with County representatives, they did not respond to telephone or email requests for meetings. This lack of response from the County has impeded progress on securing necessary funding and support.

Initial meetings were held with officials from the Town of Beaufort. The Town of Beaufort did not commit any specific resources, but should be considered for potential partnership requests if needed to apply for funding. This absence of concrete support from the County, and no specific direct support from the Town, underscores the challenges faced by the North River community in addressing its needs.

Ensuring comprehensive coverage of all critical infrastructure, including septic systems, homes, and roads, remains a potential long-term challenge. The community's infrastructure is in dire need of upgrades and maintenance, but without committed support and funding, addressing these issues is difficult. The lack of a reliable government sponsor complicates efforts to secure the necessary resources for these extensive projects.

To overcome these obstacles, the North River community must continue to advocate for its needs, seek alternative funding sources, and collaborate with supportive organizations. The community's resilience and determination are crucial in navigating these challenges and working towards sustainable solutions.

Goal 2: Build Relationships to Support Nature-Based Project Funding Applications

Objective: Establish and strengthen relationships within the Town of Beaufort, Carteret County, and the Eastern Carolina Council of Government (ECCOG) to secure funding for nature-based projects prioritized by the community.

Relationship Building:

We have developed strong connections with a variety of key organizations to support the North River community. These include the Town of Beaufort, the Eastern Carteret Collaborative, the Eastern Carolina Council of Governments, the NCSU Coastal Dynamics Design Lab, the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management (NC DCM) NC Resilient Communities Program, North Carolina Central University, the EPA Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (EJ TCTAC) program, and, of course, the North River community itself. These partnerships are instrumental in addressing the myriad challenges faced by North River.

The disparity in funding allocation from the County has been a significant barrier to the development and maintenance of essential infrastructure in North River. By leveraging



our connections with partner organizations, we are advocating for equitable funding and resources to ensure North River receives the support it needs.

Through our collaborative efforts, we are working to highlight the unique challenges faced by the North River community and to secure the necessary investments for its development. Our partnerships with academic institutions, government programs, and local organizations are key to fostering resilience and sustainability in the community. By bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, we aim to create a comprehensive approach to addressing the infrastructure, environmental, and social needs of North River.

Relationships: Town of Beaufort, [Eastern Carteret Collaborative](#) and [Eastern Carolina Council of Governments](#), [NCSU Coastal Dynamics Design Lab](#), [NC DCM NC Resilient Communities Program](#), [NC Central University](#) and the [EPA EJ TCTAC program](#), and North River Community.

Collaborative Efforts:

In our collaborative efforts to support the North River community, several key individuals have played essential roles, each bringing unique insights and dedication to the cause:

Matilda Stewart, a respected member of North River, has been a steadfast advocate for her neighbors. With her deep knowledge of the community's history and challenges, Matilda has guided our efforts to prioritize projects that address critical infrastructure needs. Her leadership and commitment have been instrumental in mobilizing community support and driving collective action towards improvement.

Justin Wallace, a native of North River and member of the Eastern Carteret Collaborative, has been pivotal in organizing community events and facilitating dialogue among residents and external stakeholders. Justin's deep connection to the community ensures that local voices are heard and that projects are aligned with the genuine needs of North River residents.

Riley Lewis, CCRW Waterkeeper, has brought significant attention to water quality issues and advocated for sustainable environmental practices in North River. Riley's expertise has been crucial in highlighting the importance of infrastructure improvements and environmental protection measures for the community's well-being.

Lisa Rider, as the Executive Director of CCRW, has provided strategic support. Her direction on the Mosaic project ensures that our efforts are coordinated in an efficient and collaborative manner. Lisa's vision has been essential in elevating the voices of underserved communities and navigating the complexities of securing funding and resources, as well as in building partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders.

Together, Matilda, Justin, Riley, and Lisa, along with their respective organizations, have formed a strong network of support for North River. Their collaborative efforts have been pivotal in advocating for equitable funding, addressing infrastructure needs, and enhancing community resilience. Through their combined expertise and dedication, they continue to lay the groundwork for sustainable development and lasting improvements in the North River community.

Our efforts are gaining momentum and interest from other organizations. Recently (May 2024), Lighthouse Environment began providing



facilitation services to the North River Community. In collaboration with Eastern Carteret Collective, community training was provided to the North River community. Staff from Lighthouse Environment and members from a local organization, D.R.E.A.M., assisted members of the North River community with the North River debris removal project (seen here in the above photo provided by Justin Wallace).

Challenges:

Overcoming historical funding imbalances and ensuring equitable support for North River remains a significant challenge that our collaborative efforts are addressing head-on. Historically, North River has faced funding disparities compared to other communities, despite its critical infrastructure needs and vulnerability to environmental challenges like flooding. By advocating for fair allocation of resources and highlighting the community's needs through coordinated efforts with stakeholders and local officials, we aim to rectify these imbalances and secure the funding necessary for sustainable development.

Maintaining and expanding relationships with key stakeholders is crucial to supporting ongoing and future projects in North River. These stakeholders include local government officials, community organizations, academic institutions like NCSU Coastal Dynamics Design Lab and NC Central University, as well as state and federal agencies such as NC DCM and the EPA EJ TCTAC program. By nurturing these relationships, we ensure continued collaboration, leverage expertise, and access additional resources needed to implement effective solutions for the community's infrastructure, environmental, and social challenges. This proactive engagement helps to build consensus, foster innovation, and sustain momentum for positive change in the North River.

Goal 3: Support Local Community Partners in Mobilizing Activists and Creating Organizational Structures

Objective: Assist local community partners in mobilizing activists and forming community organizations to advocate for funding and project prioritization in unincorporated areas.

Community Mobilization:

Community mobilization efforts have been crucial in addressing funding disparities and advocating for equitable support in North River. Local activists and community members have been actively engaged to speak out about these disparities, highlighting the urgent need for fair allocation of resources. Their voices have brought attention to the community's challenges and have been instrumental in shaping advocacy efforts.

Partnering with organizations like the Eastern Carteret Collaborative has been integral to these efforts. Throughout the Spring of 2024, collaborative workshops, including the Resilience Zone/Finding Your Voice Advocacy Training, have empowered North River community members with the skills and knowledge to effectively advocate for their needs. These workshops have equipped residents with tools to articulate their concerns and priorities, ensuring that their voices resonate in discussions about community development and resource allocation.



Participation in events such as the N.C. Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP) meetings have provided further opportunities for the North River community to voice its concerns. These gatherings have served as platforms to advocate for inclusive planning processes and equitable distribution of resources. By actively engaging in these discussions, community members have been able to influence decision-making and ensure that their perspectives are considered in regional planning initiatives.

Additionally, facilitating direct communication between the North River community and Dewberry, the contractor for the Down East area RCCP, has been essential. This effort aims to ensure that community voices are heard and incorporated throughout the planning and implementation phases. By fostering transparent and inclusive dialogue, these initiatives strengthen community cohesion and empower residents to actively participate in shaping their future.

Overall, these mobilization efforts underscore the community's resilience and determination to secure equitable support and resources. By building partnerships, providing training, and participating in advocacy, North River residents are actively working towards sustainable development and addressing long-standing challenges.

Organizational Support:

Organizational support has been crucial in North River to ensure sustained advocacy and effective grant application processes. Efforts have focused on supporting the creation and strengthening of community organizations dedicated to addressing local issues and advocating for equitable resources. By empowering these organizations, we aim to build long-term capacity for community-driven initiatives and sustainable development.

Resources and training have been provided to equip community members with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective mobilization and successful grant applications. Workshops and educational sessions have been conducted to enhance understanding of grant requirements, application procedures, and advocacy strategies.

These efforts help to streamline the grant-seeking process and increase the community's ability to secure funding for critical projects.

By fostering organizational growth and providing tailored support, we aim to ensure that North River community organizations are well-equipped to advocate for their interests, engage effectively with stakeholders, and navigate complex funding opportunities. This approach not only strengthens community resilience but also enhances the community's ability to initiate and sustain positive change over the long term.

Collaboration with ECC:

Collaboration with the Eastern Carteret Collaborative (ECC), facilitated through joint efforts with Justin Wallace, has been instrumental in empowering North River residents and promoting community resilience. Together, we have worked tirelessly to elevate community voices and ensure that local perspectives are central to decision-making processes.

One notable initiative was the organization of a community festival aimed at gathering input from residents. This festival provided a vibrant platform for community members to share their concerns, priorities, and visions for the future of North River. By actively engaging residents in discussions about infrastructure needs, environmental challenges, and social issues, the festival helped to prioritize community-driven solutions.



Through our partnership with ECC and Justin Wallace, we have fostered an inclusive approach to community development, where diverse voices are heard and respected. This collaboration has strengthened community cohesion, empowered residents to actively participate in shaping their community's future, and promoted resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

Moving forward, we remain committed to continuing our joint efforts with ECC and other partners to advocate for equitable resources, support community-led initiatives, and foster sustainable development in North River. By working together, we aim to build upon the momentum generated through collaborative events and initiatives, ensuring that North River remains a resilient and thriving community for years to come.

Challenges:

Ensuring sustained community participation and leadership in advocacy efforts presents ongoing challenges in North River. While initial engagement and mobilization efforts may generate enthusiasm and momentum, maintaining long-term involvement requires addressing various barriers such as community fatigue, competing priorities, and resource constraints. Efforts are focused on cultivating a culture of active citizenship and leadership within the community, encouraging residents to take ownership of advocacy initiatives and remain committed to collective goals.

Continuous support and resources are essential for the formation and maintenance of community organizations dedicated to advocacy. Challenges include securing funding, navigating administrative processes, and building organizational capacity. By providing ongoing training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities, we aim to empower community leaders and volunteers with the skills and knowledge needed to sustain their efforts effectively. This support helps strengthen organizational resilience and ensures that community voices continue to be heard in decision-making processes and policy discussions.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative approach, involving partnerships with local stakeholders, government agencies, and funding bodies. Together, we strive to create an enabling environment where community organizations can thrive, advocate for equitable resources, and contribute to the long-term resilience and well-being of North River.

North River Community Resiliency Project: Prioritized Needs

Rebuild the Community Center Building as a Resiliency Hub

The community center will be transformed into a central hub for resiliency, providing a safe space for residents during disasters, offering resources for recovery, and serving as a focal point for community gatherings and information dissemination.

The former community center was once the center of resources for the community. It has been many years since those services have been restored. This priority need was mentioned by the majority of all folks in the community that participated in the process.

The community has identified this as a priority and as a need that is not being adequately addressed by the County government (this is an unincorporated area).



SOURCE: Ruins of the North River Community Center, 2024

Conduct an Assessment of Current Infrastructure Needs, Including Water, Air, and Food Access Quality, and Identifying Impacts and Sources of Potential Pollution

Undertake a thorough evaluation of the community's infrastructure to identify areas needing improvement. This includes assessing the quality and reliability of water, air, and food access, as well as pinpointing sources of potential pollution and environmental hazards that could impact residents' health and safety.

Many citizens have concerns about the health of their surface water, drinking water, and air quality. One of the main concerns mentioned regarding air quality was the potential impacts from a recently developed fire training facility in the community. One of the main concerns with surface water quality is stormwater runoff from agricultural fields, runoff from the fire training facility, and runoff from roads and storm drainage areas. Access to food availability was identified by community members and there are outreach programs that are contributing to the community. However, this is an area that should be assessed to potentially identify more efficient and sustainable access to healthy fresh foods. With sea level rise and salt intrusion of the soils, it has been identified as a challenge to grow community or individual subsistence gardens.

An infrastructure assessment should also cover wastewater and stormwater systems, ensuring they are capable of handling current and future needs. Evaluating road access and emergency access routes is crucial for safety, particularly in disaster scenarios. Effective evacuation plans rely on well-maintained and accessible roads.

Ensure Adequate Waste and Debris Services are Available Throughout the Year, with a Focus on Post-Storm and Post-Flood Events

Enhance waste and debris management services to ensure they are available year-round, with special emphasis on rapid response following storms and floods. This includes improving collection schedules, increasing the availability of disposal sites, and ensuring efficient removal of hazardous materials.

The community has identified this as a priority and as a need that is not being adequately addressed by the County government (this is an unincorporated area). Debris has accumulated from numerous flooding events in the community.

Implement Regularly Scheduled Maintenance of Ditches and Drainage Areas with Improvements Using Nature-Based Solutions

Establish a maintenance schedule for ditches and drainage systems to prevent flooding and water damage. Incorporate nature-based solutions, such as rain gardens, wetlands, and vegetated swales, to improve water management and enhance the resilience of these systems.

Regular maintenance of these areas will help reduce the risk of flooding and improve overall water quality. Nature-based solutions can provide cost-effective and environmentally friendly ways to manage stormwater and support biodiversity.

The community has identified this as a priority and as a need that is not being adequately addressed by the County government (this is an unincorporated area). Debris has accumulated in ditches and drainage areas consistently and community members have stated that the State DOT does not adequately schedule maintenance in these areas.

Plan for Getting People Out of Harm's Way for Future Disasters

Develop and implement comprehensive evacuation plans that ensure all residents can quickly and safely leave the area in the event of a disaster. This includes creating clear evacuation routes, establishing communication systems, and providing transportation for those without access.

Establish partnerships with local organizations and emergency services to create a network of support during evacuations. Conduct regular drills and community education programs to ensure everyone knows the evacuation procedures and routes.

The community has identified this as a priority and as a need that is not being adequately addressed by the County government (this is an unincorporated area).

Direct Support to the North River Community

Coastal Carolina Riverwatch has provided direct support aimed at enhancing the community's resilience and sustainability. Two critical grants, each valued at \$3,500 (\$7,000 total), have been instrumental in advancing community priorities and laying the groundwork for long-term benefits.

Debris Project Grant: In July 2024, CCRW provided a \$3,500 grant to the North River Community nonprofit for a debris removal project. This project addresses the accumulation of debris from years of flooding, a significant environmental hazard that has impeded community resilience. The removal of debris not only mitigates immediate risks but also enhances the community's capacity to manage future flooding events, contributing to overall environmental sustainability.

Cash Match for Resiliency Grants: In July 2024, an additional \$3,500 was allocated to establish a fund for cash matches required by federal grants. This fund is crucial for securing further financial support for the community's resilience goals. By providing the necessary cash matches, the community is better positioned to apply for and obtain federal grants, ensuring that essential projects receive adequate funding.

These grants underscore a commitment to building community resilience and sustainability. The debris removal project directly addresses environmental hazards, while the cash match fund facilitates access to larger grants that support comprehensive resilience projects. Together, these initiatives demonstrate a strategic approach to enhancing the community's ability to withstand and recover from environmental challenges, ensuring that the benefits of these efforts are felt for many years to come.

Concerns Identified During Introductions at the North River RCCP Meeting

By prioritizing these projects, CCRW and its partners are fostering a resilient North River community, capable of facing future challenges with enhanced preparedness and sustainability.



SOURCE: RCCP Meeting in North River, July 13, 2024 (RIDER, 2024)

Based on the notes taken during the meeting, the primary concerns identified during introductions at the RCCP meeting in July by members of the North River community can be categorized into several key areas:

Drainage and Flooding Issues

Ditches: Mentioned repeatedly, indicating significant issues with the condition and functionality of the ditches. This suggests a chronic problem with water management.

Get Water Flowing: Emphasizes the need for proper drainage to prevent standing water and associated problems.

Flooding: A major concern, likely exacerbated by inadequate drainage infrastructure.

Elevation of Homes: Indicates that flood mitigation strategies, such as elevating homes, are being implemented but with varying success.

FEMA Contractors: Repeated mentions of improper work by FEMA contractors highlight dissatisfaction with the quality of flood mitigation efforts.

Drainage: General concern about effective water removal from the area.

Land Use and Ownership

Ability to Remain on the Land and Keep the Land for Generations: Strong emphasis on the desire to maintain family land and heritage.

Preserve the Community for Current and Future Folks: Reflects a commitment to sustaining the community and its traditions.

Land Perking for Septic: Issues with land suitability for septic systems, which could impact the ability to build and maintain homes.

Community Infrastructure and Services

Community Center: Indicates a need for a central place for community activities and services.

Beautification: Concern for the aesthetic and environmental quality of the community.

Tax Dollars Being Spent in the Area: Desire for more equitable distribution of public funds to support local infrastructure and services.

Housing and Insurance

Homes on Ground and Elevated Homes Insurance Rates: Concern about the high cost of flood insurance regardless of mitigation efforts.

Flood Insurance Fairness: A call for more equitable insurance practices and rates.

Assistance with Understanding Insurance: Indicates a need for better community education on insurance policies and processes.

Analysis and Recommendations

Immediate Actions: To address the immediate needs of the North River community, it is essential to begin by repairing and maintaining ditches to resolve drainage issues.

Additionally, a thorough review of FEMA contractor work should be conducted to identify and rectify any deficiencies in home elevation projects. Implementing community education programs on flood insurance and property protection will also be crucial in ensuring residents are well-informed and prepared for future events.

Long-term Strategies: For long-term resilience, the development of a comprehensive water management plan is necessary to improve drainage and reduce the risk of flooding. Advocating for fair flood insurance rates and transparent practices will help protect the community financially. Moreover, it is vital to preserve community land by supporting policies that protect family-owned properties from forced sales or development pressures.

Community Development: Investing in a community center will provide a hub for activities and services, fostering a sense of community and support. Enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the area through beautification projects can boost community morale and pride. Ensuring that tax dollars are allocated fairly to support necessary infrastructure improvements will also contribute to the overall development of the area.

Sustainability: Focusing on sustainable land use practices will ensure that the land remains viable for future generations. Engaging in continuous dialogue with community members to address emerging concerns and adapt strategies accordingly will help maintain a responsive and resilient community.

By addressing these key areas, the North River community can work towards resolving their immediate issues while laying the groundwork for long-term resilience and sustainability.

Addressing Historic Systemic Issues in the North River Community

The North River Resilience Project has been instrumental in identifying systemic issues that have impacted the North River community for generations. Any continued collaborative effort should also include consideration in addressing historic systemic injustices to ensure the community's resilience and quality of life.

Systemic Issues Identified

1. **Economic Disparities:** The North River community, predominantly composed of Black residents, faces economic challenges with a median household income lower than the state average and a higher poverty rate. These economic disparities are indicative of systemic neglect and lack of investment in the community. The value of properties could continue to erode with each incoming tide without improvements identified by the community.
2. **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** The community suffers from inadequate infrastructure, including poor drainage systems, damaged roads, and insufficient waste management services. These deficiencies have exacerbated flooding issues and hindered disaster response efforts, leaving the community vulnerable to environmental hazards.
3. **Environmental Injustices:** The community is disproportionately affected by environmental issues such as flooding, sea level rise, and pollution. Historic neglect in addressing these issues has compounded their impact, affecting the health and safety of residents.
4. **Lack of Government Support:** Despite numerous attempts to engage with the local government, the community has faced significant challenges in securing support for necessary projects. This lack of governmental response underscores a systemic disregard for the needs of the North River community.

Importance of Addressing Historic Systemic Injustices

Addressing these systemic injustices is essential for several reasons:

- **Equity and Justice:** Ensuring that historically underserved communities receive the support they need is a matter of social justice. By addressing these issues, we can begin to rectify the historic inequities that have disadvantaged the North River community.
- **Community Resilience:** Building resilience against environmental challenges requires addressing the root causes of vulnerability. By improving infrastructure, securing funding, and enhancing community services, we can help the North River community withstand and recover from disasters more effectively.
- **Quality of Life:** Enhancing the quality of life for residents involves not only addressing immediate needs but also investing in long-term solutions that ensure sustainable development and environmental health.

SOURCE: North River Children’s Park in need of repair, 2024

By addressing historic systemic injustices and working collaboratively with the community, the

North River Resilience Project aims to create a sustainable and resilient future for the North River community.



Summary and Future Steps

The Coastal Carolina Riverwatch (CCRW) North River Resilience Project focuses on enhancing the resilience of the North River community in Carteret County, North Carolina, against environmental challenges, especially flooding. This initiative involves community engagement, strategic planning, and securing funding to address critical vulnerabilities.

Key Achievements:

1. **Community Engagement and Trust-Building:** Initiated a comprehensive engagement process, including open forums, group discussions, and community events to gather feedback and understand resident concerns.
2. **Project Prioritization and Funding:** Identified and prioritized community needs, including debris removal, and established a nonprofit organization within the community to manage and apply for funding.
3. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Developed strong relationships with key organizations, including the Town of Beaufort, Eastern Carteret Collaborative, and various state and federal agencies.
4. **Milestone Projects:** Provided \$7,000 in grants for debris removal and establishing a cash match fund for federal grants, which support critical community resilience projects.
5. **Performance on Campaign Goals:**
 - **Goal 1:** Assisted the community in accessing funding for flood resilience projects.
 - **Goal 2:** Built relationships to support nature-based project funding applications.
 - **Goal 3:** Supported local community partners in mobilizing activists and creating organizational structures.



Challenges:

- Historical funding imbalances and lack of municipal or county government support.
- Sustaining long-term community participation and leadership in advocacy efforts.
- Addressing the critical need for comprehensive project funding, especially for infrastructure improvements and maintenance.

Prioritized Community Needs:

1. Rebuilding the community center as a resilience hub.
2. Conducting a thorough infrastructure assessment.
3. Ensuring adequate waste and debris services year-round.
4. Implementing nature-based solutions for drainage maintenance.
5. Developing comprehensive evacuation plans for future disasters.

Next Steps

Immediate Actions:

1. **Enhance Drainage Systems:** Repair and maintain ditches to improve water management and prevent flooding.
2. **Community Education:** Implement programs on flood insurance and property protection to empower residents with necessary knowledge.
3. **FEMA Contractor Review:** Conduct a thorough review of FEMA contractor work and rectify deficiencies in home elevation.

Long-term Strategies:

1. **Comprehensive Water Management Plan:** Develop a plan to improve drainage and reduce flooding risk, incorporating nature-based solutions.
2. **Equitable Insurance Practices:** Advocate for fair flood insurance rates and transparent practices.
3. **Land Preservation:** Support policies that protect family-owned properties from forced sales or development pressures.

Community Development:

1. **Invest in Community Infrastructure:** Establish a community center to serve as a hub for activities and services.

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2. **Beautification Projects:** Enhance the aesthetic appeal of the area through community-led initiatives.
 3. **Fair Tax Allocation:** Ensure that tax dollars are allocated equitably to support necessary infrastructure improvements.

Sustainability:

1. **Sustainable Land Use Practices:** Focus on practices that ensure land viability for future generations.
2. **Continuous Community Engagement:** Engage in ongoing dialogue with community members to address emerging concerns and adapt strategies accordingly. Attend monthly meetings as scheduled by the community.
3. **Funding:** Work with partners identified through this project to continue working with the community to find funding and apply for grants to fund projects identified in through this project and through the RCCP process. See a list of grant opportunities identified throughout this project at the end of this document.

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SOURCE: Post-Community Tour in North River with Representatives from the North River Community, Coastal Carolina Riverwatch, NC Sea Grant, ECC, and Dewberry. 2024

Resources:

1. NC Resilience Exchange:

- The NC Resilience Exchange is an interactive resource designed to help local leaders in North Carolina understand climate resilience needs, identify appropriate actions, and find resources to implement solutions. It offers guidance, data, and resources to make communities and natural areas more resilient.
- [NC Resilience Exchange \(Resilience Exchange\)](#).

2. NC Division of Coastal Management (NC DEQ):

- The NC DEQ provides extensive resources for coastal resilience planning and policy, including pre- and post-disaster recovery planning guides, floodplain management resources, and case studies of North Carolina communities.
- [Coastal Resilience Planning and Policy \(NCDEQ\)](#).

3. North Carolina Sea Grant:

- North Carolina Sea Grant offers a wide range of projects and resources to help coastal communities plan, recover, respond, and adapt to hazards and climate challenges. They have extensive experience with community resilience planning and have collaborated on several demonstration projects across the state.

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- [Advancing Coastal Resilience \(North Carolina Sea Grant\)](#).

4. **Coastal Adaptation and Resiliency Website:**

- Created by the NC Division of Coastal Management, this website helps coastal communities manage challenges related to extreme weather, flooding, and sea level rise. It offers interactive tools, funding sources, and planning documents specific to North Carolina's coastal counties.
- [Coastal Adaptation and Resiliency \(NCDEQ\)](#).

Grant Opportunities:

NC Division of Water Infrastructure:

- Provides funding for water-related infrastructure projects, including state revolving funds, reserve programs, and asset inventory grants.
- [NC Division of Water Infrastructure Funding \(NCDEQ\)](#).

North Carolina Sea Grant:

- Offers funding and technical assistance for projects aimed at enhancing community resilience and addressing coastal hazards.
- [North Carolina Sea Grant \(North Carolina Sea Grant\)](#).

Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund:


- This fund supports projects that address stormwater, sea level rise, drought adaptation strategies, and energy efficiency solutions. It is available to municipalities and counties in the Southeast U.S.
- [Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund \(NCDEQ\)](#).

NC Department of Commerce Programs and Services Directory:

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- Offers various funding and technical assistance opportunities that may support resilience goals related to housing, technology, workforce, public infrastructure, and more.
 - [NC Department of Commerce \(NCDEQ\)](#).

Revolving Loan Funds:

- Low-interest loans for hazard mitigation projects such as structure elevation or flood retrofitting. These funds can be used to increase community resilience.
- [Revolving Loan Funds \(NCDEQ\)](#).
- **Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant Program:**
 - This FEMA program provides funding to states, local governments, tribes, and territories to reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The program focuses on planning and project grants to address flood risks and increase community resilience.
 - FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance ([Home](#)).
- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC):**
 - Another FEMA program, BRIC supports states, local communities, tribes, and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects to reduce the risks from disasters and natural hazards. The program prioritizes projects that demonstrate innovative resilience-building approaches.
 - [FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(Home\)](#) ([Home](#)).
- **NOAA Coastal Resilience Grants:**
 - NOAA offers grants to support the design and implementation of projects that enhance the resilience of coastal communities and improve habitat for fish and wildlife. These grants focus on mitigating the impacts of sea level rise and coastal flooding.
 - [NOAA Coastal Resilience Grants \(NOAA\)](#).

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- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) National Coastal Resilience Fund:**
 - This fund provides grants to restore, increase, and strengthen natural infrastructure to protect coastal communities from storms, floods, and other natural hazards, and to enhance fish and wildlife habitats.
 - NFWF National Coastal Resilience Fund ([NOAA](#)).
 - **Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT):**
 - Administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), this grant program supports state and local government efforts to mitigate disaster risks and reduce future losses in areas impacted by recent disasters.
 - HUD Community Development Block Grant Mitigation ([American Flood Coalition](#)).
 - **AARP Community Challenge Grant:**
 - Provides funding for projects that make communities more livable for people of all ages.
 - [2024 AARP Community Challenge](#).
 - **EPA Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers:**
 - Provides funding and technical assistance to support community-driven solutions to address environmental and public health issues.
 - [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers](#).
 - **EPA Water Technical Assistance (WaterTA):**
 - Offers technical assistance to help communities manage their water resources and infrastructure.
 - [EPA Water Technical Assistance](#). [Water Technical Assistance Request Form](#).
 - **Golden LEAF SITE Program:**
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- Provides funding for site development projects to attract businesses and create jobs in North Carolina.
 - [Golden LEAF SITE Program](#).
 - **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Grants:**
 - The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes significant funding for climate resilience projects, including those that address flooding, sea level rise, and infrastructure needs. The act provides funding to enhance community resilience through a variety of programs.
 - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law ([American Flood Coalition](#)).

Together, we protect the quality of water and quality of life in coastal North Carolina.

