Municipal Climate Change Workshops a Success

Under the 2010-2014 Gas Tax Agreement and the Municipal Funding Agreement, NS municipalities are required by December 31, 2013, to complete Municipal Climate Change Action Plans (MCCAP). Funded by Environment Canada, BoFEP and Anne Warburton of Elemental Sustainability, hosted two workshops in February 2013, to assist municipalities in the initial stages of climate change action planning. A workshop at Bible Hill was held on February 7th, and another in Annapolis Royal on February 13th. There were thirty-two and eighteen registrants, respectively. Participants were primarily municipal and elected staff. The Advisory Committee that helped shape the workshops included: Pat Hinch, who secured the funding from Environment Canada for the project; Senior Planner Graham Fisher with Service Nova Scotia Municipal Relations; and Alexa Vodicka with the NS Climate Change Directorate.

The workshops were designed to assist with an accurate interpretation of climate trends and projections and enhance understanding of how these trends may exacerbate geohazards including (but not limited to) coastal and inland flooding, coastal erosion, sinkhole development, and groundwater quality within the Bay of Fundy ecosystem. The climate drivers of primary focus were: sea level rise as a contributor to erosion processes, flooding, and changes in the Bay of Fundy's resonate tide period; changes in precipitation in concert with increasing water deficit indicators; and a comment on latest findings regarding storms.

A workshop highlight was a hands-on exercise where groups worked with a specially developed key and a suite of maps to practice, and build capacity around delineating locations where detailed site assessments for coastal erosion are warranted. The exercise of identifying priority areas/issues for further study and adaptive action is the fundamental purpose of the 2013 MCCAP process.

Other workshop highlights included an opportunity to review prototype mapping being developed by Laura Trudell as a Thesis project for the DNR, whereby the map presentation and legend is being designed to convey a description of geological risk so that it can be easily interpreted by land use planners with limited or no geological training. As well, participants heard from Geoscientist Garth DeMont with the NS Department of Natural Resources (NS DNR) on: coastal vulnerability and styles of coastal erosion; the role of geology on flood risk; types of erosion risks inherent with unconsolidated sediment coastlines, combined bedrock and surficial geology coastlines, and coastlines of bedrock. Garth also talked about the strengths and potential pitfalls of armouring the coast, and efforts being made within the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists and the NS DNR to train geotechnicians for the type of work municipalities will soon be tendering.

Workshop materials are currently hosted by the Climate Change Directorate (click here) as well as on BoFEP's website.

A great deal of thanks goes to Geoscientist Garth DeMont, Senior Planner Graham Fisher with Service Nova Scotia Municipal Relations, and Dr. Danika van Proosdij of St. Mary's

Department of Geography and the Intertidal Coastal Sediment Transport Research Unit, for providing subject expertise and guidance during the workshops' activities and discussions. Special thanks also goes to Pat Hinch as BoFEP's Project Manager and document editor, Alexa Vodicka of the NS Climate Change Directorate for providing an online resource site for all participants, Laura Trudell for presenting her thesis research and creating maps for workshop use, Jacqueline Wightman for addressing the relevance of a historical perspective when assessing the linkages of land development and storm impacts, and John Drage and Gavin Kennedy of the NSDNR for providing hydrogeological data and expertise for workshop maps.