

COASTAL CONNECTIONS



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 5

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION FOCUSED ON TOOLS FOR COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGERS

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2007

C O A S T A L M A N A G E M E N T P R O F I L E



Chris Feurt
Coordinator, Coastal
Training Program,
Wells National Estuarine
Research Reserve

Where you live: Wells, Maine.
Family: Husband Ward and 17-year-old daughter Kelly.

Pets: Two cats, a guinea pig, a goldfish, a snailarium, and a shrimp biosphere.

Education: B.S. in zoology, University of Maryland; M.A. in biology, William and Mary; Ph.D. in environmental studies, Antioch University New England.

Job duties: Providing training and outreach to support municipal officials and coastal managers. Watershed management, biodiversity, and smart-growth planning strategies are regional priorities.

Most fulfilling aspect of your job: I like bringing together everyone with a stake in a complex environmental issue and then designing an educational experience that will get them where they want to go.

Most challenging aspect of your job: Bringing scientific conclusions into the realm

Continued on Page 2

FOCUS

PITCHING THE "SMART GROWTH" CONCEPT TO LOCAL OFFICIALS

Smart Growth—it's a term the nonprofit Urban Land Institute defines as "growth that is economically sound, environmentally friendly, and supportive of community livability." In theory, it's hard to imagine that anyone could object to such laudable goals, particularly in coastal communities where runaway development threatens the beauty and quality of life that attracted people in the first place.

However, many local governments are hamstrung by existing regulations and financing mechanisms that discourage smart-growth initiatives. Moreover, smart-growth advocates can encounter surprising resistance from local officials and other stakeholders who have not been approached tactfully or given sufficient information on its benefits.

By anticipating these potential setbacks and devising strategies to overcome them, you can increase your chances of success.

Keep it simple, specialist: Clark Anderson, a water and land use specialist with the Local Government Commission in Sacramento, California, knows the value of conveying ideas in accessible language. The nonprofit works to bring a core audience of local government officials into the smart-growth fold.

"Local elected officials have a limited amount of time to read what you're putting in front of them, and they can very easily be turned off by complex concepts or heavy political messages," says Anderson. "We try to boil down the message, then boil it down some more."

Align your vision with the local priorities: According to Anderson, smart-growth advocates come out ahead when they link their ideas with the real-world responsibilities of community officials.

"Municipal officials have finances to balance and a lot of different needs, so try to think more broadly about the issues that local governments face; then frame your message around ways that they can solve those issues," says Anderson. "Smart-growth plans that incorporate concepts such as infill development, redevelopment, or affordable housing can help you achieve a good environmental outcome while also connecting with officials on issues of interest to them."

Focus on helping, not lecturing: "We feel it's important not to force ourselves on communities. We let communities know our services are available and then wait to be invited in," says Patty

Continued on Page 2

Profile continued from Page 1

of policy and management can be very complex—unfortunately, we don’t always have the resources in education and outreach to make this transition.

Work-related accomplishment that makes you proud: Helping to create regional watershed councils in Maine. We’ve had some success convincing people that they can help preserve water quality and save money by working across town boundaries and approaching issues from a watershed scale.

Personal accomplishment that makes you proud: Finishing my Ph.D.—I was very glad when it was over!

Hobbies: I like to look at tide pools and take photos of them. I also enjoy bird-watching.

During her Ph.D. studies, Chris Feurt researched “cultural models,” those implicit and unexamined attitudes toward the environment held by people in a community.

“In my work with municipal officials, I’ve found that some assume green space is not as valuable as developed land,” says Feurt. To challenge this cultural assumption, Feurt points to the work done by programs such as Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO).

“NEMO links land-use decisions to water quality and uses geographic information system visualizations to help stakeholders see how a landscape can look under different scenarios,” says Feurt. “This exercise helps people understand the value of green infrastructure in maintaining clean water.”

Focus continued from Page 1

McIntosh, vice-president of the Georgia Conservancy, a nonprofit environmental advocacy organization. The conservancy facilitates discussions among local governments, developers, and residents concerned about preserving community character and quality of life while experiencing growth.

Not surprisingly, prized features of community life identified by these participants often embody some aspect of smart growth [see “The Ten Principles of Smart Growth” below]. According to McIntosh, when stakeholders see this connection for themselves, it becomes easier for the conservancy to support them in learning smart-growth strategies via local workshops, symposia, and Web resources. “Approaching communities with this helping attitude lessens the chance that governments and environmental organizations will become adversaries,” she explains.

Emphasize incentives and economic benefits: Smart-growth presenters can allay the concerns of many local officials by highlighting the economic pluses. “You’d be hard-pressed to find a local official anywhere

who is not interested in economic development,” says Lynn Richards, a senior policy analyst with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Smart Growth Office in Washington, D.C. “Tell them, ‘There’s another way to grow’ and outline the advantages for quality of life, public health, and other factors. Then you can add, ‘By the way—it’s good for the environment.’”

Moreover, forward-thinking communities nationwide are using economic and business incentives to generate enthusiasm and jump-start smart-growth projects.

In coastal Georgia, the EarthCraft Communities program certifies developments that encourage economic vitality while preserving the environment. Developers seeking certification participate in design charrettes, provide worksheets and implementation plans, and permit third-party inspections.

Richards has witnessed how creative incentives can attract not only developers, but residents and the business sector as well. “I’ve seen local governments offer tools ranging from tax incentives to density bonuses to streamlined permitting processes,” she notes. “Some communities say to developers, ‘If you build a mixed-

The Ten Principles of Smart Growth

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
5. Create walkable neighborhoods
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration

Credit: Smart Growth Network

use, walkable community, we'll speed up the permitting by bringing all of the permitting departments to the table so you can get a comprehensive review, rather than going department by department."

The State of Maryland promotes higher-density "priority funding areas" by footing the bill on infrastructure improvements for new developments. In Portland, Oregon, developers are allowed to add one extra story to buildings with "green roofs," plant-and-soil mediums that enhance energy efficiency while decreasing stormwater runoff.

In Santa Cruz, California, the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program, administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, has helped increase housing diversity and affordability in an expensive market. It enables a property owner to create an additional, separate residence by converting a garage or building a new structure on the property. Santa Cruz residents have used the ADU program to generate rental income and create economical living spaces for relatives.

Examples like those mentioned above illustrate that when government officials are properly approached and supported, they can become staunch and proactive smart-growth advocates.

Generating Community Excitement about Smart Growth

Kristen Whiting-Grant, an extension associate with Maine Sea Grant and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Program, shares her professional insights:

- Work with those communities that want to work with you.
- Do more listening and less talking. Nurture relationships

and learn the community's history. This includes researching official documents, such as the comprehensive plan, to identify where "smart growth" or similar concepts are on paper.

- Encourage stakeholders to describe the community features they want to preserve or enhance—chances are, they will identify many "smart growth" characteristics.
- Accentuate the positive—recognize a community's successes (even if they are small) and build upon those.
- Spend time to reinforce their vision. Create visual aids so stakeholders can clarify and refine their ideas.
- Align design ideas with existing planning documents to avoid "reinventing the wheel." Recognize that smart-growth approaches are often not permitted under current zoning, and work with local officials to "ground-truth" proposals.
- Choose consultants with care. Who will be well-received? Who will your audience find credible?
- In tourist areas, be sure to incorporate the opinions of seasonal residents, day-trippers, and overnights. One strategy: at local events, conduct brief surveys that ask respondents to rate—in order of preference—photos of local building facades, streetscapes, and other features.
- Develop a strong, multifaceted communication strategy to keep stakeholders informed throughout the community planning process.
- Be willing to step back and see what happens. Practitioners should not come to care about community planning efforts more than the community does. Resistance to change is human and, in most communities, change happens slowly.

Smart-Growth Resources at the Center

The NOAA Coastal Services Center provides products and services that support managers in bringing alternative development ideas to the attention of coastal communities.

Coastal Community Planning and Development – This course, developed by NOAA and the Environmental Protection Agency, helps resource managers learn the drivers of conventional development, understand development alternatives, learn to speak and network with members of the community, and move toward a shared vision of the future. To learn more, contact Kelly.Dickson@noaa.gov.

HD.gov – Click on the "Issues and Topics" subcategory at www.hd.gov to locate smart-growth resources, conferences, and organizations. HD.gov explores the human dimensions of coastal resource management and was developed by the NOAA Coastal Services Center in partnership with agency, academic, and nongovernmental partners.

Alternatives for Coastal Development – This website features three hypothetical 3-D scenarios of a coastal community and compares the environmental, economic, and social impacts. The site, co-developed by the NOAA Coastal Services Center, the Georgia Conservancy, and the Georgia Coastal Management Program, can be viewed at www.csc.noaa.gov/alternatives/.

CanVis – This software, developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agroforestry Center and available free of charge at www.csc.noaa.gov/canvis/, can be used to help visualize basic changes to urban waterfronts, restoration sites, and other land-use applications. The website also contains additional guides, links, and downloads.

Coastal Connections is a publication of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coastal Services Center, produced for the coastal resource management community. Each issue of this free bimonthly newsletter focuses on a tool, information resource, or methodology of interest to the nation's coastal resource managers.

Please send us your questions and suggestions for future editions. To subscribe or contribute to the newsletter, contact our editors at

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NOAA/CSC/20715-PUB

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NEWS AND NOTES

Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Grant Now Open

In cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center, the NOAA Marine Debris Program is awarding grants to catalyze locally driven marine debris prevention and removal. Applications are due October 31, 2007. To learn more, visit www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/funding.welcome.html.

OceanExpert Database Highlights Marine and Freshwater Studies Worldwide

OceanExpert is a database that contains information on more than 5,000 institutions and 9,000 experts worldwide involved in marine or freshwater research and management. To access the database, view www.oceanexpert.org.

Distinctions

The *Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book* received the 2007 Charter Award, an annual prize from the Congress for New Urbanism honoring projects that promote walkable neighborhood development. The book, which was created in the wake of the 2005 hurricane season, contains building patterns and provides guidance on green-building techniques and hazard-resistant design. The book was developed by Urban Design Associates and printed through a grant provided by the Fannie Mae Foundation. It is available for download at www.louisianaspeaks.org.

Transitions

Christopher Dewees, marine fisheries specialist for California Sea Grant, has retired after 35 years of service... **Richard Delaney** has been named the new executive director of the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies. This organization is a nonprofit research and educational organization that focuses on marine mammals in the western North Atlantic and coastal and marine habitats in the Gulf of Maine. Delaney was founding director of the Urban Harbors Institute... **Paul Michel**, formerly a manager of Environmental Protection Agency watershed-protection programs in several states, was recently named to oversee Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary... **George R. Sedberry**, formerly the assistant director of the Marine Resources Institute at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, has been named superintendent of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.

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