

Climate-Smart Community Profile: Keene, NH



Located in southwestern New Hampshire, Keene is a small, rural city with a population of around 23,000. Since the decline of the New England manufacturing period in the 20th century, Keene's primary industries have been tourism and education, and is home to more than 5,000 students attending Keene State College and Antioch University of New England. Constructed on the shores of an ancient lakebed, the town is surrounded by hills and meadows, hosting forests and small wetland meadows typical to New England. The climate produces four very distinct seasons, including scorching summers and bitterly cold winters.

Cities and towns across the United States are preparing for and responding to the impacts of climate change, a process known as climate change adaptation. Keene is using a variety of nature-based approaches to protect people and property that also confer adaptation value for wildlife and habitat areas. Keene is particularly concerned with preparations for **flooding, wetland degradation, tree loss, decreased snowpack, and drought.**

Climate Planning Activities

- 2000: Keene City Council established the Cities for Climate Protection Committee (CCPC) based on initiatives developed by the non-profit ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability. Later that year, CCPC released an **inventory report on greenhouse gas emissions** as the first step in a mitigation and adaptation plan for climate change.
- In 2004, CCPC released a **Local Action Plan** identifying specific energy saving and mitigation measures to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The report included detailed emissions scenarios from the town as well as potential financial savings to be had by following the Committees recommendations.
- 2007: CCPC and ICLEI release a full-length **climate resilience report** (CRR) with detailed assessments of the potential impacts of climate change, Keene's particularly vulnerable features, priority goals and targets, and some basic first steps.



Implementation of Adaptation Activities

Wetlands Preservation (CRR)

- Concerns exist on issues of drought and storm-related flooding for both people and wildlife.
- Wetland preservation and restoration will increase the natural environment's ability to absorb storm-water and runoff, thereby recharging aquifers and providing protection against drought.
- Changes to policy and management strategies will initiate new protections for wetlands to increase stormwater absorption. The City is also planning a public awareness campaign on the importance of wetlands..



Flora and Fauna Conservation (CRR)

- Climate change is expected to drastically affect many species and their abilities to survive under changing conditions. Many are expected to migrate or shift their geographic ranges, though some may be unable to and will be lost completely.
- Keene seeks to align city policies with the goals of **New Hampshire State Wildlife Action Plan**, emphasize protection of habitat and migration routes, and tighten restrictions on logging in surrounding forests.



Managing Increased Precipitation (CRR)

- Climate change will bring increased precipitation patterns to the region, resulting in more rain and snow in severe weather events.
- The City is identifying and prohibiting development within and around the 200-year floodplain of the city. This will directly prevent property loss and maintain the capacity of rivers and wetlands to function as natural habitat and flood suppressors by maintaining their natural states.
- **New design standards** will require extra open space to allow for snow-stacking during winter months.



What's helping Keene?

- Direct partnership with ICLEI, a non-profit committed to adaptation and mitigation at the local level
- A progressive social and political population willing to embrace necessary adaptation measures



For more information, please contact: