



Ensuring Climate Resilience

Climate resilient communities are less susceptible to damage from weather events and other changes associated with climate change. The Northern Forest Center gathered four leaders in this area whose stories made it clear that an “all the above” approach is necessary for communities to build their resilience.

The work these leaders are doing exemplified the breadth of tactics that organizations are employing to build climate resiliency. **Cameron Wake**, then with the [University of New Hampshire](#), set the context for this discussion by introducing what climate resiliency means at its core: bouncing back better by changing our infrastructure to better withstand climate impacts, ensuring energy resilience and cutting our dependence on fossil fuels, and thinking about healthy people and ecosystems.

Sam Evans-Brown of [Clean Energy New Hampshire](#) discussed policy and technology, including the importance of backup power to improve grid resilience. **Josh LaFountain** of [The Nature Conservancy](#) Adirondack Chapter shared his organization’s efforts to improve road-stream crossings and prevent development in floodplains. For **Scott Vlaun** and the [Center for an Ecology-Based Economy](#), climate resilience efforts include shifting power to youth and helping towns prepare resilience plans.

“People think about change in straight lines and linear progress. But what I’m seeing now is a change from a lot of work over 20 or 30 years that is now being adopted and exponentially increasing.”

Cameron Wake, Director, UNE North



Everyone in this group emphasized the fundamental need for community members to understand the need for planning and investment related to climate resilience. Some of the strategies they cited for accomplishing this include:

- **Connecting residents to elected officials** to help educate them and allow all voices to be heard. An example of this is [Clean Energy New Hampshire's Circuit Rider](#) program, which employs staff to work with municipalities, schools, and elected officials to implement energy efficiency and clean energy measures.
- **Providing data** to communities on the likely impacts of climate change.
- **Building the next generation of leaders** through education programs such as the [University of New Hampshire's Sustainability Fellowship](#) program, which connects undergraduate and graduate students with municipal, educational, corporate, and non-profit partners across New England for the summer to work on transformative sustainability projects.
- **Creating demonstration projects** such as electric vehicle installations that are highly visible while also sending a message about the importance of climate resilience.
- These leaders also affirmed **the importance of regional collaboration** that brings together increased funding, informed future planning, and added capacity that would not be available for towns working independently. Regional planning commissions, such as the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, is one avenue to leverage resources across towns and cities. Another approach is partnering with non-profits, municipalities, and universities to shift from theoretical to applied research in academia.
- Finally, the group reinforced **the importance of individual engagement in local government** – such as voting for candidates who prioritize climate action or advocating to town selectboards about the urgency of addressing climate resilience – to create more climate-resilient communities. Direct participation can help alleviate feelings of helplessness in the face of climate change and effect real change close to home.



The Community Learning Briefs summarize the Northern Forest Center's 2021-2023 "Building the New Forest Future" webinar series. The Ensuring Climate Resilience webinar and others in this series are available [here](#). This project has been supported in part by USDA Rural Development.