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On-Line Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities

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On-Line Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities

A Final Report to

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project

Submitted by

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Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities
Final Report

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Executive Summary

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, sprawl is among the biggest environmental challenges facing New England, where more than 1,200 acres of open space are lost to development each week. New Hampshire is the fastest growing state in New England, and much of this growth is located within the 42 community coastal watershed served by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project.

The Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities project was created out of an interest in getting community decision makers the information and access to resources that they need to make informed decisions in this challenging time. The clearinghouse is designed to assist efforts to implement smart growth and other strategies to reduce growth impacts on the environment and quality of life. This project resulted from the 2003 Voices of Communities Experiencing Rapid Change Symposium held at the University of New Hampshire.

A searchable database, or "resource clearinghouse," focused on the top ten issues of rapidly growing communities in New Hampshire now exists on-line through a web interface at clearinghouse.unh.edu. This site is easy to use and offers users quick access to a variety of valuable information, including 1) mission and services, contact information, and website links for organizations and agencies that can assist communities with these issues, 2) direct access to ordering information or links to the text of publications and other tools (such as CD-ROMs, other clearinghouses, seminars, etc.), 3) background and contact information for experts on the top ten issues, including University of New Hampshire faculty, and 4) stories from communities that have implemented growth management or smart growth strategies, including process and outcome.

This project was made possible through a partnership between the UNH Center for Integrative Regional Problem Solving and Cooperative Extension, in collaboration with the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, the Rockingham Planning Commission, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning, Concord 20/20, GrowSmart Maine, the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, the UNH Library, and other departments and programs of the University of New Hampshire. We thank the New Hampshire Estuaries Project for their generous support of this project.

Introduction

The University of New Hampshire (UNH) Center for Integrative Regional Problem Solving (CIRPS), in collaboration with UNH Cooperative Extension, received funding in March 2004 from the New Hampshire Estuaries Project for the first phase of development of an on-line resource clearinghouse. The purpose of this project was to help rapidly growing communities make informed decisions to minimize urban sprawl and its adverse effects in coastal watersheds in New Hampshire.

This project directly addressed the NHEP Management Plan action plan LND-6: Minimize urban sprawl in coastal watersheds. The clearinghouse also helps to achieve the aims of LND-6F: Assist communities that embrace a strong smart growth philosophy to conduct comprehensive reviews, identify sources of funding, provide public education, and implement new land-use tools. The clearinghouse project was initiated at the 2003 Voices of Communities Experiencing Rapid Change CIRPS Symposium, during which community decision makers from the New Hampshire seacoast and beyond identified actions that would help to meet their needs.

The central goal of the *Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities* is to harness the best of what a university can offer - scientific information and expertise, technical expertise in on-line communication, a regional and multi-disciplinary perspective – for growing communities in New England needing a fast and simple way to access assistance, resources, and knowledge in order to preserve New England community character, conserve open space and natural resources, and to protect the environment and human health.

Funding from the New Hampshire Estuaries Project supported the technical development of the clearinghouse database and web interface in addition to the initial promotion of the website in New Hampshire. These project deliverables, originally proposed in the grant application, have been completed:

- First prototype of the tool on-line and available for public use in 2004
- Easily accessible and searchable database on the research areas of University of New Hampshire scientists
- Searchable database of organizations, community groups, and government agencies in New Hampshire working to reduce the impacts of rapid growth and development
- Direct links to tools and resources
- Mechanism built into the clearinghouse to enable users to submit information to the database
- On-line comments page and evaluation survey
- Targeted focus group meetings from participant communities

- Promotion of the clearinghouse website through notices in publications, links from other websites, conference demonstrations, news releases, and through the outreach of our partners

The first phase of project development was also supported by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and the Maine Community Foundation.

This report describes the first phase of project development for the Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities. During this initial phase, the clearinghouse went from being a vision initiated at a public symposium to being a tangible tool, now on-line and available to the public, posed to help minimize urban sprawl in our coastal watershed by providing community decision makers with quick, up-to-date information and easy access to answers, resources, and to the organizations and programs that can assist them in their work.

Project Goals and Objectives

As described above, the main goal of this project was to help rapidly growing communities to make informed decisions to minimize urban sprawl and its adverse effects in coastal watersheds in New Hampshire. To accomplished this goal, CIRPS proposed to develop an on-line public clearinghouse that offered two parts, including 1) easy access to university research in interdisciplinary areas related to the topics of smart growth, New England style development, conservation planning, biodiversity and water resources, and 2) a database of organizations and programs working to reduce the impacts of rapid growth and direct access to their publications and tools.

The process and direction for the first phase of the project received on-going guidance from the Clearinghouse Planning Committee. Additional guidance was provided by four feedback group sessions with potential users. Thus, the original goals for the first phase were expanded and revised throughout the project in response to input from these stakeholders.

To accomplish the first phase of the project within the expected timeline and thus produce a public database and web interface for the clearinghouse by the award deadline, we pursued several project goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are outlined below:

Goal: Develop a database and web interface for the clearinghouse
Objectives:
- Work with the UNH Research Computing Center to develop the technical capacity needed for the clearinghouse to function on-line
- Work with the UNH Research Computing Center to produce a website interface that enables the clearinghouse moderators to make revisions and additions

- Work with the UNH Research Computing Center to develop a "smart" database enabling users to query the database in order to be directed to the most helpful resources
- Trouble-shoot for technical problems that arise throughout development
- Continue to fundraise to provide on-going support for web-hosting and technical trouble-shooting

<u>Goal</u>: Provide the initial entries to the database, including information on University of New Hampshire faculty, community assistance providers, useful publications and other tools, and community stories
    <u>Objectives</u>:
- Gather information on University of New Hampshire faculty and Cooperative Extension staff and input a minimum of 40 complete entries into the database
- Gather information on community assistance providers in New Hampshire and input a minimum of 100 complete entries into the database
- Gather information on publications and tools and input a minimum of 100 complete entries into the database
- Gather information on community success stories and case studies and input a minimum of 10 complete entries into the database

<u>Goal</u>: Ensure that the clearinghouse is ready for public use by January 2005
    <u>Objectives</u>:
- Host a minimum of 2 feedback group sessions and 2 clearinghouse planning group meetings
- Review and edit all entries entered into database
- Review and revise, if necessary, the technical database and web interface

<u>Goal</u>: Implement a strong outreach program to encourage site visitation
    <u>Objectives</u>:
- Promote the clearinghouse through outreach material to a minimum of 200 community decision makers in New Hampshire
- Promote clearinghouse website in a minimum of 2 stakeholder publications and 4 news articles
- Establish links from a minimum of 10 other related websites to the clearinghouse
- Establish links from a minimum of 5 of the most frequently utilized Internet search engines
- Demonstrate the clearinghouse at a minimum of 2 conferences in New Hampshire

<u>Goal</u>: Ensure the on-going sustainability of the clearinghouse
> <u>Objectives</u>:
> - Identify a minimum of 3 other potential funders for the clearinghouse
> - Determine the on-going annual costs of the clearinghouse
> - Provide at least 1 new award for the clearinghouse during the duration of the NHEP grant
> - Work with Cooperative Extension to provide a long-term "home" for the project

Activities

<u>Background Research</u>
Prior to development of the database, project staff examined other on-line clearinghouses focusing both nationally and regionally on related topics. Doing this research assisted in determining the website and clearinghouse characteristics most useful to our project goals. Good examples were provided by the Smart Growth Resource Library (www.smartgrowth.org/library), the Gulf of Maine People Finder (www.gulfofmaine.org/people_finder), and other websites.

<u>Information Gathering</u>
Two undergraduate students were hired during the spring semester 2004 to begin information gathering and inputting data. In the fall 2004, an undergraduate and a graduate student were hired to continue information gathering and data input, as well as assist in preparing the clearinghouse for public release. The project coordinator, Amy Seif, supervised the students and edited their work. Michele Gagne from Cooperative Extension and her student intern also worked with the project coordinator to gather appropriate information.

From the information gathered by the students, we were able to input into the database 144 entries on community assistance providers (includes organizations, agencies, etc.), 124 entries on tools useful to communities experiencing rapid growth, 50 entries on experts and consultants, and 17 community stories. These entries provide the base for the information available through the website, and we expect many more entries to be provided by users themselves through the "Submit New Resource" function of the database. We are also continuing to add entries on resources in Maine through funding from the Maine Community Foundation.

<u>Technical Development</u>
This activity area was funded by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project.

The project staff worked closely with the computer technicians at the UNH Research Computing Center over the past year to develop the clearinghouse database and web interface.

We began working with a technician and a web designer at the UNH Research Computing Center in May 2004. This process included several meetings with the Research Computing Center staff to examine other similar websites and make decisions about the function and look of the site. We wrote the text for the web interface, including an evaluation page, the user query, a page to enable input to the Clearinghouse by users, and other pages. Based on the instructions of the clearinghouse staff, the technicians developed a user-friendly database enabling several creative functions including the ability for the web manager to make changes to the web interface if needed. The database was available on for feedback on a password-protected site in mid-July 2004.

Development of this live site demanded several weeks of the technologist's time and more than 50 hours of CIRPS and Cooperative Extension staff time. Meetings to discuss database development were held throughout the summer in addition to almost daily email correspondence. Following each feedback group session, project staff and the technicians made revisions to the site as needed. On December 20, 2004, the password to the site was removed and the clearinghouse became accessible to anyone using the Internet at http://clearinghouse.unh.edu.

The technical aspects of setting up the clearinghouse included site set-up, data normalization, data input, preparing web interface forms, site design, and troubleshooting. The cost of technical development also included the fee for hosting the website on the Research Computing Center's server for one year, from September 2004 to September 2005.

Collaboration
The Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities, from the very beginning of its development, has been the result of partnerships between CIRPS and project stakeholders. Cooperative Extension has been the central partner on the project, and they have contributed staff and student time on the project.

The project coordinator developed and maintained relationships with the community assistance providers collaborating on the project through the clearinghouse planning committee. The members of the committee from New Hampshire include the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, the Rockingham Planning Commission, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the NH Office of Energy and Planning, Concord 20/20, the UNH Library, and other departments and programs of the University of New Hampshire. New members from Maine were invited after CIRPS received a grant from the Maine Community Foundation for the project. These members include GrowSmart Maine, the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission, and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. The planning committee, since the project's inception, has met five times at the University of New Hampshire to offer guidance and feedback on the project. Some members of the committee are taking a more active role in the

project. For example, GrowSmart Maine is utilizing the clearinghouse as a repository and distribution mechanism for the information they have gathered on smart growth organizations and community stories in Maine.

Project staff are keeping up to date with other similar efforts in the region and looking for additional opportunities for collaboration. For example, we have been in communication with the Wells Estuarine Research Reserve regarding their Seacoast Watershed Information Manager (SWIM) project, an on-line tool that will offer technical data for watershed management, and are exploring collaboration possibilities. We have also been in touch with the Orton Family Foundation regarding the Pathways to Planning website, an on-line community assessment tool for communities.

A pilot collaboration with the UNH Resource Economics Department has proven to be very exciting for the project. We worked with Mary Robertson, a faculty member in the department, to develop class projects based on the clearinghouse for her Topics in Community Development undergraduate course. Students interviewed area community decision makers to write community stories to input into the database. These stories, such as the story on "protecting a watershed reserve in Barrington" and "visioning for the future in Exeter," are now on-line and serve as informative resources for communities hoping to learn from the experiences of others. Mary Robertson, who found that these projects offered strong educational experiences for her students, intends to continue these projects in her class next year and we may explore other possibilities for students to work on and learn from clearinghouse-related projects.

Evaluation
Throughout development of the draft site, we received feedback from potential users through focus group sessions organized for the purpose of evaluation.

On August 11, 2004, two focus (or "feedback") groups were held to get input from potential users on the usability of the draft site and to get suggestions for effective methods of evaluation and promotion. One feedback group, held at UNH, included a mix of community decision makers from the seacoast area and the other group, held at the Local Government Center in Concord, included planners from around the state. Staff from Cooperative Extension facilitated and feedback from these sessions was recorded.

A third feedback session was held on September 24, 2004 with members of the CIRPS Advisory Committee. The last feedback session was conducted via email with key stakeholders in December prior the release of the clearinghouse to the public. (See Appendices: Evaluation from Feedback Sessions)

Several mechanisms for evaluation were built into the web interface for the clearinghouse including a "Give Us Feedback" page and a "Contact Us" page. We will be receiving weekly reports on hits to the website, which will offer

feedback on the number of users. Because the clearinghouse was just recently released to the public, we do not yet have records of this feedback but expect that we will be continuously improving the site based on feedback from users.

Promotion
This activity area was funded by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project.

Promotion of the website during the first phase of the clearinghouse included early announcements through bookmarks, postcards announcing the public release, and presentations. Early in January 2004, the public release of the website will also be announced through a press release, announcements posted to relevant listserves and newsletters, and links from appropriate websites and search engines.

Bookmarks informing potential users about the project were distributed in participant packets at the May 2004 Office of Energy and Planning Conference, the May 2004 New Hampshire Planning Association Conference, and the Nashua Regional Resource Conservation Committee meeting. In total, 500 bookmarks were distributed. (See Appendices: Bookmark)

Postcards announcing the release of the website were recently distributed to 800 community decision makers in New Hampshire. Postcards were sent to conservation committee members, planning board members, planners, town managers, and other community decision members in the four fastest growing counties in New Hampshire, including Rockingham and Stafford counties. Postcards were also sent to New Hampshire town libraries, regional planning commissions, participants of the 2004 Voices of Communities Experiencing Rapid Change symposium, and relevant state and local agencies. Clearinghouse planning committee members received postcards to distribute to their stakeholders. (See Appendices: Postcard)

Project collaborators have included the clearinghouse in their presentations at conferences and seminars. Nancy Franz, Associate Director of UNH Cooperative Extension, presented the clearinghouse at a meeting of the Northeast Center for Rural Development. Sandrine Thibault from the Office of Energy and Planning presented the clearinghouse to I-93 communities during their November 2004 meeting.

We expect the clearinghouse to be mentioned in the March issue of New Hampshire magazine and to be featured in a spring publication of UNH Cooperative Extension.

Fundraising
The Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing communities is an on-going project that must be supported by funding for general maintenance and upkeep, at minimum. During the first phase, we have developed an annual budget and

identified on-going funding needs of the clearinghouse. We raised the funding needed to support the first phase of the project from NHEP, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and the Maine Community Foundation.

We have begun to explore strategies for funding the second phase of the project and have identified potential funders to whom we will apply in the spring. Staff time during the duration of the first phase has been focused on project development; now that the clearinghouse is public, more attention can be placed on fundraising for the project.

We are also exploring furthering the partnership with Cooperative Extension on this project, which may lead to ensuring sustainability of the project in the future and reduce technical costs.

Results

The most tangible result of this project is a new website, now the home of the Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities at http://clearinghouse.unh.edu. As promised in our proposal to the NHEP, the first prototype of the tool is on-line and available for public use. Visitors to the site can search for community assistance providers, publications and other tools, experts and consultants, and community stories through a listing of "All Resources" or through a "New Search" query that enables the users to narrow down their search and quickly find what resources would be most useful to them. Users can also submit their own organizations, publications, stories, and other resources to the site, give us feedback on the clearinghouse, and easily access the CIRPS home pages.

The clearinghouse structure, in terms of what information is offered to users, has changed over its development. Initially, we had intended to produce a database of research papers by University of New Hampshire scientists and links to community assistance providers and their tools and publications. However, the clearinghouse planning committee advised us that the user group for the clearinghouse, mostly non-scientists, would likely be uninterested to read research papers full of technical jargon. They suggested that this user group would be more interested to know whom the go-to people are for advice and expertise on scientific matters; thus we forgo creating direct links to scientific publications and data and instead created a section linking users to "Experts and Consultants." We may offer more scientific information in later phases.

We continued to provide access to community assistance providers and their publications and tools, and added a new section to the clearinghouse on "Community Stories." This section offers users background on smart growth projects and other projects related to the issues covered in the clearinghouse. This section could also be described as "case studies." According to the

feedback that we have received, this section could be the most useful and frequently visited section of the website.

Throughout the timeframe of the NHEP grant award, we have achieved many of our goals and objectives. Phase One of the project continues with an award from the Maine Community Foundation, and some of the objectives for the project will be met over the next five months. Below, the objectives met by December 31, 2004 have been designated with a checkmark. The objectives designed by check boxes will be met by May 2005, when phase one is completed. Further information is given in italics:

Goal: Develop the technical support for a database and web interface for the clearinghouse
    Objectives:
- ✓ Work with the UNH Research Computing Center to develop the technical capacity needed for the clearinghouse to function on-line
- ✓ Work with the UNH Research Computing Center to produce a website interface that enables the clearinghouse moderators to make revisions and additions
- ✓ Work with the UNH Research Computing Center to develop a "smart" database enabling users to query the database in order to be directed to the most helpful resources
- ✓ Trouble-shoot for technical problems that arise throughout development
- ❑ Continue to fundraise to provide on-going support for web-hosting and technical trouble-shooting. *Web hosting and technical trouble-shooting is funded through August 2005. We continue to seek additional funding and intend to re-apply to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for two years of support.*

Goal: Provide the initial entries to the database, including information on University of New Hampshire faculty, community assistance providers, useful publications and other tools, and community stories
    Objectives:
- ✓ Gather information on University of New Hampshire faculty and Cooperative Extension staff and provide a minimum of 40 complete entries into the database. *50 complete entries have been entered into the database by project staff, and more entries are expected.*
- ✓ Gather information on community assistance providers in New Hampshire and provide a minimum of 100 complete entries into the database. *144 complete entries have been entered into the database by project staff, and more entries are expected.*
- ✓ Gather information on publications and tools and provide a minimum of 100 complete entries into the database. *124 complete entries have been entered into the database by project staff, and more entries are expected.*

✓ Gather information on community success stories and case studies and provide a minimum of 10 complete entries into the database. *17 complete entries have been entered into the database by project staff, and more entries are expected.*

Goal: Ensure that the clearinghouse is ready for public use by January 2005
Objectives:
✓ Host a minimum of 2 feedback group sessions and 2 clearinghouse planning group meetings. *Within the award year, 4 feedback group sessions were hosted and 3 clearinghouse planning group meetings were held.*
✓ Review and edit all entries entered into database
✓ Review and revise, if necessary, the technical database and web interface

Goal: Implement a strong outreach program to encourage site visitation
Objectives:
✓ Promote the clearinghouse through outreach material to a minimum of 200 community decision makers in New Hampshire. *Postcards announcing the new website have been distributed to 800 community decision makers in New Hampshire.*
❑ Promote clearinghouse website in a minimum of 2 stakeholder publications and 4 news articles. *This is a priority for CIRPS after the New Year (promotion delayed because it was decided that December would not be a good time for outreach on the clearinghouse due to the holidays).*
❑ Establish links from a minimum of 10 other related websites to the clearinghouse. *This is a priority for CIRPS after the New Year.*
❑ Establish links from a minimum of 5 of the most frequently utilized Internet search engines. *This is a priority for CIRPS after the New Year.*
❑ Demonstrate the clearinghouse at a minimum of 2 conferences in New Hampshire. *Dates of appropriate conferences have been compiled, and conference organizers have been contacted. We expect to demonstrate the clearinghouse at the NH Office and Energy and Planning Conference in April, the Saving Special Places Conference in April, and the Roll Out Meeting for I-93 communities in October 2005.*

Goal: Ensure the on-going sustainability of the clearinghouse
Objectives:
✓ Identify a minimum of 3 other potential funders for the clearinghouse. *Other potential funders for the clearinghouse include the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Barr Foundation, and the Boston Foundation.*
✓ Determine the on-going annual costs of the clearinghouse. *Minimum on-going costs of clearinghouse maintenance and hosting come to*

> *$17,584 - $29,416. A budget outlining the on-going costs of the project is available.*

- ✓ Provide at least 1 new award for the clearinghouse during the duration of the NHEP grant. *During the during the duration of the NHEP grant CIRPS received an award of $5000 from the Maine Community Foundation to help support the first phase of development.*
- ❑ Work with Cooperative Extension to ensure a long-term "home" for the project. *We are currently in discussion with Cooperative Extension administration and the Community Profiles Program regarding this item.*

Conclusions

Thank you for walking me through the clearinghouse. What a fantastic resource you are putting together! It will be SO helpful to communities. I really appreciate that you are allowing GrowSmart Maine to be a part of your effort.
- Lynne Seeley, GrowSmart Maine

Thank you for the opportunity [to review the site]. The clearinghouse may become a very handy tool for us to share with communities we work with. We look forward to its completion!
- Julia Peterson, Natural Resources Outreach Coalition

It looks great! This should prove to be a very valuable resource.
- John Wallace, Barrington Conservation Commission

The website looks great! This will be an invaluable resource to community planners, professional planners, economic developers, conservationists, and others.
- Charlie French, Cooperative Extension Community Profiles Program

According to the feedback we have already received about the Resource Clearinghouse for Rapidly Growing Communities, this new tool will be of valuable assistance to rapidly growing communities trying to make informed decisions on minimizing urban sprawl and adverse effects. Since the clearinghouse has just very recently been released the public, time will tell if community decision makers use the website and find it useful in making decisions; however, we have designed the site with much input from stakeholders and look forward to receiving additional feedback.

During the project period, we have exceeded our initial expectations of what we could accomplish. Instead of creating just the initial prototype, we have created an on-line tool, far along in its development and design, that serves as a solid foundation for a clearinghouse that users can both take information from and add information into. We have input more information into the database then expected and have created additional resource categories, such as "community stories." An additional unexpected benefit of the project was its educational value to students, both the interns who worked in the project team and the

students enrolled in the UNH class, Topics in Community Development. We also engaging students in the project to be useful to its development. We expect other unplanned benefits to come from the clearinghouse. For example, one stakeholder said that the website would likely instigate networking between community decision makers and collaborations between communities. Although the release of the clearinghouse to the public was delayed by two months from when originally expected, the delay was necessary to incorporating these new important elements to the clearinghouse and ensuring that the information in the clearinghouse was accurate.

Unique from other on-line resource listings, the clearinghouse offers more to users than just a long list of resources or links to websites around broad topic areas. The clearinghouse is focused upon the "top ten issues of rapidly growing communities," including such topics as water protection, land protection, transportation, and seven others. This focus defines the clearinghouse function and thus not deviate from the original project goal and helps users to stay on topic. Users can query the database about the issues and sub-topics, region, and type of resources that are most useful to them, and thus find information quickly and easily. A site that narrows the search is important to community decision makers, many who are juggling their volunteer work in their town with demands of family and work. Users receive details on each resource chosen that helps them quickly to determine if searching the resource's home page is worth their time and effort; enough details are provided so that users can learn about the resource without even going to the homepage and can directly contact the person who can assist them. We are working to give users as much direct access to the resource as possible without having to go to another website, such as by uploading publications directly to the clearinghouse.

In this time of rapid growth in the New Hampshire seacoast and surrounding areas, communities need information and quick access to assistance to help them to make informed decisions that protect the environment and maintain or improve quality of life. The CIRPS resource clearinghouse enhances and complements the many good endeavors now underway to deal with this complex and challenging situation. The clearinghouse provides a central place, which can be accessed from one's living room, for information and expertise on the top ten issues of growing communities. The new tool also will encourage networking and collaboration among individuals and communities and provide community assistance providers with a database that they can use to get their information out to the public. The clearinghouse is a go-to place for community decision makers and will help to better define our region and its issues.

Recommendations

During this project, we learned about the complexities involved when developing an on-line tool and of the demands on staff time, which ended up being many more hours than had been budgeted. A recommendation for future fundraising

for the project is to accurately represent the amount of staff time needed to produce the deliverables. We learned that an on-line tool, in order to stay current and remain effective, needs constant updating, moderating, and site promotion, which again translates to increased staff time on the project and creative solutions for building many of these activities into the database functions. Technical assistance is critical to the on-going effectiveness of the tool and any website must be hosted on a server, which must be accounted for in budgeting for the project.

The clearinghouse is an on-going project which can be utilized for as long as the website stays current. This fact in itself presents funding challenges, and the best possible situation would be to have an endowment that supports the project. We are currently exploring funding options, and exploring strategies for the long-term sustainability of the clearinghouse as a regional resource that stays up-to-date and focused on important issues of the time.

During the feedback sessions held to evaluate the clearinghouse, we received many good suggestions about new features that would strengthen the clearinghouse as a tool for community decision makers. We expect more suggestions of this type from visitors to the clearinghouse. Many of these suggestions are beyond our current funding capability and are therefore reserved for phase two of the project. Examples of these suggestions are listed below:

- Enable search results to be sent via email
- Enable visitors to the site to see the archived material
- Add additional choice fields for resource types (such as "data resources" for GIS tools)
- Build in Northern New England-unique technical section
- Send out quarterly message to mailing list announcing new resources added to the database or numbers of new resources to stimulate repeat visitation
- Build in ability to upload photos to community stories
- Add Pop-up boxes to define each sub-topic
- The form asks for user-supplied keywords. Supply controlled vocabulary to reduce synonyms, alternative spellings and all the other things that arise with non-controlled vocabulary.
- Categorize the View all Resources pages (currently only alphabetized)

Phase two of the project will also include expanding the reach of the clearinghouse to rapidly growing communities in southern Maine and northeastern Massachusetts, areas within the region serviced by CIRPS.

Appendices

A) Faculty Questionnaire, for information gathering
B) Evaluation from Feedback Session 1
C) Evaluation from Feedback Session 2
D) Evaluation from Feedback Session 3
E) Evaluation from Feedback Session 4
F) Feedback Group Exit Survey
G) Bookmark, for website promotion
H) Home page of Clearinghouse (print out)
I) Postcard, for website promotion