

Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition (OSCRC)

Quarterly Newsletter – January 2026



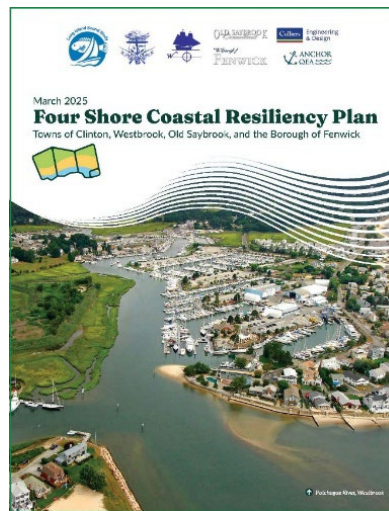
In this edition:

An Historical Perspective

Cornfield Point after the Hurricane of 1938

The Hurricane of 1938 hit New England with little advance notice. The forecast in the newspaper that day was “rain, heavy at times.” That afternoon Old Saybrook saw sustained winds of 115 mph and a storm surge between 14 and 18 feet.

Today’s photograph, from CT State Library Archives, shows Cornfield Point three days after the hurricane. The pictured houses damaged by the storm surge still remain today.



Four Shore Coastal Resiliency Plan Part 2 – Adaptation

In our October 2025 newsletter we reviewed the impacts of sea level rise on Old Saybrook and Fenwick. In this edition we review potential adaptation strategies recommended by the Four Shore Coastal Resiliency Plan.



OSCRC 2025 Year in Review

The Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition’s activities have gained momentum in 2025 supporting technical studies, shoreline improvements, and more community outreach than ever before. New in 2025 was the publication of a Living Shoreline Information sheet, the debut of this quarterly newsletter, and informational presentations to the Town of Old Saybrook, community groups, and professional organizations.

Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition (OSCRC)

Year in Review – 2025

[Old Saybrook and Westbrook Marsh Restoration and Erosion Control Study](#)

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OSCRC 2025

The OSCRC gained momentum in 2025 supporting technical studies, shoreline improvements, and more community outreach than ever before. New in 2025 was the implementation of drainage improvements to the marsh behind Chalker Beach, support of marsh restoration and erosion control studies, publication of a Living Shoreline Information sheet, publication of this Quarterly Newsletter, and informational presentations to the Town of Old Saybrook, community groups, and professional organizations.

Old Saybrook and Westbrook Marsh Restoration and Erosion Control Study

Members of the Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition (OSCRC) are part of the committee responsible for overseeing Fuss & O'Neill, the engineering firm selected to conduct the studies. Fuss & O'Neill has been contracted to develop alternatives for restoring the environmentally degraded Chalker Beach Marsh, mitigating erosion of the Cold Spring Brook Marsh and adjacent shorelines, and mitigating flood hazards within the residential neighborhoods abutting the Cold Spring Brook, Chalker Beach Marsh, and Hagar Creek/Mud Creek Marshes. The project is supported with a \$323,400 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund and a contribution of an additional \$191,500 by the Towns of Old Saybrook and Westbrook.

Fenwood Seawall Repair

Ed Rajotte, an OSCRC board member, observed deterioration of the Fenwood seawall footing that could lead to significant damage during future storm events. The seawall is adjacent to a state highway (CT Route 154). Ed reached out to State Representatives Devin Carney and Martha Marx to identify the Fenwood seawall as a candidate for a DOT maintenance project. The DOT inspected the existing seawall deterioration and made temporary repairs. It has begun the design and permitting process to realize a permanent restoration of the seawall. Construction is anticipated to begin after Labor Day 2028.

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Year in Review - 2025

Drainage Swale Improves Drainage of Chalker Beach Marshlands

The increase in the frequency of heavy rain events and landscape changes affecting runoff have caused water in Chalker Beach marshlands to back up into adjoining neighborhoods. This backup is making some roads impassable, flooding properties, and endangering the integrity of some septic systems and well-supplied drinking water.

The swale allows flood waters to subside more quickly and, as a first step, has already improved the flooding situation. In addition to excavating the swale, specific plant species were planted to line the swale's interior to prevent erosion. In this case, if the water rises to a certain level in the marsh, the swale allows for release of excess water into the Sound.

Beach Nourishment Study

The Chalker Beach Improvement Association is considering beach nourishment to address beach erosion that affects residential neighborhoods from the bulkhead at the west end of Chalker Beach to the jetty at the Hagar Creek inlet at Indian Town. The increased volume of sand would serve to attenuate wave energy and reduce the impact of storm surge eroding the shoreline and flooding the affected neighborhoods. The Beach Nourishment Study is an initial step toward any action providing protection to the Chalker Beach, Bel-Aire Manor, and Indian Town beaches.

Living Shoreline Information Sheet

Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition (OSCRC) published a "Living Shoreline" information sheet describing recent efforts to stabilize coastal shorelines and highlights a recent success at Fenwick and Indiantown in Old Saybrook.

Fulfilling OSCRC's Educational Mission

The OSCRC made presentations on the effects of climate change and sea level rise to:

- Old Saybrook Zoning and Planning Commissions
- Old Saybrook Conservation Commission Environmental Fair
- Seminar at the Florence Griswold Museum – *Rooted Solutions – Designing Rain Gardens for Resilient Shoreline Homes*
- UConn Middlesex County Master Gardeners Class
- Old Saybrook Land Trust
- Old Saybrook Chamber of Commerce business exchange

Four Shore Coastal Resiliency Plan – Part 2

Adaptation Recommendations to Enhance Coastal Resilience in Old Saybrook and Fenwick

The Four Shore Coastal Resiliency Plan is a collaborative effort between Clinton, Westbrook, Old Saybrook, and Fenwick to assess coastal vulnerability to sea level rise and develop adaptation strategies. https://www.oldsaybrookct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf10491/f/uploads/final_coastal_resiliency_plan_and_appen_dicies_3.2025.pdf. The Resiliency Plan was developed between June 2023 and March 2025 using funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and contributions from the four participating communities. In OSCRC's October 2025 Newsletter we reviewed the vulnerabilities to Old Saybrook and Fenwick posed by coastal storms and sea level rise identified by the Resiliency Plan. Here we look at some of the adaption recommendations the Resiliency Plan provides to enhance coastal resilience in Old Saybrook and Fenwick. Many of these strategies are also outlined in the Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan prepared by the Town of Old Saybrook and Borough of Fenwick. You can obtain a copy of the Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan here: https://www.oldsaybrookct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf10491/f/uploads/nhmp_publicreviewdraft.8.202.2024.pdf.

Natural Shoreline Fortification

Natural shoreline fortification consisting of vegetated earthen berms and other living shoreline features were recommended for much of the shoreline west of Cornfield Point to the Westbrook Town Line and for portions of Fenwick.

Stormwater Management

Improvements to stormwater collection and drainage systems were recommended for Chalker Beach at Brooke and Saye Streets and for Indian Town at Mohican Trail, Nehantic Trail, and Shetucket Trail. Underground drainage pipes leading to Indian Town Harbor are suspected to be damaged and in need of repair to improve stormwater drainage in this area.



Sequassen Avenue Fenwick from the Four Shore Coastal Resiliency Plan

Tide Gates

Tide gates that allow drainage of marsh areas during low tide and prevent seawater from flowing back during high tide were recommended for Cold Spring Brook at Chalker Beach. Back flow preventers were recommended for the discharge pipe between Old Sea Lane and Harford Avenue in Saybrook Manor and the outfall discharging into Indian Town Harbor. CTDEEP would likely require an updated analysis of marsh drainage to allow modifications to the current Chalker Beach or any future tide gates. In December 2024, the Towns of Old Saybrook and Westbrook received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund to develop strategies for restoring marshes and controlling erosion along a one-mile stretch of shoreline from Chapman Beach in Westbrook to Indian Town in Old Saybrook. This planning document is a critical step toward modifications and additions to the existing tide gate that will improve drainage of coastal marshes in these areas.

Elevate Structures and Equipment

Elevating structures and equipment such as electrical boxes, HVAC equipment, and communications systems was recommended for Chalker Beach, the marsh behind Chalker Beach, and for Sequassen Avenue in Fenwick. All critical equipment should be elevated two feet above base flood elevation as defined by FEMA.

Elevate Roadways

Elevating Nehantic Trail and Mohican Trail in Indian Town and Sequassen Avenue east of the Crab Creek Bridge in Fenwick were recommended, recognizing the challenges of obtaining homeowner buy-in given the resulting water displacement onto private properties and the necessary grading adjustments to driveway aprons.

Seawall Evaluation

Perform a comprehensive evaluation throughout Old Saybrook to identify inadequate and compromised seawalls. In parallel, perform an evaluation of road conditions in flood-prone areas to prioritize seawall improvements. A desktop evaluation of seawalls and other shoreline structures was included in Old Saybrook's 2018 Coastal Resilience and Shoreline Adaptation Study.

Dredge South Cove

The Resiliency Plan recommended dredging accumulated sediment on both sides of the causeway to maintain South Cove's ecological character, improve water quality, and prevent ongoing siltation that is transforming South Cove into a mud flat. As part of this effort, the existing channels beneath the causeway would be expanded or supplemented. If suitable, dredged sediment could be used to construct marsh sills elsewhere in Old Saybrook to protect marshes from coastal erosion. Also recommended was enlarging and maintaining the openings beneath the causeway to improve water circulation into and out of South Cove.



Flooding at Barnes Road Great Hammock Beach from the Four Shore Coastal Resiliency Plan

Summary

The Resiliency Plan identified the impacts of tidal inundation during high tide events and extensive flood risks along the entire shoreline during a 100-year storm event. These impacts are expected to become more extensive as sea level rises in the coming decades. Mitigation and adaptation strategies identified above are presented in greater detail in the Resiliency Plan along with some additional recommendations for the Old Saybrook and Fenwick shorelines. Currently, a study is underway to develop strategies for restoring marshes and controlling erosion along a one-mile stretch of shoreline from Chapman Beach in Westbrook to Indian Town in Old Saybrook. The Town of Old Saybrook is also reviewing potential mitigation measures identified in the Resiliency Plan as part of the Town's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Town of Old Saybrook, Borough of Fenwick, local neighborhoods, and homeowner's associations need to work together to prioritize and implement these coastal adaptation strategies.

**An Historical Perspective
Cornfield Point at Uncas Road
Three Days After the Hurricane of 1938**



Aerial Survey of Connecticut 1938 Hurricane Damage Photograph 00083
State Archives, Connecticut State Library

Send your favorite photographs of Old Saybrook's coast and river shorelines during storm events or good weather to our Newsletter editor at oscrcinc@gmail.com. We will publish them in future newsletters.



The Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition (OSCRC) coordinates responses to sea level rise and climate change by documenting vulnerabilities of local beachfront and riverfront communities, educating the public on these vulnerabilities and, through governmental and commercial partnerships, identifying and implementing intermediate and long-term, science-based, mitigation solutions.

Our response to sea level rise is going to be costly, time-consuming, and socially challenging. We are looking for partners, funding sources, skilled professionals, and individuals who can assist us to sustainably fortify the infrastructure along the Connecticut coastline.

Please email us at oscrcinc@gmail.com or go to <https://oscrcct.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61563259214783> to support our efforts.

Links we like:

Connecticut Institute of Resilience & Climate:

<https://circa.uconn.edu/>

The Nature Conservancy's Coastal Resilience:

<https://coastalresilience.org/>

Old Saybrook Land Use Department Coastal Resilience:

<https://www.oldsaybrookct.gov/land-use/pages/coastal-resilience>

NOAA Office for Coastal Management:

[Natural and Structural Measures for Shoreline Stabilization](#)

FEMA Region 1 Office:

<https://www.fema.gov/about/regions/region-1>

The OSCRC Board of Directors

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The OSCRC Newsletter is published quarterly. Please email the OSCRC Newsletter editor at oscrcinc@gmail.com to receive the newsletter.

We are seeking volunteers to help manage our social media. If you are interested in helping us curate and improve our website or Facebook page, contact us at oscrcinc@gmail.com.

A special shout out to Chef Rick for providing space for our monthly meetings. You can enjoy a variety of Chef Rick's tasty offerings at Mindy K's on Boston Post Road in Old Saybrook.