Project Summary and Case Study

Municipality: Town of Gosnold
Project Title: Cuttyhunk Land Conservation Project
Grant Award: $ $1,400,000
Match: $ 466,667

Community Overview:
The Town of Gosnold (smallest town by population in the Commonwealth) encompasses the Elizabeth Islands, a chain of islands that stretch southwest from Woods Hole on Cape Cod and separate Buzzards Bay from Vineyard Sound. The last island in the chain is Cuttyhunk which is the locus for the project. Cuttyhunk serves as the community center of the Town and sees its year round population of 35- 50 jump to several hundred in the summer months as people seek to spend time on the island vacationing, enjoying the beaches, boating, swimming, fishing, exploring and generally, unplugging from the mainland.

Description of Climate Impact:
Cuttyhunk is particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Specifically, sea level rise, storm surge, coastal flooding, erosion and increased storm frequency/intensity threatens: 1) the protection of the harbor and the public safety, transportation and commerce it supports, 2) future private development in vulnerable areas and 3) the sole source aquifer providing the public drinking water.

Protection of the project lands, by applying MVP funding to acquisition costs, would address these issues as well as enable more efficient wildfire planning and management and allow important costal habitats (saltmarsh and beaches) to migrate and persist in the face of sea level rise.

Project Goals:
The specific goals of the project were: 1) the direct fee acquisition (purchase) of land (67 acres) by the Town of Gosnold and our partner, Buzzards Bay Coalition (BBC), 2) simultaneous purchase of permanent conservation restrictions on these lands (to both provide permanent protection and facilitate acquisition) and 3) the recording of a permanent conservation restriction on a large associated adjacent parcel to be donated by the current private landowner, Ridgely Farm Limited Partnership.

Approach and Result:
Our project partner, BBC, had all the project lands under contract to acquire and led the effort to get to closing. Upon simultaneously acquiring the fee lands (Church's Beach by the Town and the other components by BBC) and conservation restrictions (the reverse, Church's Beach by BBC and the other components by the Town), the project goals were met.

Lessons Learned:

While this project was costly ($6.1M), acquisition of the project lands is considered the most cost-effective, long-term solution to climate change resiliency for the community. Had project lands been developed, a variety of problems were anticipated to arise from climate change that would have been more complicated and expensive to address including protection of the harbor, protection of the public drinking water supply, protection from flood and storm impacts, resilience to wildfire threat, resilience/migration of coastal habitats and ecological resources. Going through the effort of creating an MVP Plan motivated the Town to consider its resiliency preparedness and this project of acquisition, protection and prevention of private development of the project lands helped the Town address 3 of its top "Areas of Concern" and advance 3 of its "Highest Priority" strategies.

Partners and Other Support:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
> *DCS*: grant funding (MVP, LAND, DWSP), CR review and approval
> *DCR*: grant funding (USF&WS NCWC)
> *NHESP*: identified habitats of 8 MESA species on or near the project lands

Buzzards Bay Coalition: coordinated getting to closing, assisted in fundraising (approx. 200 private donors), acquired fee land, holds CR on Church's Beach

Bouchard 120 Trustee Council: grant funding (NRDA)

USF&WS: grant funding (NAWCA)

Town Conservation Commission: submitted successful grant applications, acquired Church's Beach, holds CRs on other components

Buzzards Bay NEP: grant funding (Municipal Mini-grant), substantial mapping help and data analysis/interpretation

Martha's Vineyard Commission: helped with process of creating Town's MVP Plan & OSRP