BUILDING A CLIMATE READY NJ

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

$72.5 MILLION
IN TOTAL FUNDING

432 MUNICIPALITIES
IN THE PROJECT AREA SPANNING
16 COUNTIES

203 MUNICIPALITIES
IDENTIFIED AS DISADVANTAGED AND OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES

15 NJ-BASED PARTNERS
LEADING THIS WORK

$342 MILLION
FUNDS LEVERAGED

SUMMARY

The **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection** (DEP) **Coastal Management Program** has been awarded $72,493,449 through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Resilience Regional Challenge to implement *Building a Climate Ready NJ*, a large-scale, transformational climate resilience initiative across 16 coastal counties over the next five years.

Led by **New Jersey's Chief Resilience Officer**, building upon a strong **Coastal Resilience Collaborative** established after Hurricane Sandy, and partnering with a network of 15 New Jersey-based academic institutions and NGOs, *Building a Climate Ready NJ* will implement multiple projects that increase community and ecological resilience, make climate resilience planning accessible to a greater number of New Jersey communities, and support them in bringing those plans to fruition with comprehensive technical assistance and robust education, outreach, and engagement.

Building a Climate Ready NJ has a strong focus on supporting disadvantaged and overburdened communities and commits dedicated resources to work with underserved communities to co-design projects and plans that address locally specific climate vulnerabilities and community needs. In partnership with the **John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy & Research at Kean University** and in coordination with the **NJ Environmental Justice Alliance**, the project will empower community organizations with the knowledge and resources to meaningfully engage throughout the *Building a Ready NJ* initiative.

PROJECT PARTNERS

BUILDING A CLIMATE READY NJ

TRANSFORMATIONAL RESILIENCE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION

Through community engagement and regional planning, several construction projects have been identified as part of *Building a Climate Ready NJ*. These projects will address a range of issues stemming from climate change in disadvantaged and overburdened communities such as flooding, degraded water quality, and loss of habitat. By combining green and gray infrastructure, these projects will provide co-benefits to the communities such as recreational opportunities, improved air quality, and increased access to New Jersey's waterways and natural areas.

PROJECTS	LEAD PARTNERS
• Design and construct neighborhood-scale green infrastructure projects to improve stormwater management in Newark, Paterson, and Perth Amboy	→ **Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program**
• Restore the vegetated marshlands of the Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area	→ **Meadowlands Research & Restoration Institute at NJ Sports and Exposition Authority**
• Construct a new Riverfront Park in Little Ferry to improve public access to the waterfront while providing resilience to the community and restoring the area's native habitat	→ **DEP Division of Resilience Engineering & Construction**

*Little Ferry Riverfront Park is part of New Jersey's **Rebuild by Design Meadowlands** project, a suite of strategies and projects to reduce flood risks in communities within the Meadowlands region.*

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In coordination with the construction work under this initiative, *Building a Climate Ready NJ* will offer several training and workforce development opportunities to support the longevity of this critical work beyond the life of the grant.

PROJECTS	LEAD PARTNERS
• Provide hands-on learning opportunities for Newark-area community college students on the design and monitoring of green infrastructure projects	→ **New Jersey Institute of Technology Center for Natural Resources**
• Launch a green infrastructure training and entrepreneurship initiative to empower an emerging group of professionals in green infrastructure construction	→ **John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy & Research at Kean University** **Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program**

BUILDING A CLIMATE READY NJ

REGIONAL RESILIENCE PLANNING

Building a Climate Ready NJ will leverage existing efforts to expand resilience planning opportunities to a greater number of communities. These planning efforts help communities reduce their vulnerability to climate change impacts and can be leveraged to obtain federal funding for identified projects and actions down the line.

PROJECTS	LEAD PARTNER(S)
• Expand the successful Resilient NJ program to fund direct climate resilience planning assistance in 3-4 multi-municipal regions	→ **DEP Bureau of Climate Resilience Planning**
• Develop a Meadowlands Strategic Plan that will inform municipal climate resilience planning throughout the region	→ **Rutgers Climate Change Resource Center**
• Launch an Urban Chief Resilience Officer program that will train and staff Chief Resilience Officers in Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Atlantic City, Camden, and Trenton	→ **Sustainable Jersey**
• Update, enhance, and develop tools and guidance that municipalities can use to conduct resilience planning activities on their own	→ **NJ Coastal Management Program** **Rutgers Climate Change Resource Center** **Sustainable Jersey**
• Update flood modeling and maps to inform planning and decision-making	→ **Princeton University**

Resilient NJ public workshop, Old Bridge, NJ

*To date, Resilient NJ communities have received and/or benefitted from **over $23 million in federal funding** resulting from their resilience planning efforts.*

BUILDING A CLIMATE READY NJ

RESILIENCE PROJECTS DESIGN PIPELINE

Building a Climate Ready NJ project partners will collaborate to provide capacity, expertise, and resources with disadvantaged and overburdened communities to move conceptual or planned natural and nature-based resilience projects to the design phase, preparing them for implementation.

PROJECTS	LEAD PARTNERS
• Co-design natural and nature-based resilience projects identified through previous planning efforts in disadvantaged and overburdened communities →	**NJ Sea Grant Consortium** **Stevens Institute of Technology** **Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute DEP Bureau of Climate Resilience Planning**
• Establish a Coastal Restoration Extension & Credentialing Program to train practitioners on successful coastal ecological restoration and community resilience →	**NJ Sea Grant Consortium**
• Enhance and expand the NJ Coastal Ecological Restoration and Adaptation Planning Tool to operate as a user-friendly portal to support decision-making around restoration project planning, design, and implementation →	**Rutgers Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis**

TRANSFORMATIONAL RESILIENCE IN URBAN STATE PARKS

Parks provide critical green space, recreational opportunities, and shade in urban areas that are already at greater exposure to climate impacts like extreme heat. In addition, parks offer opportunities to restore natural lands that provide protection from flooding and coastal erosion. *Building a Climate Ready NJ* will support DEP's ongoing initiatives to expand its urban state park offerings.

PROJECTS	LEAD PARTNERS
• Design plans for Phase 2 of the Liberty State Park Revitalization Program that will improve and enhance existing coastal habitats, benefit neighboring communities, and provide new public recreational opportunities →	**DEP State Park Service** **DEP State Land Acquisition**
• Develop community-supported innovative concept designs for a new state park on the Camden waterfront →	**DEP State Park Service**

BUILDING A CLIMATE READY NJ

NJ EDUCATION, CLIMATE AWARENESS, TRAINING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NJ EDUCATE)

Building a Climate Ready NJ will foster enduring capacity within each construction, planning, and design activity to support equitable adaptation within the region through education, workforce development, trainings, and entrepreneurship. This engagement will help ensure that the benefits of the proposed projects reach beyond typical decision-makers and professional audiences.

The EduCATE initiative will provide broad education, training, and engagement initiatives across the region, conducted primarily by long-standing, federally funded regional institutions. Coordinated by **Rutgers University's Department of Marine & Coastal Sciences**, EduCATE projects include:

PROJECTS	LEAD PARTNERS
• Expanding the use of the citizen science app MyCoast NJ for community engagement and education on coastal risk communications	→ **Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve**
• Hosting innovative climate change resilience programming at the Novins Planetarium at Ocean County College	→ **Barnegat Bay Partnership**
• Expanding the successful Urban Waters Initiative to reach more communities in the Delaware Bayshore	→ **Partnership for the Delaware Estuary**
• Empowering community stakeholders to use climate data and tools to inform watershed management and climate resilience decision-making	→ **NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary Program**
• Launching a K-12 Research Practice Partnership to support educators in teaching about climate change and climate resilience and to support student environmental action	→ **Rutgers 4-H Youth Development Program**

ABOUT THE CLIMATE RESILIENCE REGIONAL CHALLENGE

In 2024, Congress appropriated approximately $575 million through the Inflation Reduction Act to be competitively awarded for projects that help coastal communities become more resilient as they face increasing threats from extreme weather and climate change. This historic, transformative effort is known as the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge. To learn more about the program and the other national projects, visit the website.