



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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DEM ANNOUNCES GRANTS TO HELP RI COMMUNITIES CONFRONT THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

\$3 million in new funding is available to improve municipal resilience

PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announced today that around \$3 million in matching grants is available for climate resilience projects throughout Rhode Island. A [Request for Proposals](#) (RFP) is now open, with a deadline of April 6, 2020, for projects by government and nonprofit groups that restore and improve the climate resilience of vulnerable coastal habitats, as well as river and stream floodplains and related habitats.

Funding will be provided through the 2018 Green Economy and Clean Water Bond, which Rhode Island voters approved by a margin of almost 80 percent. Having pledged in her State of the State speech to continue to “address climate change with urgency,” Governor Gina M.

Raimondo proposed a \$64 million Beach, Clean Water, and Green Bond initiative in the fiscal year 2021 budget. Raimondo’s measure proposes funding a modernization of state parks and beaches, conservation of forests and farmland, and continued investments in clean water, drinking water, and the Municipal Resilience Program, which would further capitalize climate resilience projects.



Sapowet Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Tiverton: DEM uses a mini-excavator to create small, narrow ditches in the saltmarsh to improve tidal circulation, and ultimately, bring dead spots back to life. Marsh grasses are very tolerant of daily tidal flooding but cannot survive being submerged all the time, which is a harm caused by sea level rise. Along with providing essential food, refuge, and nursery habitat for more than 75 percent of fisheries species, salt marshes act as buffer zones, stabilizing shorelines and protecting coastal areas, inland habitats, and human communities from floods and storm surges. When flooding does occur, the salt marsh acts like a huge sponge, soaking up the excess water.

“These grants will support the work of our [Resilient Rhody](#) strategy to protect the health, safety, and livelihoods of our people, communities, and workplaces,” Governor Raimondo said. “We will continue to

combat climate change by advancing our clean energy and heating sectors, increasing energy efficiency, and reducing transportation pollution.”

“In the past decade, Rhode Islanders have seen places we love eroded, flooded, degraded, and lost due to impacts of climate change,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “We are excited that these grants will enable us to work with governmental and nonprofit entities to protect our treasured habitats and advance a healthier, more resilient Rhode Island. With critical funding that Rhode Islanders approved by supporting the 2018 Green Economy and Clean Water Bond, we are investing in our state to help ensure our communities are prepared for climate impacts now and in the future.”

“The Ocean State, through the leadership of Governor Raimondo, is accelerating action and providing resources to strengthen our communities and natural areas to the impacts of climate change,” said Shaun O’Rourke, Rhode Island’s Chief Resilience Officer. “Together, with our partners like DEM, we look forward to working with stakeholders from across the state to evaluate each of their unique vulnerabilities and support them with critical funds to make their priority projects a reality.”

Climate change is causing extreme weather, inland and coastal flooding, and sea level rise – resulting in environmental and economic challenges for Rhode Islanders and around the world. Scientific modeling predicts that these impacts are expected to accelerate. Each of Rhode Island’s 39 cities and towns is vulnerable to climate change impacts, with infrastructure and natural systems at risk due to their location in riverine or coastal floodplains. Already:

- The sea level has risen over 10 inches at the Newport tide station since 1930.
- Annual precipitation rates are climbing an inch almost every 10 years. In 2018, RI experienced a record number of days with over 1 inch of rain.
- RI is the first state in the lower 48 where average annual temps have risen by over 2 degrees Celsius.

DEM is seeking grant proposals that will allow municipalities, other governmental entities, and nonprofits to implement climate resilience projects for many kinds of climate-driven challenges facing Rhode Island communities, inland and coastal. Additional information about eligible projects and the required match is available in the [RFP](#). A public workshop has been scheduled to discuss the RFP:

Date: Monday, March 2
Time: 2 PM
Where: DEM Headquarters, Room 300
235 Promenade Street, Providence RI

For more information or to apply contact Elizabeth Stone (elizabeth.stone@dem.ri.gov). Proposals should be mailed to the DEM Permit Application Center, 235 Promenade Street, Second Floor, Providence, RI 02908 and emailed to elizabeth.stone@dem.ri.gov. Final proposals and supporting materials are due by 4 PM on Monday, April 6, 2020. Governmental entities and non-profits are eligible to apply.

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.

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