

Governor Phil Murphy

# On Earth Day, Murphy Administration Releases State's First Climate Change Resilience Strategy

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*Draft Strategy Will Strengthen New Jersey's Communities and Infrastructure Against Adverse Effects of Climate Change*

**WOODBRI**GE – On Earth Day, the Murphy Administration today released a draft of the state's first Climate Change Resilience Strategy ("Strategy") for public review and comment. In October 2019, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 89 (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562019/20191029a.shtml>), which appointed the state's first Chief Resilience Officer, established an Interagency Council on Climate Resilience (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience-council.html>), and directed the Department of Environmental Protection to develop the Strategy. The Strategy outlines six state priorities, each of which includes recommendations to guide state and local government efforts to protect vulnerable communities, infrastructure, businesses, and the environment from the devastating effects of climate change. Over the past 18 months the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience has worked collaboratively to develop the Strategy, which includes over 100 recommendations to strengthen New Jersey against climate impacts, including the State's unique risks from sea-level rise, chronic flooding, rising temperatures, and more frequent and intense storm events.

"Climate change is the single greatest long-term threat currently facing humanity, and our state and economy are uniquely vulnerable to its devastating effects," **said Governor Murphy**. "Confronting climate change requires decisive and intentional action across all sectors and levels of government. The Climate Change Resilience Strategy outlines a comprehensive set of actions designed to ensure that New Jersey's communities and infrastructure are resilient against future storms and the impacts of climate change."

"The adverse consequences of climate change affect our communities, natural resources, public health, and economy," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Building our state's resilience must be a critical component of our comprehensive statewide approach to climate action. From educating our children to both fight climate change and take on the jobs of the future, to our continued progress on clean energy, New Jersey is leading the way nationally and globally in climate action."

"Addressing the impacts of climate change requires a coordinated effort across state government," **said Jane Cohen, Director of the Governor's Office of Climate Action and the Green Economy**. "New Jersey is already bearing the brunt of climate impacts and they will only intensify without immediate action. The statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy is a critical guide to making our state stronger."

"Through this inaugural edition of the Climate Change Resilience Strategy, the Department of Environmental Protection is committing to a long-term partnership with all New Jersey communities and local governments, and we will be there to assist them in planning for and adapting to the realities of climate change," **said Department of Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette**. "There will be on-the-ground challenges, hard conversations, and tough work ahead—but, by working together, we will ensure that New Jersey remains strong."

"Our Scientific Report on Climate Change, presented last summer, is the basis for the Interagency Council's Climate Change Resilience Strategy," **said David Rosenblatt, the state's Chief Resilience Officer and Department of Environmental Protection's Assistant Commissioner for Climate and Flood Resilience**. "The first iteration of the Resilience Strategy is the structure that will support and direct the public discourse we will need to further the state's adaptation to climate change. The proposed actions are the first of many that will need to be developed by the state agencies with public input. We look forward to implementing the actions, evaluating our progress, and having the public share in the process."

"NJDOT is committed to continued collaboration with our partner agencies to address the effect of climate change and how it will impact our transportation network throughout New Jersey," **said NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti**. "Our Resiliency Working Group is developing innovative project designs and cutting-edge maintenance practices to ensure that NJDOT will be ready to deploy environmentally beneficial approaches to manage the state of good repair of our transportation system."

"Climate change is one of the most pressing threats our society currently faces," **said New Jersey Economic Development Authority CEO Tim Sullivan**. "In addition to the dangers it poses for communities, climate change also has the potential to do significant economic harm if left unchecked. Fortunately, we still have an opportunity to avoid the worst effects of climate change, and even use our response to build stronger, more resilient communities. The statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy represents Governor Murphy's comprehensive whole-of-government approach needed to achieve these goals. The Strategy presents innovative ideas that will address the myriad problems caused by climate change with a sense of urgency and an eye toward the future."

"NJBP

The draft Strategy follows the June 2020 release of the first-ever Scientific Report on Climate Change (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/nj-scientific-report-2020.pdf>), which documents the specific impacts of climate change to New Jersey and serves as an important scientific basis for decision-making.

The statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy's six priorities are the following:

## 1. Build Resilient and Healthy Communities

Every municipality will be encouraged to integrate climate change into local planning, regional transportation planning, hazard mitigation planning, housing, and other infrastructure planning. State agencies will provide technical assistance to communities to identify and address climate change impacts. Public health considerations

would also factor into planning.

Other strategies call for reducing future climate impacts to critical buildings and infrastructure, identifying programs and policies that put people in harm's way, and continuing to invest in renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, and sustainable economic policies.

## 2. Strengthen the Resilience of New Jersey's Ecosystems

Improving resilience and reducing greenhouse gases will help protect natural areas and restore areas that buffer communities from climate change impacts. Making ecosystems more resilient to environmental stressors such as pollution, wildfires, and rising temperatures will help keep land and waters healthier and more capable of responding to climate impacts.

The state will offer technical assistance and support to farmers, fishers, foresters, and land managers to help them incorporate climate change considerations into their natural resource management plans.

Nature-based solutions such as planting new trees and restoring or enhancing salt marshes to trap and store carbon will be used to address climate impacts. These proposed solutions can help stabilize shorelines, manage water, and reduce heat in more cost-effective ways than traditional infrastructure projects.

## 3. Promote Coordinated Governance

Addressing climate change will routinely be considered part of the state's daily business and operations. State agencies will work with county and local governments on climate resilience plans, prioritize the protection of vulnerable populations and ensure equity and inclusion in resilience decision-making.

The state will also seek and use academic and private-sector expertise to identify and implement resilience solutions.

## 4. Invest in Information and Increase Public Understanding

The Interagency Council will undertake a multifaceted communications campaign to help the public understand climate change, current and future climate threats in New Jersey, and how to prepare for them. This would build upon First Lady Tammy Murphy's 2019 initiative that made New Jersey the first state in the nation to incorporate climate change education across its K-12 learning standards.

State agencies will also work with colleges, universities, and other organizations to identify critical gaps in climate resilience research. A cross-agency effort is underway to improve modeling for precipitation and storm events. The Interagency Council will also study the impacts of changes in precipitation, temperature and sea level on key state assets, economic factors and critical resources.

## 5. Expand Resilience Funding and Financing

Climate risk analysis will become a routine element of asset management, capital funding and grant programs to ensure public funds are used for activities that serve long-term economic needs and community resilience.

Transparency will be at the heart of all resilience investments to ensure equity and protection of vulnerable populations. Understanding that many communities may lack the resources to fund resilience projects, the Interagency Council will prioritize protection of vulnerable populations that experience disproportionate climate change impacts.

## 6. Coastal Resilience Plan

This section of the overall Strategy identifies nine key points to protect New Jersey's coastal zone, which is at grave risk of increased flooding, permanent inundation of low-lying areas, and loss of coastal marshes.

The plan guides policies, regulations, funding, and allocation of resources to reduce the impact of coastal hazards, increase the resilience of structures and infrastructure systems, environmental resources, coastal communities, and vulnerable populations. It also recognizes the need to attract equitable and sustainable investment to the coastal zone, which covers 3,218 square miles and comprises 239 communities.

Among specific solutions identified in the plan are strategic planning and management of beaches and dunes to reduce erosion and storm damage; using natural and nature-based means such as living shorelines to manage shore stabilization; and consideration of movement to safer areas.

The DEP will host two public webinars, on Tuesday, May 4, at 10:30 a.m., and on Wednesday, May 5, at 6 p.m. To register for the webinars, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience.html> (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience.html>)

To view and comment on the statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience-strategy.html> (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience-strategy.html>).

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