



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, July 10, 2020

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Rise to Resilience Coalition Launches Proposals to Build Regional Resilience to the Climate Crisis

Following a year-long process involving 400+ regional stakeholders, plan calls for federal, state, and local policy solutions including reforming the National Flood Insurance Program, integrating resilience into state-funded infrastructure, and passing enforceable flood-risk disclosure laws.

Day-Long Digital Takeover to Push Elected Leaders to Adopt Platform as Region Reopens; Climate Change Presents Large-Scale Challenge to Equity

New York, NY — There is a realistic way forward to build regional resilience to the threat of climate change, posits the [Rise to Resilience](#) coalition in its package of 15 federal, state, and local policy solutions released today. The solutions are the result of more than a year of exhaustive consensus building among hundreds of stakeholders convened by the Waterfront Alliance over the course of 2019, and subsequent development by a coalition of more than 80 organizations.

The campaign's platform release marks a major capstone for the Rise to Resilience coalition, as it seeks to address climate change as the greatest threat to our region's future in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis and Hurricane Sandy. Both put a tragically fine point on how unprepared the region is for disasters; the worst impacts of each were borne inequitably by low-income residents and communities of color due to the legacies of systemic injustice.

"A resilient future for New York and New Jersey is not only crucial, it is eminently possible-- but only if we work together to put resilience and justice at the forefront of our regional planning, to address the threat of sea-level rise and the climate crisis head-on," said **Kate Boicourt, Director of Resilience for the Waterfront Alliance**. "Our elected leaders must take urgent action now. The Rise to Resilience coalition is offering a specific, attainable policy roadmap to realize a better future for the region."

"We cannot afford to wait for the next Hurricane Sandy to build a more resilient region. The time to prepare for climate change is now," said **Peggy Shepard, co-founder and executive director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice**. "This isn't just about securing our region's future, protecting our coastal communities and natural habitats; climate resilience is an issue of urban justice. The communities hit first and worst by this crisis will be predominantly lower-income communities and communities of color. It's critical that we implement a more equitable framework for weathering this long-term crisis."

Workable Solutions for a More Resilient Region



The impacts of climate change have no boundaries; one of the campaign's key proposals is to establish an interstate regional climate resilience council to ensure a unified response to protect the region.

Similarly, as flooding is already the most frequently-occurring and damaging disaster, it is critical and increasingly important for renters and homeowners to understand their flood risk; the campaign is pushing for strengthened flood risk disclosure laws in New York and New Jersey.

Restoring funding to the United States Army Corps of Engineers and revising the approach of the Harbor and Tributaries study would enable our region to invest in a comprehensive coastal risk study that prioritizes people and nature, accommodating the changing climate while protecting our regional residents, economy, and coastal habitats.

Below is a comprehensive list of the campaign's proposed solutions for more robust climate adaptation and preparedness in our region, collectively meant to provide a legislative framework for resilience that is well-funded, well-managed and prioritizes the needs of frontline communities.

Federal:

- Introduce legislation that re-envision and funds FEMA so it can support our response to the climate challenges of the 21st century;
- Reauthorize and reform the National Flood Insurance Program;
- Invest in a resilient recovery from Covid-19 by directing stimulus funds toward green infrastructure and workforce development.

Regional:

- Establish an interstate Regional Climate Resilience Council to ensure our response to the climate crisis is a unified, coordinated effort;
- Pass enforceable flood risk disclosure laws in New York (S8439) and New Jersey;
- Restore funding to the United States Army Corps of Engineers and execute a comprehensive coastal risk study that prioritizes people and nature.

New York:

- Enact stronger flood risk assessment and prevention through the Community Risk & Resilience Act passed in 2014.
- Integrate resilient design and process into all state-funded infrastructure planning and capital projects;
- Establish long-term funding for statewide resilience investments, leveraging the New York State 2020 Environmental Bond Act as a \$3 billion down payment;
- Strengthen Intro 1620 as a legislative framework for a well-funded and comprehensive citywide resilience strategy.

New Jersey:

- Ensure a resilient Covid-19 recovery by directing stimulus funds toward green workforce development programs, affordable housing, and resilient infrastructure;



- Establish a clear governance system to oversee the implementation of statewide resilience policy;
- Ensure that the Climate Resilience Plan and New Jersey Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJPACT) per Executive orders 89 and 100 effectively incorporate climate resilience into statewide policy;
- Amend municipal land-use law to ensure that all local master plans incorporate climate vulnerability assessments and resilience measures.

Building Grassroots Momentum for Climate Justice and Resiliency

The Rise to Resilience coalition now counts more than 80 organizations as partners—including the Waterfront Alliance, New Jersey Future, Center for NYC Neighborhoods, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Climate Jobs NY, Red Hook Initiative, Environmental Defense Fund, the Regional Plan Association, and dozens more—working aggressively to translate its comprehensive regional policy program into legislative action and secure a more sustainable future for New York and New Jersey.

Elected officials, allies, and coalition members will share their support for the unveiling of the campaign’s platform in a massive digital day of action, with a social media takeover and virtual rally that promotes solutions and hundreds of calls to local, regional and national leaders to encourage commitment to the platform.

In addition to a series of short videos from leading advocates and residents of flood-prone areas, the day will include a digital rally with upwards of 300 already confirmed.

Statewide, regional and local elected officials, climate advocates, and experts expressed their support for the Rise to Resilience campaign’s solutions:

“Too often, we frame these crises in terms of a war; but if it's a war, it is one we won't win. We must build resilience to climate change -- preparing our region for the reality of rising tides and vacillating temperatures,” **said Chris Ward, Chairman of the Board of the Waterfront Alliance.** “More than one million people across New York and New Jersey live in danger of permanent flooding. Resilience means unified action that addresses the true scope of this challenge. To achieve the change we need requires both aggressive grassroots action and decisive leadership from our elected officials. Rise to Resilience was born out of consensus building on the right solutions -- now we are holding our policymakers accountable with a campaign that demands legislative results from the local to federal level.”

“Climate change is an unprecedented challenge that requires unprecedented action. The goal of the Rise to Resilience campaign is to help our elected leaders realize the fundamental change we need to make and then to make it,” **said Peter Kasabach, executive director of New Jersey Future.** “For too long our region has delayed addressing the threat of climate change altogether, dealing with the issue in piecemeal fashion or siloing climate preparedness as a minor or secondary concern. We can no longer afford to make resilience anything less than a central, guiding priority for New Jersey and New York.”



Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) said: “My Congressional district hugs multiple waterfronts and my constituents are on the front lines for the next climate disaster. As we work to mitigate and slow climate change, we must simultaneously prepare for flooding and other challenges that will inevitably be brought on by a warming planet. We’ve seen time and again that marginalized communities of color are among those hardest hit by severe weather, sea level rise and other effects of climate change. These communities must be central to planning how we make our region more resilient. And we must continue working to secure the types of federal and local investments that will allow us to rise to the challenge of securing a sustainable future.”

“We know that the climate crisis is real and that we must treat it like the emergency it is. As Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, combating the climate crisis head-on has been one of my top priorities, which is why this Congress I announced a bold plan to achieve 100% clean economy by 2050. I’ve also worked to ensure that our coastal communities are more resilient against the effects of climate change. My Living Shorelines Act will help our state effectively mitigate future flooding and improve the local environment by supporting water quality and habitats for local wildlife and fish,” said **Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ)**. “We must work together to address the scope of the climate crisis with a united effort at the federal, state, and local level. I’m grateful for Governor Murphy’s leadership on this issue, and I’m proud to stand with the Rise to Resilience campaign as we work toward a more resilient future.”

“The climate crisis is one of the defining challenges of the next decade for our state, region and the waterfront communities I represent. Covid-19 has underscored the urgency with which we must prepare for unpredictable disasters -- whether a pandemic, storm or flood -- and we can’t wait for the next crisis to better prepare for the reality of climate change,” said **New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. “I’m proud to stand with the Rise to Resilience campaign in fighting for a more sustainable future in New York and New Jersey. We all have a stake in this issue, and we have the power to take action that puts us in a stronger position when the next storm comes.”

New York Senator Brad Hoylman said: "Our kids are going to grow up in a world that is vastly warmer because of a political failure to act on climate. I'm proud that New York passed landmark climate legislation last year, but we need to keep the momentum going. That means passing additional climate and resiliency legislation, including S.8439 which I sponsor to update New York's flood risk disclosure requirements. I'm proud to be joining my elected colleagues and Waterfront Alliance for today's Rise to Resilience Day of Action, and committed to fighting for our climate in the State Senate."

“New York City is on the frontlines of climate change. Unless we act with urgency and put shovels in the ground on critical resiliency projects across our shoreline, our City's homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, and parks will be exposed to the next storm,” said **NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer**. "I will continue fighting to build a more resilient City, and I am proud to stand with the Rise to Resilience coalition in their work to address climate change, the greatest threat to our city's future."

“New Yorkers don’t need another reminder of our city’s susceptibility to the devastating impacts of climate change. For too long our nation has denied the need to act, while local and state government have worked with lack of urgency in implementing real solutions to confront this emergency,” said **NYC Councilmember Carlina Rivera**. “A regional approach to resiliency is what we need to effectively tackle



this existential threat, and I'm proud to support the Rise to Resilience campaign as we work to close the gaps in protecting our most vulnerable communities."

"New York -- from the city to the Troy dam -- knows too well the dangers of climate change, and impending sea level rise, yet we have not taken the necessary steps to protect our communities, our eco-systems, or our shorelines from severe flooding and storms. Now is the time to build meaningful resilience and proactively prepare for risk, which requires real community engagement. It's time to act decisively," said **Paul Gallay, President of Hudson Riverkeeper**. "I'm proud to stand with the Rise to Resilience campaign in pushing for comprehensive regional action to secure our long-term commitment to climate preparedness and adaptation in the NY-NJ area."

"Infrastructure systems are on the front lines of risks related to climate change. Infrastructure must be designed, constructed and upgraded to meet or exceed design tolerances for all risks, including the increased hazards predicted due to climate change. Resilience isn't just about protecting the residents in our communities; but also the infrastructure that keeps society functioning, like water and wastewater, transportation, marine terminals, airports and our region's power generating capacity. These assets are in danger of permanent flooding in the coming decades and public investment and good policy is needed to deal with that reality," said **Dan Kennedy, MCRP, PP/AICP, Director of Environmental & Utility Operations of Utility Contractors Association of New Jersey**. "Our policymakers must realize a program for resilience that goes past the conventional paradigm of land use regulation. There is no better time to do that than the present, and we're proud to stand with the Rise to Resilience in fighting for these changes."

"Building a more resilient region means rethinking our approach to infrastructure, especially in flood-prone communities. This is an urgent challenge that's crucial to New York's future," said **Jeff Vockrodt, Executive Director of Climate Jobs NY**. "Investing in resilience and clean-energy infrastructure also promises major economic benefits if we do it right, putting New Yorkers back to work coming out of the Covid-19 economic crisis in good family-supporting, community-sustaining jobs. And the Rise to Resilience campaign is providing our region an important roadmap for smart recovery and a sustainable future."

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The [Waterfront Alliance](#) inspires and effects resilient, revitalized, and accessible coastlines for all communities.