



SMART BI-STATE LEADERSHIP

DEVELOP AN INTERSTATE GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR REGIONAL RESILIENCE

Background

Climate change is not abstract for our region. More than one million people across New York and New Jersey live at risk of flooding today. Yet, eight years after Hurricane Sandy, we are still unprepared. What is at stake? Your home, your business, your school, your park, your neighborhood, and your way of life. Delaying action is not an option. Now is the time to address the greatest threat to our region's future.

The Rise to Resilience campaign is today's roadmap for a more resilient tomorrow. Together we can build resilience, support our communities and economy and create a more equitable and just region.

Please join us at rise2resilience.org.

Issue overview

The climate crisis does not recognize state boundaries; like COVID-19, our response to it must be a unified, coordinated effort. Across our region, a lack of coordination in planning and decision-making has led to an inconsistent and incomplete approach, inefficiencies, and ineffectiveness at seeking federal funding for flood risk reduction.¹

A Regional Climate Resilience Council would better enable a unified approach across jurisdictions and consistency in communication and climate metrics. The effective and consistent implementation of funding and financing strategies would also reduce the amount of people and infrastructure at risk from flooding.

¹ Regional Plan Association. 2017. Establish A Regional Coastal Commission. Fourth Regional Plan. <http://fourthplan.org/action/coastal-commission>

ACTION: Introduce and pass legislation to establish a Regional Climate Resilience Council

The New York and New Jersey governors and their legislatures should seek to establish an interstate agreement to form a Regional Climate Resilience Council. The Council will be chaired by chief resilience officers, to be appointed within each State Governor's Office and the chief resilience officer of New York City, beginning with New York and New Jersey, and expanding to neighboring states as determined by the Council.

The purpose of the Council would be to develop a shared strategic vision for climate resilience in the region and better position the region to seek federal funds. It should be modeled after successful councils in other regions, such as the San Francisco Conservation and Development Commission, with a charge to develop a regional strategy for reducing our risk to sea level rise, increased precipitation, and coastal storms, and creating alignment across boundaries.²

To maximize effectiveness, the Council should be supported through a budget for research, planning, and projects.

An interstate body leading resilience planning across New York and New Jersey would:

- > **Reduce our risk from storm surge, sea level rise, and precipitation-based flooding:** Facilitate the development of a framework for assessing, monitoring, and reducing risk across jurisdictions.
- > **Increase communication and coordination between agencies across state boundaries,** and include agency resilience leads from both states.
- > **Provide civic oversight and longevity beyond electoral cycles:** In addition to agency heads and the governor's office, a subset of the Council should include governor-appointed elected officials, frontline communities representatives, design/engineering practitioners, emergency management experts, ecology, and environmental and social scientists, and a liaison between state climate councils (e.g., New York State's Climate Action Council).
- > **Establish consistency in climate metrics across boundaries,** through updating peer-reviewed climate projections, building from New Jersey's Science and Technical Advisory Panel and New York City's Panel on Climate Change and ClimAID to establish common metrics and using this scientific basis to inform minimum standards for design that account for future climate conditions.
- > **Establish pathways to funding,** including improved leveraging of federal funding opportunities through the Water Resources Development Act and evaluation and implementation of funding and financing strategies for different scales of investment.

²The Delaware River Basin Commission, South Florida Compact, and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission are potential models to consider. Each model has different regulatory roles, budget, and structure, which should be considered in terms of what resources and structures are needed to most effectively reduce regional risk and meet the goals described above.