



State of Rhode Island

Daniel J. McKee
Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER

23-07

May 22, 2023

RHODE ISLAND RESILIENCE 2023

WHEREAS, Rhode Islanders are experiencing the impacts of climate change on the Ocean State's economy, infrastructure, natural resources, and way of life; and

WHEREAS, sea level measured at the Newport Tidal Gauge has risen over ten inches since 1930 and is currently rising at more than one inch per decade; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island and all of the Northeast have seen a greater recent increase in extreme precipitation than any other region in the United States. The region experienced more than a 70% increase in the amount of precipitation falling in very heavy events; and

WHEREAS, temperatures in Rhode Island have risen almost 4°F since the beginning of the 20th century with historically unprecedented warming projected to continue through this century; and

WHEREAS, coastal habitats and river and stream floodplains provide buffer and flood storage capacity that protects Rhode Island's infrastructure, buildings, and roads from sea level rise and the impacts of intense storms; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) have a long history of developing and implementing coastal and riverine habitat restoration projects with many partners, including Save the Bay; and,

WHEREAS, in September 2017, Rhode Island initiated development of a strategy to make Rhode Island resilient to the impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, in July 2018, the CRMC adopted a Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan, developed in collaboration with URI's Coastal Resources Center/Sea Grant Program, to examine coastal hazard risk and outline resilience and adaptation strategies for all of coastal Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, in July 2018, after ten resilience roundtables were held in cities and towns across the State, the statewide climate action strategy titled "Resilient Rhody" was published; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB) partnered with The Nature Conservancy to launch the Municipal Resilience Program (MRP). Since its inception, 33 municipalities have participated in the MRP to hold local workshops and develop community-led plans leading to 28 MRP Action Grants totaling \$7.4 million; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the RI Act on Climate was signed into law, putting Rhode Island on a trajectory to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, Rhode Island established the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) Fund to support projects to improve public safety and community climate resilience for coastal habitats, as well as river and stream floodplains; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, Rhode Island voters approved a Green Bond that provided an additional \$16 million for MRP Action Grants and the State budget allocated \$4 million to the OSCAR program; and

WHEREAS, while Rhode Island is a leader in responding to climate change through enactment of bold laws and a nation-leading commitment to offshore wind and other sources of renewable energy; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island remains at risk from the impacts of global climate change and must respond with local action to build resilience by incorporating climate change into its programs and planning processes.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DANIEL J. MCKEE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Rhode Island, do hereby order and direct the following:

The Department of Environmental Management shall recruit and hire an individual to serve as the Rhode Island Chief Resilience Officer. The Chief Resilience Officer shall:

- a) Coordinate resilience efforts across state agencies, municipalities, businesses, and other organizations and to advise the RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (RIEC4), established pursuant to R.I. General Laws § 42-6.2-1, on the status and effectiveness of those efforts;
- b) Draft state policies on resilience and implement such policies under the direction of the RIEC4;
- c) Serve as the primary voice and advocate for state actions on resilience;
- d) Build upon the planning assistance provided to municipalities by MRP workshops, in coordination with partner agencies;
- e) Work closely with RIIB on the MRP Action Grants and the planning and financing of other resilience projects;
- f) Work with RIIB and CRMC on the implementation of the OSCAR grant program;
- g) Plan and implement projects to protect and restore the habitat and recreational resources owned or under the stewardship of DEM;
- h) Aggressively track and apply for federal grants to fund resilience efforts across Rhode Island;
- i) Coordinate resilience efforts with decarbonization programs, activities, and policies taken in accordance with the RI Act on Climate; and

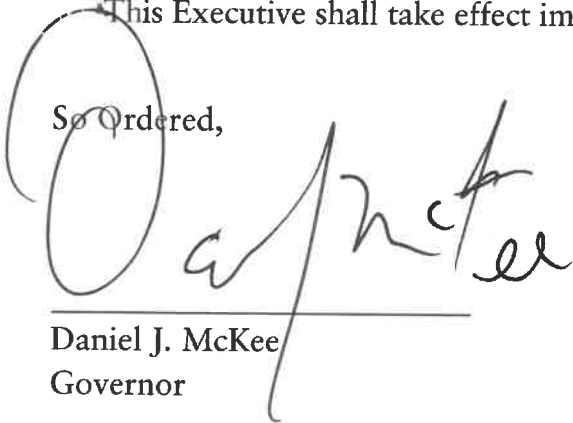
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- j) Provide biennial reports to the RIEC4, the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate on the State of Resilience in Rhode Island, with the first report to be submitted by December 31, 2024.

This Executive shall take effect immediately.

So Ordered,



Daniel J. McKee
Governor