

Climate Resilience Regional Challenge

PROJECT SUMMARIES

RESILIENT MAINE: LOCAL ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE ACTIONS AT A COASTWIDE SCALE

Project Lead: Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future

Funding Amount: \$69,008,683

SUMMARY

Maine's vision is to become a national leader in climate resilience among rural states by the end of this decade. This will be accomplished by supporting the goals outlined in *Maine Won't Wait*, the state's award-winning climate action plan. This funding is focused on nature-based solutions, strengthening the resilience of Maine's working waterfronts, and building enduring capacity to prepare for, and respond to, climate change impacts.

Specific activities include supporting underserved, rural, and tribal communities in the development and implementation of climate adaptation strategies; expanding the availability and use of technical assistance tools and training focused on flood risk, saltwater intrusion, bluff stability, and living shorelines; updating the state's regulatory framework to support climate resilience; conducting demonstration projects that incentivize regional collaboration and nature-based solutions; and strengthening the climate resilience of vulnerable public infrastructure and working waterfronts.

DETAILS

Tackling climate change, advancing clean energy, and improving climate resilience is a top priority for Governor Mills. Recent severe storms and flooding recently clearly demonstrated the urgent need to provide planning and implementation assistance to Maine communities. In December 2023 and January 2024, for instance, storms caused \$90 million in damage to public infrastructure. Four lives were lost. With nearly 500 municipalities and tribal governments, many lack the capacity or expertise needed to adequately prepare. The approach outlined in this project plan will bolster community-led projects that reduce risk, build enduring capacity, and support helpful regulatory change.

Building Enduring Community Resiliency

Lack of capacity, expertise, and funding are consistently cited by municipalities as reasons why they are unable to adequately address climate risks. To address this need, this project builds on existing activities that assist underserved rural and tribal communities. Actions include increasing participation in the Community Resilience Partnership, which provides communities with climate technical assistance and funding, in 225 communities to date, and offering grants that help communities, particularly smaller



communities, assess climate risk and implement projects. This portion of the project also provides engineering expertise for designing public green infrastructure projects, offers support for improvements made to at-risk infrastructure, and funds 20 to 30 subgrants for projects designed to make communities safer from extreme weather, sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding, severe heat, and other climate impacts.

Investing in Nature-Based Solutions

To increase the ability of Maine communities to adapt to a changing climate, the state is expanding the availability of technical tools and technical assistance. The effort includes incentivizing resilient designs with an emphasis on nature-based solutions, and positive changes to the state’s land-use and permitting regulations. The development of “shore corps stewards” will provide trained individuals to help communities implement nature-based adaptation solutions.

Several nature-based demonstration projects will be conducted, including living shoreline projects, as well as regionally-significant coastal resilience projects on the Popham Peninsula in Southern Maine and in the West Branch of the Pleasant River in Downeast Maine.

Strengthening Working Waterfronts

With 3,500 miles of tidal coastline, Maine is the fourth longest coast in the continental U.S. Most of the state’s population lives in the coastal zone, and the coast represents an important economic engine for the state. Project funding will support a full-time position that works with coastal municipalities and tribes to determine commercial fishing access needs; prepare Maine for working waterfront investments; and help municipalities and tribes acquire funds allocated to improve waterfront infrastructure for the public and commercial fisheries and aquaculture needs.

Additional activities include providing assistance to coastal communities and working waterfronts that need help addressing climate threats related to maintenance, protection, funding and financing, and engineering support. To increase the economic resiliency of working waterfronts, the project will support a needs assessment focused on how aggregated facilities or transportation could better serve small businesses. Another research focus area is how targeted investments to fund energy efficiency conversions or construction may improve resilience to climate-related shocks.

ABOUT THE CLIMATE RESILIENCE REGIONAL CHALLENGE

In 2022, Congress appropriated approximately \$575 million, through the *Inflation Reduction Act*, to be competitively awarded for projects that help coastal communities become more resilient as they face increasing threats from extreme weather and climate change. This historic, transformative effort is known as the *Climate Resilience Regional Challenge*.

To learn more about the program and the funded projects, visit the website.

coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/

