



## Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund The "OSCAR" Fund

S. 412 (Sen. Lynch Prata) / H. 5628 (Rep. Maldonado)

### Climate Change Is Already Impacting the Ocean State

The impacts of climate change upon Rhode Island's natural and built environments are wide-ranging, discernable, documented and, in many cases, growing in severity. Climate change impacts include:

- sea level rise
- coastal erosion
- increased storm intensity and flooding
- storm surge

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) projects sea levels to rise by approximately one foot (1') in 2035, two feet (2') in 2050 and up to nine feet (9') by 2100. These changes pose a significant threat to the people of Rhode Island and it is critical that we do *all* that we can to prepare for these coming changes.



*Coastal flooding during a "king tide" on Arnold's Neck Drive in Warwick, along Appanoag Cove. Photo credit: Janet Freedman, CRMC*

### Our Infrastructure Is Vulnerable

Climate change will continue to pose increasingly significant risks for state and municipal infrastructure and our environment, public health, welfare and economic well-being.

Rhode Island's rivers will flood at increased levels and coastal infrastructure is at risk. Cities and towns, along with the state, must begin to plan and implement projects that adapt infrastructure on public lands to the impacts of climate change.

### What Can We Do to Prepare?

Adaptation projects can reduce the vulnerability of low-lying infrastructure through measures that include removal, relocation, and redesign of infrastructure; re-grading and revegetating eroding banks and buffers; and acquisition of that area of land necessary to maintain public access. These projects can also improve water quality, provide room for coastal habitats to move inland, and enhance public access to the shoreline.



*Eroding pavement at the end of Van Zandt Road in Warwick being removed.*

Reducing the vulnerability of our infrastructure is vital to the economic prosperity and quality of life of Rhode Islanders. Senate Bill 412 (Sen. Lynch Prata) and House Bill 5628 (Rep. Maldonado) would establish the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund (OSCAR) and create a new source of funding for cities, towns and state agencies to complete much-needed adaptation projects.

## Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund (OSCAR)

The production, transport, and use of fossil fuels cause the release of carbon dioxide and methane, two greenhouse gases that trap the earth's heat in the atmosphere leading to climate change. The Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund (OSCAR) would be funded by a \$0.05 per barrel fee on petroleum products imported by ship into Rhode Island. (There are 42 gallons in a barrel.) This fee equates to 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a cent per gallon of fuel. It is estimated that OSCAR would generate approximately **\$1,900,000 per year** to fund important adaptation projects throughout the state with no impact to the state budget.

OSCAR creates a dedicated source of funding that would:

- Provide grants directly to cities, towns and state agencies for projects that:
  - adapt infrastructure on public lands to the impacts of climate change, and
  - protect or enhance natural systems and habitats to improve the resilience of these systems to rising seas, with *no matching fund requirement for grantees*
- Address current gaps in funding
- Provide a match to help cities, towns and the state leverage federal funds

Of the total annual OSCAR funds collected, \$250,000 would be deposited into the existing Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Fund. OSCAR funding would be administered by the Department of Environmental Management and the Coastal Resources Management Council, guided by a Technical Advisory Committee.

### Types of Projects Funded

- Infrastructure relocation or removal
- Regrading of eroded banks using natural materials and vegetation for stabilization
- Floodplain restoration
- End-of-road pavement removal and stormwater management
- Resizing or replacing culverts that cause flooding

### Examples of Projects

There is no shortage of “shovel ready” projects throughout the state that could be funded via OSCAR.

Examples include: flood plain restoration in the **Pawtuxet River** by removing abandoned infrastructure at the **Pawtuxet River Depot** in Cranston; reconfiguring the parking lot at **Oakland Beach** and moving it back from the water's edge; moving a walking path inland that is vulnerable to flooding at **Colt State Park** in Bristol; and removal of low-lying pavement at roads that end along the coast or rivers throughout the state.



*Barrington Town Beach's low lying parking lot prior to being moved inland.*



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