

# Climate Change Response Work in Rhode Island 2000-2025: An Initial Scoping Study

Prepared for the lead sponsors of the  
**2026 Rhode Island Climate Superfund Act**

By the **Brown University Climate and Development Lab**  
With support from Dunskey Energy + Climate Advisors, consultant for the Science and  
Technology Advisory Board of the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council



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# CDL + CSSN

The Climate and Development Lab at Brown University is a student think tank headquartered at Brown with both student and staff researchers, looking into topics of climate obstruction. The CDL is also home to the Climate Social Science Network, which includes 800 scholars in 49 countries focused on understanding climate obstruction.



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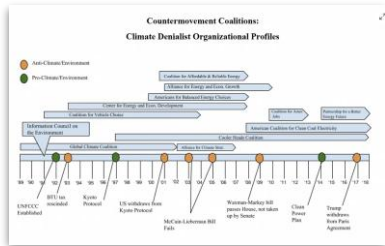
## Research and reports

**CHORUS: A New Dataset of State Interest Group Policy Positions in the United States**  
Published online by Cambridge University Press: 17 May 2024

Garth Hall, Joshua A. Rescher, Rebecca Stronlay-Triggle and Trevor Colburn

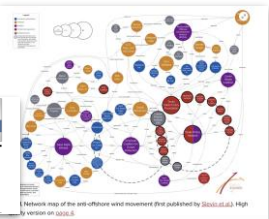
Articles Figures Supplementary materials Metrics

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Original research article  
**Beyond dark money: Information subsidies and complex networks of opposition to offshore wind on the U.S. East Coast**  
Isaac Shlein, William Kastrop, Charlotte Mavell, J. Timmons Roberts

Climate and Development Lab, Institute at Brown for Environment and Society, United States of America



## Data

**How Do They Lobby?**  
EXPLORING LOBBYING IN U.S. STATES USING THE CHORUS DATASET

How Do They Lobby? shows you obstructionism efforts in eleven groups lobby and gas industry across seventeen states. Using this panel, you can search and analyze CHORUS (Dataset on Policy Checks and Organizational Representation in the United States), the first comprehensive dataset of lobbying and lobbying positions in state legislatures. This panel was created by the [CHORUS Dataset and Dashboard](https://www.chorusdataset.com).

**State-level Lobbying**

Rhode Island Colorado Connecticut

## Briefings

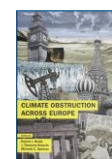
**CLIMATE & DEVELOPMENT LAB In Brief**

Manufacturing Delay: How Local Business Associations Argue Against State-Level Climate Policy

**Legal Entanglements**  
Mapping Connections of Anti-Offshore Wind Groups and their Lawyers in the Eastern United States

**CSSN Briefing**  
CSSN Primer 2024.1  
Climate Obstruction in the UNFCCC

## Books



2026 – S 2024

LC003519

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT – RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE  
SUPERFUND ACT OF 2026

Introduced By: Senators Ujifusa, DiMario, Valverde, Mack, Sosnowski, Acosta, Bell,  
Gu, Zurier, and Kallman

Date Introduced: January 09, 2026

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings and purpose.

2 The general assembly hereby finds and declares the following:

The **2026 Climate Superfund Act** as introduced in the Rhode Island Legislature (S2024, H7004) would:

“establish a cost-recovery framework to quantify and recover public expenditures related to climate change.”

Both bills define “**climate change response work**” to include “*a broad range of public investments, including coastal and flood protection; stormwater, drinking water, and wastewater infrastructure upgrades; heat mitigation and air-quality improvements; resilient transportation and housing infrastructure; energy system resilience; ecosystem and watershed restoration; emergency response; and climate planning, modeling, and hazard mitigation activities.*”

In their request, lead sponsors Senator Linda Ujifusa and Representative Jennifer Boylan described,

“The purpose of this work is not only to inform implementation of the Climate Superfund legislation, but also to provide policymakers, municipalities, and the public with a clear, evidence-based understanding of how much climate change is already costing Rhode Island — and where those costs are falling.”

# Report Outline

**Introduction: Why this Report, What's Here**

**Section 2: Methods, Attribution and Limitations of this Study**

**Section 3: Examples of Clear Climate Expenses for RI**

**Section 4: Recommendations and Next Steps**

Decisions on legislative text

Sequencing of research with bill consideration and passage/implementation

**Appendices - Initial Research Findings**

- a. Appendix 1: Water: Increased Costs from Addressing Flood Protection, Sewage, and Drinking Water
- b. Appendix 2: Increased Costs to Human Health
- c. Appendix 3: Transportation, Building Sector and Energy
- d. Appendix 4: Increased Costs for Planning
- e. Appendix 5: Increased Costs for Natural Systems

SUMMARY REPORT

## **Climate Change Response Work in Rhode Island 2000-2025: An Initial Scoping Study**

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Photo: Michael Derr, IndependentRI.com

Cite as:

## Section 2: Methods, Attribution, Limitations

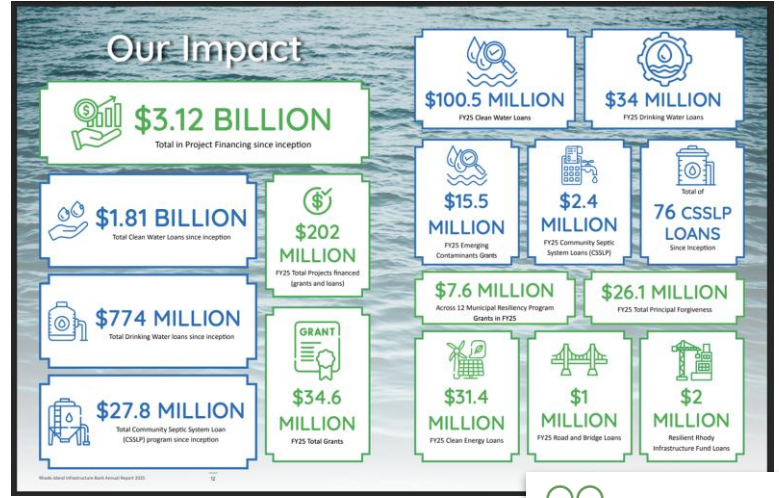
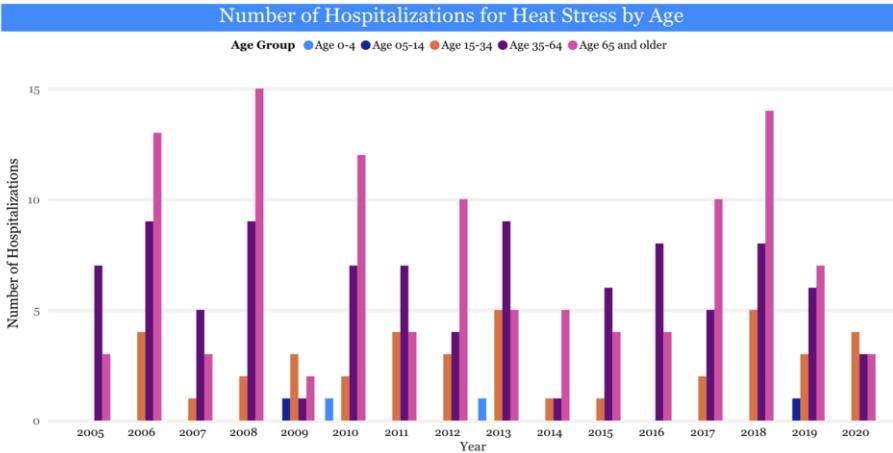
**Methods:** We sought to identify indicators of total costs to the state and municipal governments for the types of climate change response work listed above from 2000-2025.

**Attribution:** Attribution science has advanced significantly, but it becomes more challenging the smaller the scale of the region being considered (Hawkins and Sutton 2009). It is easier to attribute future damage than past.

**Limitations:** Data sources are often incomplete and were gathered and calculated for other uses. Some data, especially from several years ago, are not publicly accessible.

# Section 3: Examples With Good Data

- We had some success with **health data**
- We also had success with **energy infrastructure data**.
- **Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank** provided strong financial data once extracted.



**nationalgrid**

Raquel J. Webster  
Senior Counsel

December 23, 2014

**BY HAND DELIVERY & ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Luly E. Massaro, Commission Clerk  
Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission  
89 Jefferson Boulevard  
Warwick, RI 02888

**RE: National Grid's Proposed FY 2016 Electric Infrastructure, Safety, and Reliability Plan Docket No. \_\_\_\_\_**

Dear Ms. Massaro:

### Loans and Grants

Projects financed since inception		Loans for FY25 by Program	
Grants	\$18,138,634	ENR	\$51,837,763
Loans	\$1,749,854,377	CSSLP	\$1,900,000
Grants	\$100,613,360	CW	\$194,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,938,899,366</b>	DRW	\$128,410,000
		DRP	\$194,246
		MRP	\$1,000,000
		TRF	\$1,000,000
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$188,898,799</b>

Drinking Water Loans		Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy	
Since Inception	\$770,437,871	Single Asset Street LLC	\$11,895,000
DW Conduit	\$18,965,000	Project 100	\$1,237,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$789,402,871</b>	<b>TOTAL LOANS</b>	<b>\$14,132,000</b>

Clean Water Loans		Community Septic System Loans	
Since Inception	\$1,749,854,373	Health Engagemen	\$100,000
CW Conduit	\$67,824,000	Schedule	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,817,678,373</b>		

## Section 3: Examples With More Difficult Data

- Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB)
- Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT)
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM)
- Rhode Island All-Payer Claims Database



# Findings

1. Rhode Island has expended substantial funds for “climate response work” between 2000 and 2025
2. Quantification will be time-intensive and costly--bill language should include necessary funding for agencies to do a robust and defensible job
3. Alternative bill language might include forward-looking, and economy-wide expenses, and create a structure for tracking expenses as they are incurred

# Findings

## 1. Some reliable numbers that we found:

- a. **247** heat-related hospitalizations and **2035** ER visits between 2005-2020
- b. **\$7,453,10** from the CDC for Asthma support since 2010
- c. **\$3,423,637** from CDC for tick and vector-borne illnesses since 2010
- d. Between 2014-2025, RIIB has given **\$638,997,785** in loans and grants for:  
Drinking water, Resilient Rhody, Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy, Efficient Buildings, Municipal Resiliency Program Fund, Municipal Infrastructure, Wastewater resilience, Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund, and the Stormwater project accelerator.
- e. Rhode Island spent roughly **\$62,595,106** on storm-related damages to energy infrastructure from FY2011-24, excluding 15 and 2016 (these year's reports did not itemize costs)

# Section 4: Recommendations/Next Steps

## For the State

Affirm the final form of ‘damages claim’ to be quantified and recovered

- Just retrospective, or also prospective?
- State/municipal spending only? Or economy-wide?
- Finalize bill language accordingly

Fund State-level process for quantification in bill language

- Build on CDL preliminary research

## For the CDL

Submit report and presentation to Climate Superfund bill sponsors and stakeholders

Provide additional support as needed

Future research on who is obstructing climate superfund laws and how

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