



FY 2024 ADDENDUM

# EPA REGION 1 CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLAN

# **Region 1 Climate Adaptation Plan Priority Actions Addendum September 30, 2024**

## **1. Overview:**

In September 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its Climate Adaptation Action Plan which outlines the adaptation actions the Agency will take to fulfill its mission to tackle the climate crisis and advance equity. To further integrate adaptation and build resilience, EPA Region 1, along with EPA's major National Programs and Regional Offices released Climate Adaptation Implementation Plans in October 2022. The EPA Region 1 Climate Adaptation Plan (2022 RCAP) included 95 priority actions (PAs) and set targets through Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

Region 1 revised our 2022 plan to expand and extend its PAs into FY24 (see Appendix 1). The update built on past success and will further institutionalize climate adaptation into the Region's work. As a result, many of our PAs extend over multiple years to allow for refinement and continuous improvement. This update also allows the Region to evolve and incorporate the latest science, resource availability and funding opportunities.

The RCAP is not an exhaustive list of all climate adaptation actions occurring in Region 1; it is a subset of activities identified by Region 1 staff in all divisions as priorities to incorporate adaptation into their work. Additional climate adaptation work is occurring in coordination with partners through assistance agreements and memorandums of agreement, and through other partnerships outside the scope of the RCAP.

## **2. FY24 Office of Policy's Climate Adaptation Addendum Requires Updates on Only 3 Key Focus Areas**

In FY24, the Office of Policy's (OP) Climate Adaptation Program requires all program offices and regions to only focus efforts on actions that:

1. Integrate climate adaptation considerations into Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) investments;
2. Integrate Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into EPA activities, projects and decisions; and
3. Increase the climate literacy of staff and external partners.

In FY24, Region 1 will fulfill these requirements as follows:

### **2.1. Integrate Climate Adaptation into BIL and IRA Investments**

In addition to the \$4 billion in grants and assistance agreements that EPA awards each year,<sup>1</sup> approximately \$100 billion<sup>2</sup> has been issued to the Agency under the BIL and IRA. The air programs have received funding under both the BIL and IRA, while the water programs, primarily the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF) and geographic

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<sup>1</sup> EPA Grants website, [www.epa.gov/grants#:~:text=Every%20year%2C%20EPA%20awards%20more,organizations%20achieve%20their%20environmental%20goals](https://www.epa.gov/grants#:~:text=Every%20year%2C%20EPA%20awards%20more,organizations%20achieve%20their%20environmental%20goals).

<sup>2</sup> EPA, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding Opportunities/Inflation Reduction Act Funding Opportunities, [www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-12/epa-bil-ira-program-overview-flyer.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-12/epa-bil-ira-program-overview-flyer.pdf)

programs, have received funding under the BIL. This funding is an extraordinary opportunity to support community resilience and invest in climate-smart infrastructure. EPA, in its Strategic Plan, commits to modernizing its financial assistance programs to encourage climate-resilient investments. To champion this effort, EPA created the Resilient Infrastructure on Climate Subgroup (RISC). The group is developing tools and resources including adaptation-focused evaluation criteria, funding opportunity language, and a clearinghouse of examples for EPA staff to reference and incorporate during grant program development. Region 1 has three staff on RISC working to compile clearinghouse examples and develop a Communications and Engagement Toolbox to scale technical resources and decision support for federal funding recipients. Following the release of these resources, Region 1 will promote them on existing regional platforms and through grants-related trainings. Region 1 will build awareness and encourage the use of these tools across the region.

Complementing the RISC effort, Region 1 has developed a new PA to provide climate adaptation-focused input on BIL and IRA-funded grant program guidance and requirements. Region 1 technical staff review Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and other program-related documentation for BIL, IRA, and other Clean Air Act (CAA) and Clean Water Act grant programs. Staff ensure that climate resilient considerations are included in these funding programs such that investments for equipment and infrastructure are done in a climate change resilient manner. To date, Region 1 has recommended adaptation language for several funding opportunities including the IRA Clean Ports Program, IRA Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Program, the BIL Clean School Bus Programs and the FY 2022-2023 Diesel Emissions Reduction Act National Grants program. The published NOFOs for all of these programs have incorporated climate adaptation language. Region 1 will continue to provide similar recommendations to incorporate climate resilience considerations into future NOFOs and program guidance that staff review, develop or manage, including the Indoor Air and the Healthy Communities grant programs. Region 1 is also working with state partners to expand climate cooperation through the Performance Partnership Agreements (PPA). In FY24, EPA is working with Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Maine to finalize new agreements. The region will collaborate in the future with the other New England states when their PPAs are renegotiated.

Region 1 will also work to train staff how to review and score applications under climate adaptation-related criterion developed by the RISC. For example, the 2023 BIL Clean School Bus Grants Program included Project Resilience to Climate Change Impacts as an evaluation criterion. To prepare for reviewing applications, Region 1 staff discussed how a variety of climate impacts—including sea level rise, extreme storms, flooding, and extreme temperatures—may impact critical electric vehicle infrastructure. With their improved understanding of climate resilient infrastructure, reviewers were able to effectively evaluate applicants' ability to assess and plan for climate vulnerabilities and to implement appropriate adaptation measures. This helped ensure that projects funded under this program achieve their expected outcomes even as the climate changes. Region 1 will continue to have these discussions with reviewers of upcoming BIL and IRA grant programs to ensure investment in climate resilient infrastructure remains a priority.

BIL is the single-largest investment in water infrastructure in U.S. history, providing over \$50 billion over a five-year period for essential water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure upgrades. The majority of this funding, roughly 96 percent, flows through the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRFs. Continuing into FY24, the Region 1 SRF Program will use its annual SRF

reviews with each state to encourage the utilization of SRF BIL funding to prioritize resiliency infrastructure projects in state SRF Intended Use Plans.

EPA also received approximately \$3 billion in BIL funding to support its 28 National Estuary Programs (NEPs), 12 Geographic Programs (several of which are also designated as NEPs or overlap with their geographic boundaries), and the Gulf (of Mexico) Hypoxia Program. These are watershed-based, stakeholder-driven programs that help protect local ecosystems and communities from climate change, habitat loss, and pollution. In Region 1, the Long Island Sound Study (LISS), Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), Southeast New England Program (SNEP), and other five NEPs received a total of \$188 million in BIL funding. The NEPs, LCBP, and SNEP are using their BIL appropriations to accelerate implementation of climate resilient actions described in their management plans and strategies, with an emphasis on serving overburdened, underserved communities. Integrating climate considerations across all phases of the financial assistance process demonstrates the Region's commitment to invest in climate-smart projects. It also ensures our grantees are furthering that mission as they conceptualize and implement their projects. Ultimately, Region 1's efforts in FY24 will help build more resilient and prepared communities across New England.

## **2.2. Consider Indigenous Knowledge in Projects and Decisions**

New England is home to ten federally recognized Tribal nations each with unique history, culture, and traditions. IK is the place-based body of observations, oral and written communication, innovations, practices, and beliefs developed by Tribes through interaction with the environment.<sup>3</sup> This accumulated ecological insight is a resource for understanding our changing climate and supporting effective decision-making. When such knowledge is entrusted to us, the Region will respectfully consider and incorporate IK, as appropriate, to support regional resilience.

Several FY24 actions build off of previous regional support to strengthen Tribal adaptive capacity and respect IK. In April 2022, Region 1, the New England Federal Partners, and several federally recognized New England Tribes hosted the Tribal Climate Summit, which brought together experts on food sovereignty. Following that summit, which fulfilled a FY22 Priority Action, Tribal members and federal staff organized to address the identified action items, including a literature review of the climate impacts on species of key importance to the Tribes. As part of the FY24 commitments, the Region wants to utilize that research as well as other resources to assist Tribes in developing or advancing their climate vulnerability assessments. Furthermore, Region 1 will continue to support efforts to implement other 2022 Tribal Climate Summit action items through regularly scheduled meetings during which internal and external experts will be developed and share resources.

The Region will also support actions to address immediate climate challenges faced by Tribal communities. In addition to the recently completed revetment, R1 will work with federal partners to find funding opportunities to relocate or armor the Passamaquoddy Tribe—Pleasant Point wastewater treatment plant affected by sea level rise and storm surge.

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<sup>3</sup> Office of Science and Technology/Council on Environmental Quality. Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge. [www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/OSTP-CEQ-IK-Guidance.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/OSTP-CEQ-IK-Guidance.pdf)

Moreover, Region 1 will work with US and Canadian federal agencies to assist the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians with fish passage and habitat restoration improvements to the Wolastoq/St. John River Watershed.

IK, when available, will help the Region make informed decisions that respect Tribal sovereignty and support climate resilience. The Region will partner with the Office of International and Tribal Affairs/American Indian Environmental Office to capitalize on their expertise and resources on the above actions, as appropriate. Making space for IK in the RCAP builds trust and provides opportunities to further integrate Tribal culture in the future. The planned FY24 actions compliment the larger process leading to an enhanced understanding of climate vulnerabilities facing New England Tribes.

### **2.3. Increasing Climate Literacy of Staff and External Partners**

As the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate.gov website notes, climate science literacy is an understanding of your influence on climate and climate's influence on you and society. A climate-literate person knows how to assess scientifically credible information about climate and is able to make informed and responsible decisions with regard to actions that may affect climate.<sup>4</sup> Climate-literate staff and partners are essential to identify opportunities and champion adaptation integration into our work. To enhance climate literacy, the Region will provide training opportunities to internal and external partners on a variety of climate adaptation-related topics.

Internally, Region 1 is focused on providing customized climate training to ensure direct applicability to specific EPA programs and work. Providing relevant and actionable information will further integrate adaptation into established processes and our day-to-day work. For example, training for several remedial programs will highlight climate adaptation-informed remediation best practices. In the field, staff can use these skills, as well as the latest tools, to maximize the efficiency and resilience of remedial actions. Another training collaboration with the environmental justice staff will further awareness of the climate change and environmental justice nexus. Staff will discuss how climate change affects and compounds existing inequities in communities with environmental justice concerns.

Over the last two years, Region 1 revised the methodology and expanded the programmatic coverage of the Vulnerability Mapping Tool (both of which were Priority Actions). This internal tool helps staff screen cleanup sites for potential climate vulnerabilities helping to ensure the protectiveness of the site's remedy. In FY24, staff will be trained to use the Mapping Tool to inform their decision making. Operationalizing the screening capabilities of the Mapping Tool will assist the Region in meeting other Priority Actions, especially those considering climate impacts throughout the cleanup process and promoting remedy protectiveness in light of the changing climate.

Lastly, Region 1 plans to build climate literacy of our partners through climate-focused outreach. The Sustainable Materials Management program will hold several events to improve public awareness on the links between waste (particularly food waste) and climate change and encourage lower impact practices throughout the regional food system. EPA also intends to host workshops and exercises with states and water sector utilities to explore climate change

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<sup>4</sup> NOAA. *What is Climate Science Literacy?* <https://www.climate.gov/teaching/what-is-climate-science-literacy>.

risks to their systems. The trainings will enhance their capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate impacts.

### **3. Looking Forward and Leading Transformative Adaptation**

Adapting to climate change will require cooperation and expertise from a variety of government agencies, partners, and the public. In FY24 and beyond, Region 1 will continue to address our programmatic climate vulnerabilities through the priorities outlined in the 2022 RCAP from which the Region has already realized tangible outcomes. The Region understands that the actions outlined above are just part of a broader continuum of adaptation activities. Region 1 stands ready to support the advancement of climate adaptation-related actions across the Region. The sustained efforts of EPA and our partners will work in tandem to build long-term resilience.