

Region 2 Climate Adaptation Plan Priority Actions Addendum

September 30, 2024

Overview:

In September 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced its Climate Adaptation Action Plan, outlining the agency's commitment to addressing the climate crisis and advancing equity. In October 2022, EPA Region 2, alongside major National Programs and Regional Offices, released its Climate Adaptation Implementation Plans, which included 36 priority actions (PAs) with goals set through Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. By FY 2024, Region 2 expanded its PAs to 40, focusing on three key areas as defined in this addendum.

The Region 2 Climate Adaptation Plan Priority Actions Addendum update is built on past success and will further institutionalize climate adaptation into the Region 2'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.

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 2 will fulfill these requirements as follows:

Integrate Climate Adaptation into BIL and IRA Investments

EPA awards approximately \$4 billion in grants and assistance agreements annually, with an additional \$100 billion from the BIL and IRA. Air programs have received funding under both laws. Water programs, specifically the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF) and geographic initiatives, primarily benefit from BIL. To streamline efforts, EPA established the Resilient Infrastructure on Climate

Subgroup (RISC), which develops adaptation-focused evaluation criteria, funding opportunity language, and other resources for grant program development.

Region 2 has two new PAs in this area:

1. *Conduct screening-level vulnerability assessments for Superfund sites receiving BIL funds to ensure climate resilience.*

The integration of climate adaptation into BIL and IRA investments, EPA R2 has identified six Superfund sites that incorporate climate adaptation in their cleanup efforts using BIL funding.

FY'24 Update:

- Cornell Dubilier Superfund Site:
 - Daily weather monitoring and backup equipment on-site to mitigate flooding risks during construction.
 - Heavier armoring of slopes for higher stream flows, vegetation restoration to reduce flooding, and increase flood capacity.
 - Streambed design meets NJDEP flood hazard requirements, including protection measures 3 feet above Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) 100-year flood levels.
- Kaufman & Minter Superfund Site:
 - Staging areas built outside flood zones, with wells protected by stick-up completions and concrete pads.
 - Minimizing vegetation clearing and using pervious mats in wetlands to reduce stormwater impacts.
- Vestal Superfund Site:
 - Generator will be elevated to ensure operation during flood events, ensuring continued in-situ thermal treatment.
- Onondaga Lake – Ley Creek Deferred Media Superfund Site:
 - Backfilling soil excavation to restore habitat and improve floodplain function, allowing increased flood storage.
- Pesticide Warehouse III Superfund Site (Puerto Rico):
 - Exploring the use of solar-powered offices to address power issues and storm resilience.

- Diamond Head Oil Superfund Site:
 - Native vegetation for wetland restoration and invasive species removal.
 - Excavation and capping to preserve elevation and improve stormwater drainage.
2. *Use communications materials developed by RISC or BIL/IRA programs to support technical assistance, outreach, and engagement with stakeholders, including states, tribes, communities, and environmental justice organizations.*

FY'24 Update:

R2 Water Division provided technical assistance to communities in R2 through various forms of assistance. Through EPA's online Water Technical Assistance (TA) form, communities submitted their TA requests and after the request was vetted by the contractors, EPA R2, and the respective states, they were connected to a TA provider to help address their TA needs. R2 also provided direct TA with HQ by engaging in conversations with communities who were looking for engineering support services such as drafting a preliminary engineering support (PER). In May, R2 hosted and recorded a webinar to share information about BIL, State Revolving Fund (SRF), and TA resources.

- EPA R2 and NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation discussions on communities who may benefit from Technical Assistance under the Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap (CAWAG) program. NYS provided a list of communities that they've assessed with their partners and that list was shared with EPA Headquarters (HQ) and the contractors. EPA R2 had a meeting in July and August 2004.
- EPA R2 attended the Albany Press Event for the Beaver Creek Clean Water Project to celebrate the completion of the project in Lincoln Park and to show how BIL and SRF funding is used to make a lasting impact in the community.
- Syracuse University hosted an event with non-Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) leaders from Puerto Rico in New York City and EPA R2 attended on session to learn about new engineering strategies available and directly hear from the non-PRASA leaders on their needs. Syracuse University is working with the non-PRASAs to figure out how to

get them on the SRF Intended Use Plans (IUPs) and tap into the BIL funding.

- Water Division Deputy Director was on the panel at the NY American Water Works Association (AWWA) conference highlighting the BIL funding that's been awarded to NY and mentioned the Technical Assistance that's available to the water professionals.
- Technical Assistance Coordination calls with communities are attended by R2 and organized by EPA Headquarters or contractors when communities reach out for engineering support needs.
- Meetings with Plumsted Municipal Utilities Authority, NJ to understand their Technical Assistance needs and the type of support EPA can provide. EPA Headquarters and R2 participates in the call with NJDEP and the I-Bank.
- Outreach meeting with Highlands/Bloomsbury Borough, NJ with EPA and NJDEP to discuss the failing septic systems in the NJ Highlands Region.

Consider Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in Projects and Decisions

EPA Region 2 is home to eight Federally recognized Indian Nation communities, all located in NY State. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is the place-based body of observations, oral and written communication, innovations, practices, and beliefs developed by Indian Nations interaction with the environment. 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.

Region 2 has two PAs that incorporate IK:

1. *Partner with Indian Nations to identify and apply shoreline stabilization techniques based on IK, with a goal of selecting 1-2 applicable techniques.*

FY '24 Update:

- The Water Division has begun to implement this Priority Action by providing funding through a Performance Partnership Grant for shoreline work. More action is expected in FY '25.
2. *Partner with Indian Nations, through collaboration and consultation, and in a manner that is respectful of their Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge (TEK/IK), on their current and future resiliency efforts. Region 2 will*

coordinate with EPA's American Indian Environmental Office on IK in this action and in other climate adaptation actions.

FY '24 Update:

In FY '24, Region 2 continued to partner with the Indian Nations within the Region. We did so in a manner that is respectful of their indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge. Some of the engagements that Region 2 had with the Nations are as follows:

- In March 2024, EPA Region 2 staff met with the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) to discuss HETF climate concerns and potential EPA support for addressing those concerns (e.g. technical assistance, funding, and data support). EPA also shared several interagency efforts underway, such as the Mid-Atlantic Federal Climate Partners and the Mitigation Framework Leadership Group (MiTFLG), that are working to support communities as they work to address climate change and become more resilient.
- In September 2024, EPA Region 2, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) staff met with several of the Indian Nations to highlight all of the various federal funding opportunities to support resilience building.
- EPA Region 2 also held two meetings during FY '24 with one of the Indian Nations in New York to discuss stakeholder engagement on their climate adaptation plan, climate adaptation training, EPA's Adaptation Resource Center (ARC-X), and EPA's Equitable Resilience Builder (ERB) Tool.

Increasing Climate Literacy of Staff and External Partners

EPA Region 2's Climate Adaptation Implementation Plan (CAIP) recognizes that increased literacy on climate change impacts and adaptation is a key element of building capacity for adaptation within the Region. The Region's ability to take effective action to address climate impacts depends on having staff who recognize the connection between their work and climate impacts and who see opportunities to build resilience. Effective action can also be enhanced by building awareness with our state, Territorial, and Indian Nation partners of our respective efforts on climate adaptation. The CAIP also recognizes the importance of educating the next generation of climate leaders.

Region 2's CAIP has PAs and a Training Plan that advance Climate Literacy, including the following items which were active in FY '24:

1. *Training Plan— Through R2's Climate Change Network, Region 2 will host from internal and external expert speakers on climate related topics / programs throughout the region. The R2 Climate Change Network invites the entire Region for these presentations / workshop. R2 will also work with HQ on Climate training developed by HQ and present it through the R2 Climate Change Network.*

FY '24 Update:

- To build climate literacy among EPA staff in FY '24, Region 2's all-staff Climate Network sponsored two panels that featured our partners in New York and New Jersey. These panels were organized as part of a speaker series with panels of speakers from Region 2 states, territories and Indian Nations. The series is intended to both educate our staff and help identify opportunities for collaboration with our partners. The first FY '24 panel, "Climate Change in the Garden State: Taking Action," included representatives from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Climate Change Mitigation and Monitoring office, and the Hazard Mitigation Unit of the NJ State Police, as well as New Jersey's Climate Resilience Officer. The second program was the "New York State Cap-and-Invest Program" which included senior officials from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority. The program focused on greenhouse gas mitigation but connected with adaptation and built on an adaptation panel with New York officials in FY '23. Climate Network panels with other partners and on EPA developments under the Inflation Reduction Act are planned for FY '25.
 - Region 2's Water Division held two internal forums for its staff, called Water Forums, which included a component on climate change adaptation. The first forum highlighted how the Water Division's Urban Waters program is mitigating climate change risks and the second focused on green infrastructure case studies and its benefits.
 - The Region 2 Office of Regional Counsel (ORC) held or cosponsored several climate change Continuing Legal Education programs in FY '24 that incorporated adaptation from a legal perspective and also provided several trainings on adaptation to its ORC Climate Change Workgroup, including one program that featured FEMA attorneys and their role in climate adaptation.
2. *Engage with youth on climate adaptation to promote learning and capacity among future generations.*

FY '24 Update:

- In furtherance of the PA on youth education, Region 2 held a Youth Summit during NYC Climate Week in partnership with Fordham University at their Lincoln Center campus. The Summit included a panel that featured Region 2's Regional Administrator and three other EPA Regional Administrators, from Regions 1, 6 and 7. The Summit also included a program, in partnership with Climate Café, to address climate anxiety among young people. During the program, 15 EPA facilitators ran table conversations with youth, ages 18-30, to discuss their emotions on the climate crisis. The Summit also included presentations by AmeriCorps and the American Climate Corps on job opportunities related to climate change.

- Region 2's Air and Radiation Division gave a presentation to the Green Team members of East Side Community High School in Manhattan on the science of climate change and climate adaptation. EPA partnered in this presentation with the Lower East Side Ecology Center which presented on the importance of street trees to adaptation in urban areas. The presentations were followed during a subsequent visit to the school in which EPA and the Lower East Side Ecology Center led a street tree care activity with the students which included litter removal, soil aeration and application of compost.
- Region 2 also partnered with City College of New York's (CCNY's) chapter of the New York Water Environment Association, Inc. (NYWEA), and a representative from WE ACT for Environmental Justice to conduct a training for club members of CCNY NYWEA and interested students at CCNY. The topics included climate science, adaptation, and environmental justice.
- Region 2's Laboratory Services and Applied Science Division (LSASD) hosted a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Youth Inclusion Initiative event that included presentations by Region 2 staff on climate change. In hosting the event, Region 2 partnered with local New Jersey community organizations including Rutgers Camden, Ironbound Community Corporation (Newark), The Work Group (Camden), Groundwork Elizabeth, Neighborhood Improvement Association (Trenton), Boys and Girls Club (Garfield), Ranch Hope (Alloway), United Community Corporation (Newark).