

# New Jersey Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order Addressing Climate Change Resiliency for New Jersey

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**This article discusses New Jersey Executive Order 89, which calls on the Department of Environmental Protection to establish a Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, among other initiatives related to climate change adaptation.**

As storms like Superstorm Sandy continue to grow more devastating and frequent, communities, governments, businesses, and industries of all sizes and varieties must face the challenge of adapting to a changing climate. October 29, 2019 marked the seventh anniversary of Sandy hitting New Jersey. Governor Murphy marked this occasion by signing Executive Order 89,<sup>1</sup> which calls on the Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”) to establish a Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, among other initiatives related to climate change adaptation. “New Jersey is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of sea-level rise and global warming, and [this] Executive Order outlines a bold and comprehensive set of actions to ensure that our communities and infrastructure are more resilient against future storms,” said Governor Murphy about the signing.<sup>2</sup>

## The Executive Order

The preamble to the Executive Order notes

that New Jersey is especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as a coastal state. Picking up on this administration’s Environmental Justice<sup>3</sup> efforts, the Order acknowledges that minority and low-income communities are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. Climate change of course is an issue that also impacts all communities, including the business community, industry, and government. The preamble also notes that “studies show that each dollar spent to mitigate hazards, including those associated with climate change impacts, results in a six-fold decrease in spending on recovery.” With that as background, the Order directs the following action items.

First, the Order calls on the DEP to appoint a Chief Resilience Officer (“CRO”) of the State of New Jersey, and DEP has acted quickly in naming David Rosenblatt, the Assistant Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (“NJDEP”) Division of Engineering & Construction to that position.

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The CRO will direct the Climate and Flood Resilience Program, which is tasked with developing and delivering to the governor a Scientific Report on Climate Change and its anticipated environmental effects through at least 2050.

The Order additionally establishes an Inter-agency Council on Climate Resilience, which is tasked with developing and implementing a Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy in conjunction with the CRO.

The Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy is meant to “promote the long-term mitigation, adaptation, and resilience of New Jersey’s economy, communities, infrastructure, and natural resources throughout the State.” Specifically, the Resilience Strategy will aim to:

- Identify methods to strengthen climate resilience;
- Provide guidance and implementation strategies;
- Promote long-term water and energy security;
- Reduce the risk of wildfires in State forests;
- Reduce health risks that may be associated with climate change;
- Support sustainable economic development;
- Identify financing mechanism, strategies, and opportunities to support climate change resiliency measures; and
- Take any other measures deemed necessary by the CRO to prepare for, miti-

gate, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The Resilience Strategy must also include a Coastal Resilience plan “that recommends a specific long-term strategy for climate change resilience and adaptation in the coastal areas of the State.”

Lastly, the Order calls on the State Planning Commission to incorporate climate change considerations as set forth by the Scientific Report on Climate Change and the Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy as a mandatory requirement for the endorsement of municipal and other local development and redevelopment plans. The State Planning Commission must also amend its regulations to incorporate such considerations.

## Concluding Thoughts

Per the newly-appointed CRO and DEP Assistant Commissioner David Rosenblatt, “[w]e face many challenges from increasing temperature and sea-level rise. To meet those challenges, we need to fully engage the public and stakeholders and provide a clear picture of what the impacts will be, including physical changes to our coastline, and the steps that have to be taken to adapt and become more resilient.” Communities and businesses alike will benefit by staying involved in the process as these challenges continue to mount.

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-89.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562019/approved/20191029a.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases19/pr20191025a.html>.