



**CHANGE THE FORECAST FOR WILDLIFE**  
SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL WARMING

## Global Warming and RHODE ISLAND

Despite a 2001 commitment by New England governors and Canadian provincial leaders to cut global warming pollution in the Northeast, emissions of carbon dioxide and other global warming gases in the region are on the rise. According to an analysis by the New England Climate Action Network, fuel consumption for cars and trucks is increasing, as is coal, oil and gas consumption for home and commercial heating—all contributing to increasing emissions. This is not good news for Rhode Island, considering sea level is rising along the state's heavily populated coastline. The average temperature in Providence has risen about 3.3 degrees Fahrenheit over the last century. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates average temperatures in Rhode Island could rise another 4-5 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100 if global warming continues unabated. We can solve global warming and revitalize our economy by rebuilding America with clean energy.



### Global warming effects on Rhode Island wildlife

Rhode Island is home to an incredible diversity of native wildlife species, including 277 birds, 53 mammals, 37 fish, 25 reptiles and 18 amphibians. Rising temperatures and sea level in the state will likely change the makeup of entire ecosystems, forcing wildlife to shift their ranges or adapt.

- Coastal erosion and storm surges have already damaged many of the state's tidal flats and dunes, including those on Block Island and throughout the Rhode Island Refuge complex, home to animals such as the savanna sparrow, northern harrier hawk and piping plover.
- Warmer water temperatures will likely reduce the number of winter flounder spawning in Rhode Island's waters. With fewer

flounder to eat their eggs, crab populations could increase. With more crabs eating scallops and quahogs—their main sources of food—the intricate food web would be thrown out of balance.

- Many species of songbirds may no longer breed in Rhode Island, including several different flycatchers, swallows and warblers. Some of these birds are important not only for their beautiful sounds, but for their appetite for gypsy moths, tent caterpillars and other invasive pests that harm vegetation.



### Global Warming Pollution

Burning coal, gas and oil produces carbon dioxide, which is a greenhouse gas that warms the planet as it builds up in the atmosphere. Some of the carbon dioxide released today remains in the atmosphere after even 100 years, trapping more and more heat.

Since the mid-1800s, emissions of carbon dioxide have skyrocketed, causing global temperatures to rise by about 1° Fahrenheit in the last century. Earth has not experienced such a rapid change in temperature in thousands of years.

### A Global Solution

The U.S. must lead the world by passing global warming legislation at home and working with other nations at the Copenhagen climate summit at the end of 2009 to sign a new climate treaty that keeps further warming below 2° Fahrenheit. With a global solution, we can avoid the worst impacts of global warming.



## What's at stake for Rhode Islanders?

Rhode Island's 400 miles of coastline is home to the bulk of the state's residents. The beaches along the south shore have already been severely damaged by hurricanes and storm surges. This damage will likely increase as global warming continues to raise sea level and increase storm intensity.

- The EPA reports that sea level in Watch Hill, R.I. is likely to rise another 12.4 inches by the end of the century. The cost of sand replenishment to protect the state's coastline from a 20-inch sea level rise by 2100 could be anywhere from \$90-\$530 million.
- Many of Rhode Island's lakes and waterways are freezing for shorter periods of time, reducing traditional outdoor recreation opportunities such as hockey and ice skating.
- Rhode Island's current ozone levels exceed national health standards, and the entire state is rated as having a "serious" problem attaining safe levels. Warmer weather could increase concentrations of ground-level ozone, which is known to aggravate respiratory problems.
- Loss of wildlife and habitat could mean a loss of tourism dollars. In 2006, nearly 600,000 people spent more than \$340 million on hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing in Rhode Island. The industry in turn supported 5,840 jobs in the state.\* (*Jobs are an average of 2001 and 2006 data.*)

**"Global warming poses an overriding challenge to our responsibility to protect wildlife for our children's future. We must advance balanced solutions that work for people, wildlife and the economy to overcome this challenge."**—

**Larry Schweiger**  
President, CEO  
National Wildlife Federation

### GLOBAL WARMING NATIONAL POLICY SOLUTION:

A federal legislative solution can drive American ingenuity, create millions of green jobs, and restore America's global leadership on global warming. Legislation should:

- \* Include ambitious targets to reduce America's global warming pollution as swiftly and deeply as possible. Scientists say that developed countries as a whole need to reduce their global warming pollution by at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050 to avoid the worst impacts of global warming.
- \* Move America toward a 100% clean electricity future by maximizing energy efficiency, modernizing the electric power grid, expanding power generation from renewable energy resources, and investing in clean transportation infrastructure.
- \* Invest in natural resources. Forests, coasts, wetlands, clean air and clean water are already being impacted by global warming. Funding is needed to safeguard the natural resources that are critical to wildlife populations and human health.
- \* Lead a worldwide effort to finance clean energy technology, forest conservation, and adaptation to unavoidable impacts of global warming.

For more information, visit: [www.nwf.org/globalwarming](http://www.nwf.org/globalwarming).



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## Rhode Island's solutions to global warming

Rhode Island signed onto a 2001 compact between New England governors and Canadian provincial leaders requiring the collective reduction of global warming pollution in the region. The Environmental Council of Rhode Island and more than 70 other state groups and businesses are part of the Rhode Island Climate Coalition, which is working to support the state's climate action plan.

- Rhode Island adopted a "renewable portfolio standard" that calls for 16 percent of the state's energy to come from clean, renewable sources like solar and wind by 2020.
- The state has agreed to adopt California's low emission vehicle standards for new cars, light trucks and SUVs sold in the state, starting in 2008.
- Providence approved an ordinance directing the city to purchase the most fuel-efficient cars and trucks for municipal operations, and to prominently label hybrid or other alternate fuel vehicles.

Following some simple guidelines, you can cut your global warming pollution, become more energy efficient and give something back to nature.

- **Plant shade trees:** The Department of Energy says planting three trees strategically around your home can reduce your annual heating and cooling costs by an average of 40 percent.
- **Convert to compact fluorescent bulbs:** If every household in America replaced its next burned out light bulb with a compact fluorescent, we would prevent more than 13 billion pounds of carbon dioxide from being emitted.
- **Become a Green Tag subscriber:** Many states now offer options for homeowners to buy electricity from clean, renewable sources such as wind, solar and biomass that produce little or no global warming pollution. Green energy can also be purchased through the National Wildlife Federation by visiting [www.nwf.org/energy](http://www.nwf.org/energy).

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