

# REBUILD BY DESIGN

For more information  
Amy Chester, Rebuild by Design: [achester@rebuildbydesign.org](mailto:achester@rebuildbydesign.org)

## **REBUILD BY DESIGN PROPOSES NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD THE CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO KEEP NEW JERSEY SAFE**

*Report shows that New Jersey Experienced 14 Major Federal Climate Disasters since 2011*

July 15, 2024 - On the brink of hurricane season, [Rebuild by Design](#) releases the report "[Atlas of Disaster: New Jersey](#)" identifying the impact of recent climate disasters across New Jersey at the county level from 2011-2021. Since the data was analyzed, New Jersey has had one additional disaster in 2023, for a total of 14 Federally Declared Major Disaster Declarations from 2011 to now.

**The data show that every single county in New Jersey has experienced at least five federal climate disasters between 2011-2021, with several counties – Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland, and Essex – having at least eight.**

These federal disasters have cost taxpayers more than **\$7.2 billion dollars**, ranking New Jersey as the state with the third highest per capita spending on climate disasters in the nation. Within New Jersey, Bergen County has received the most post-disaster assistance in the state, totaling over \$110 million. Post Hurricane Ida, Bergen county received a deluge of over 8 inches of rain, forcing the closure of highways and local roads throughout Hasbrouck Heights and Lodi. In addition, the majority of counties in New Jersey rely on utility companies with longer than average energy outage periods.

A majority of the federal funding for building climate resilience is only available when people are already suffering in the aftermath of a disaster. We need to shift those investments to dollars that can be allocated more proactively to build resilience ahead of storms and before the most vulnerable communities suffer." **said Amy Chester, Managing Director of Rebuild by Design,** "Every day that we are not investing in adapting New Jersey's infrastructure to current and future climate conditions, we are actively working against our own pocketbooks. We can do better."

The report includes research that shows county-level data for where major disasters have occurred, where post-disaster support has been given, where the most socially vulnerable populations reside, and the energy reliability by utility area. It also overlays the federal disaster data with State Assembly, Senate, and Congressional district boundaries as a tool for advocates to hold their representatives accountable or help representatives reach across the aisle and talk to different districts who have been experiencing a similar level of impact from climate change.

"As a New Jersey resident, I've seen firsthand how extreme weather events are affecting all New Jersey communities causing significant economic and social hardships," **said Jeff Stevens, Executive Vice President and General Manager at iParametrics**, "New Jersey needs to focus its efforts on proactive hazard mitigation solutions that recognize our changing weather patterns."

Rebuild by Design calls for new, long-term, funding sources for climate adaptation such as upgrades to sewer infrastructure, raising roads, helping communities move from high risk areas and in place using the land to create green buffers to reduce risk, and premature death from extreme weather events. The report proposes **three innovative funding opportunities** for the State of New Jersey:

- Develop a statewide ballot measure to address resilience and climate-related investments, a method that voters around the country have overwhelmingly supported.
- Leverage a modest two-percent surcharge on certain types of Property and Casualty Insurance that could support **\$9.1 billion** in climate infrastructure investments over 10 years.
- Create a state-level "Superfund" to hold oil and gas companies responsible as four other states have already modeled (as passed in the legislatures of New York and Vermont this year).

State funding could also leverage significant federal funding by providing a local match for programs that will be made available under the Inflation Reduction Act and other federal sources.

"Many stakeholders, practitioners, and state and federal agencies in New Jersey have partnered to identify projects needed to improve community and ecosystem resilience to climate change but the state lacks the funding to implement many of the projects," **said Thomas Herrington, Ph.D. Associate Director of Urban Coast Institute and Co-Managing Director of the NJ Coastal Resilience Collaborative**

For the Atlas of Disaster, [Rebuild by Design](#), brought on the expertise of [APTIM](#) and [iParametrics](#) to take a county-by-county look at the rate of federal disaster occurrences and the costs of extreme weather in the United States. Rebuild by Design used similar research to convince New York State policymakers to create the \$4.2 billion Environmental Bond Act of 2020, which was overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2022.

“The importance of leveraging State funding together with Federal resilience and infrastructure funds has never been more important to ensure New Jersey benefits from getting proactively ahead of the next storm instead of fighting the last one,” **said Dr. Paul Tschirky, Senior Director of Resilient Solutions at APTIM.**

This report informs our understanding of the impact of climate events on communities throughout New Jersey, while also highlighting the need for further state-specific data collection to understand the true impact of these events. The report argues that the impacts of extreme weather events always disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people. Disasters are not created by natural events alone, but are the product of natural events and a combination of social, political, and economic stressors. Therefore, as climate change increases the frequency of flooding and storms, it will further reinforce underlying vulnerabilities and systemic inequality.

"We must find a way to fund resilience projects if we are to tackle the challenges that come with thriving in a changing environment with rising seas and increasing climate hazards," **said Laura Kerr, Co-Managing Director of the NJCRC and Senior Research Engineer at Stevens Institute of Technology.**

Rebuild by Design has been working in New Jersey since Hurricane Sandy and is the catalyst for "[The Rebuild by Design Hudson River Project](#)" and [Rebuild by Design: Meadowlands](#) that has brought hundreds of millions of infrastructure dollars to New Jersey. Rebuild is housed at the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University.