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Roger Williams University School of Law

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Newsroom

Wyman on Climate Change Adaptation

Julia Wyman, Marine Affairs Institute staff attorney and adjunct professor, examines ongoing community efforts to adapt to climate change in coastal New England.

From [Narragansett Bay Journal](#): "[Climate Change Adaptation: Efforts on the Ground. What Will the Future Bring?](#)" by Julia Wyman

Julia Wyman is a staff attorney and adjunct professor at the Marine Affairs Institute at Roger Williams University School of Law/Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program.



Spring 2013: Climate change is impacting the world in tremendous ways: drought, wildfires, increased air and water temperatures, and decreased biodiversity are just a few examples.

Some of the areas that are experiencing significant impacts from climate change are coastal communities. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and increased storm intensity and frequency are causing significant changes on the coasts. These changes force coastal communities to rethink how they manage their resources. Laws and policies must be reexamined to balance the protection of resources, community access, and private property interests. This article will examine some of the ongoing work documenting and expanding climate change adaptation in coastal New England. It will then briefly discuss the Texas Supreme Court case *Severance v. Patterson*, and what that case may mean for coastal communities, particularly those in Rhode Island.

“Climate change science not only involves complicated interactions among the ocean, atmosphere, land masses, and people, but it is also developed and communicated in a complex political, legal, economic, and cultural context.” (Hari Osofsky, Lesley McAllister, *Climate Change Law and Policy*). This complex political, legal, economic, and cultural context is exemplified in coastal New England. An area rich in maritime history and dependent on its coasts, New England’s coastline is small, heavily developed, and a sought-after location for personal residence, water-dependent businesses, and tourism. When climate change causes rising sea levels, increased storm intensity and frequency, and the resulting erosion, there is less of the highly coveted land to enjoy. This can cause numerous challenges in coastal communities.



In an effort to document some of these challenges and the innovative ways coastal communities in New England are adapting to them, **the Marine Affairs Institute at Roger Williams University School of Law, a partnership with Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program and the University of Rhode Island**, teamed up with the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, Northeast Regional Ocean Council, Blue Urchin, StormSmart Coasts Network, and Clean Air-Cool Planet, to research and disseminate some of the best practices for climate change adaptation in the Northeast.

The team, funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate and Societal Interactions Program, has spent the last two years researching on-the-ground climate change adaptation strategies for its project, Stimulate Innovation and Increase the Pace of Municipal Responses to a Changing Climate in the Coastal Zone of the Northeast and Bay of Fundy. The research and case studies will be available shortly on the StormSmart Coasts Network: stormsmartcoasts.org.

Through the project, the team found some themes in successful adaptation strategies: identifying and engaging key stakeholders in the adaptation process; communication and outreach of climate change risks and adaptation efforts to key stakeholders and the public; and identifying and using relevant data and information resources. Rhode Island Sea Grant Law Fellows, second and third year law students at the Roger Williams University School of Law, researched relevant laws and policies for climate change adaptation strategies, and documented case studies of some of the best practices already underway in the Northeast. Blue Urchin is adapting the case studies and research for the StormSmart Coasts Network, where they will be available for coastal managers to access, providing ideas for their adaptation efforts. Clean Air-Cool Planet is working on outreach and effective communication of climate change issues and adaptation strategies. [...]

For full story, click [here](#).

