

Town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island



For Immediate Release
January 30, 2024

Office of the Town Manager
100 Fairway Drive
North Kingstown, RI 02852
Phone: (401) 268-1501
www.northkingstownri.gov

PRESS RELEASE

Town Council Supports URI Application for Base Flood Elevation Maps to Incorporate New Climate Change Standards

North Kingstown, RI- In their meeting last week, the North Kingstown Town Council resolved to send a letter of support for the University of Rhode Island's Department of Ocean Engineering's application entitled "Implementation of ASCE 7-22 500-Year Flood Standard Revisions in Rhode Island" to Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RI EMA) for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants within the Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) programs.

Through efforts led by Chris Baxter, Professor of Ocean/Civil Engineering at URI, the project is estimated to cost \$100,000 and will result in seamless Base Flood Elevation (BFE) maps for the entire Ocean State to include coastal and inland areas that explicitly consider the effects of climate change such as sea level rise and enhanced precipitation. The new maps will be far more accurate predictors by incorporating new design standards for flooding in ASCE 7-22 guidelines and replacing FEMA FIRMs for the state which do not allow for the consideration of sea level rise, while also for the first time, incorporating 500-year surge levels and wave effects.

The proposal put forth by URI's Department of Ocean Engineering will expand on the institution's decade-long development of STORMTOOLS, BFE maps for coastal areas with tools to assess risk to structures from coastal flooding via the Coastal Environmental Risk Index. The expansion of BFE maps to include climate change factors such as enhanced precipitation and sea level rise coupled with 500-year surge levels and wave effects may impact the RI state building code and by extension, that of all RI municipalities, when considering structure risk categories.

"Resiliency to coastal flooding continues to be a big concern for North Kingstown home- and business-owners," said A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager, "Even when Wickford and other areas in our town are not immediately affected by stormwater and tidal flooding, impacts from flooding and climate change are an ever-present concern. With the Council's support, I hope the URI application is successful and results in more reliable flood maps for our entire community."

Please contact Kate Glass, Executive Assistant, at kglass@northkingstownri.gov with any questions.

###