

Why This Manual?



This is a guide to actions that we in Rhode Island, in our households and communities, can take to reduce the state's contributions to climate change. It's also a guide to building relationships—with each other and with the natural world—that will create a larger cultural and political shift away from a fossil fuel economy, toward a more livable future.

Our climate has changed, and will change more, in ways that can render us homeless or kill us. In just this last year, we've seen the devastation that hurricanes like Harvey, Irma and Maria can bring to coastal communities—hurricanes like these will become more frequent as the climate warms. The effects of climate change can starve us and suffocate us as they disrupt the ways we get our food, our water and even our air. Our actions in the next few years will determine how severe those changes are, and how we survive them.

As of today, 80% of the greenhouse (climate-warming) gas emissions we generate in RI come from a combination of transportation (40%), electrical generation (20%), and residential use (19%)—mostly heating and cooling. We're also responsible for the greenhouse gases produced in transporting and making many of the things we use, even when those things are made outside Rhode Island.

The way we live generates these climate-changing gases, and so this manual is a guide to changing the way we live. To keep Rhode Island livable, we need to get our emissions as close to zero as possible and improve our relationships with the ecosystem we're part of—which includes each other. We need to act together, and we need to act now.

This manual shows how we can work together to make these changes. You can choose

the ones that work for you and encourage your neighbors to do the same.

To stop our greenhouse gas emissions, we must:

1. Drive less, and invest in and use cleaner, more social and communal transportation: walking, biking, ridesharing, public transit.
2. Reduce the amount of electricity we use overall.
3. At the same time, convert our vehicles and heating systems to ones that can be powered with electricity, rather than fossil fuels. Electricity can be generated renewably, with much lower fossil fuel emissions.
4. Generate more, and eventually all, of our electricity using renewable resources like solar and wind.
5. Change how we eat, travel, and use our land, and other aspects of the way we live, to require less fossil fuel use, enrich our economy, and strengthen our communities.

Making these changes will require work and ingenuity. Fortunately, Rhode Islanders are good at that. You and the people you live with, work with, learn with, or worship with will find many things you can do, on a scale that you can afford, that will make Rhode Island more livable now and for future generations.