



**NORTHEAST RISK  
& RESILIENCE**  
LEADERSHIP  
FORUM  
A Risk Mitigation Leadership Forum Event



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## National Environmental Leaders Address Lessons Learned from Sandy and the Impact of Climate Change on the Northeast

### *Progress Noted but Experts Say More Action Needed*

Stamford, CT – With the two year anniversary of Sandy just weeks away, [National Wildlife Federation](#) President & CEO Collin O'Mara addressed over 350 environmentalists, policy makers, scientists and business leaders at the [Northeast Risk & Resilience Leadership Forum](#) in Stamford, CT this week and cautioned that coastal communities along the east coast remain highly vulnerable to sea level rise and other climate impacts.

The day-long forum tackled a number of important issues raised by Sandy through panel discussions and keynote speeches from powerful figures in government and the environmental community.

"It is critical that we take steps now to restore and enhance the natural systems of our coastlines and communities so they can safeguard both people and wildlife from the growing threats of severe weather, sea level rise, and other climate impacts," said O'Mara.

"I think an important take-away from the forum is the realization that the solutions that best protect wildlife and other natural resources from severe weather are most often the same solutions that will reduce hazards to people and property," added O'Mara. "This reality enables creation of a diverse coalition of organizations committed to promoting resiliency and preparedness."

U.S. [Senator Chris Murphy](#) (D-CT) a member of Congress' Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change, addressed the delegates and pledged to continue his push to have Congress adopt strong and proactive environmental policies that combat climate change, curb pollution, invest in renewable energy, and promote sustainable development solutions.

"I'm thrilled that such a distinguished group of disaster resilience experts was able to assemble in Stamford," said Murphy. "It's not a question of whether we'll see another Superstorm Sandy, but only a question of when. We need the best minds working together on these complex challenges, and I hope the Northeast Risk & Resilience Leadership Forum helped move us toward that goal."

Collin O'Mara and Senator Murphy joined a host of other environmental organizations that took part in this week's forum including the [Association of Climate Change Officers](#), the [Center for Clean Air Policy](#) (CCAP), the [Georgetown Climate Center](#), and the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#).

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“Sea level rise is already contributing to serious tidal flooding today and worsening storm surge during severe storms and this risk will only increase over time as sea level rise accelerates,” said Rachel Cleetus, Senior Climate Economist, Climate and Energy Program with the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#), a forum co-sponsor. “This forum brought together a diverse group of experts that can help develop innovative solutions to support local communities in better preparing and protecting themselves.”

The Northeast Risk & Resilience Leadership Forum represents a broad mix of knowledge and experience – from the local to the international levels,” said Juliana Barrett, Ph.D., Associate Extension Educator, [Connecticut Sea Grant Program](#), University of Connecticut, a forum co-sponsor. “While speakers and panels reviewed the impacts of Super Storm Sandy, the focus of this forum was also how we move forward together to build more resilient communities. Everyone from government, NGOs, for profit companies, scientists and local citizens have a critical role to play in building resilience and overcoming challenges.”

Forum delegates also heard from Alice C. Hill, the Senior Advisor for Preparedness and Resilience to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. As a member of the National Security Council Staff at the White House, Hill serves as the principal advisor on preparedness and resilience issues arising from climate change. Her duties include providing advice and counsel on implementation of the President’s Climate Action Plan and developing policy regarding building resilient infrastructure. The former federal prosecutor and judge also works to remove barriers to ensuring resiliency, promotes creation of innovative delivery of climate change related information, fosters regional coordination of federal climate preparedness and resilience services, and leads interagency policy groups.

“The impacts of climate change threaten the nation’s infrastructure, public health, and economic resilience as well as the country’s national and homeland security,” said Hill. “We have the power to make decisions and take adaptive actions now to ensure our resilience to a changing climate.”

The Northeast Risk & Resilience Leadership Forum was the tenth in a series of Risk Mitigation Leadership Forums convened by the RenaissanceRe Risk Sciences Foundation. “I want to thank today’s participants for contributing to such a productive discussion about the impact of Sandy on the Northeast region and what we all need to do to protect people and property from the deadly effects of natural disasters,” said Stephen Weinstein, Chairman of the RenaissanceRe Risk Sciences Foundation and General Counsel of RenaissanceRe. “Our collective goal is to move the nation towards a proactive rather than reactive response to severe weather and other disasters through increased resiliency measures, improved construction practices, and a greater awareness of the inherent benefits of natural environments in protecting against the devastating effects of storms, floods and other weather related disasters. If we succeed, we will reduce both the life safety risks and economic costs of these increasing perils.”

Other prominent figures taking part in the forum included Dr. Rick Knabb, Director of the [National Hurricane Center](#); Dr. Bill Read, Knabb’s predecessor; Katherine Greig, Senior Policy Advisor, Climate Change and Insurance in the New York City Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency; Brian Swett, Chief of Environment, Energy and Open Space for the City of Boston; and [Adam Sobel](#), Professor of Earth & Environmental Sciences, Applied Physics & Applied Mathematics, Columbia University.

Other co-sponsors of the forum included the [Center for Clean Air Policy](#) (CCAP), the [Federal Alliance for Safe Homes](#) (FLASH), the [Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety](#) (IBHS) and [WeatherPredict Consulting Inc.](#)

More information about the Northeast Risk & Resilience Leadership Forum is available at [www.mitigationleadership.com](http://www.mitigationleadership.com).

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