

## Council for Advertising & Support of Education

Nominee: Rutgers University

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Award categories: Storytelling

Award title: In Sandy's Wake

### Introduction



On October 29, 2012, Superstorm Sandy hit New Jersey with devastating force, upending lives and leaving a \$30 billion trail of destruction.<sup>1</sup> Its aftermath revealed the vulnerability and challenged the viability of coastal communities. But in Sandy's wake, Rutgers has led the search for long-term and sustainable solutions.

Rutgers' Office of Communications and Marketing (R-Comm) created a digital campaign to commemorate the impact of Sandy on New Jersey and showcase how the university supported post-storm recovery, mitigation and adaptation. The campaign ran from October 24 to November 4. What follows is an overview of campaign planning, execution and outcomes.

### Goals and Objectives

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dep.nj.gov/sandy-10/>

Our Sandy package was designed to provide a multifaceted analysis of how Sandy affected life in New Jersey, the Tri-state area and beyond, and showcase the myriad ways Rutgers helped respond. Washing through the entirety of the campaign was the objective to present tangible aspects of response and recovery: what Rutgers did, what we continue to do, and how that work is making a difference in people's lives – now, and into the future.

The primary audience for this campaign was the New Jersey public. As the state university of New Jersey, taxpayers expect their public university to do public good and conduct research that changes lives for the better. In Sandy's Wake demonstrated these qualities.

We identified three main goals for campaign success:

1. Raise awareness of Rutgers' expert contributions to Sandy recovery and post-storm mitigation and adaptation.
2. Showcase Rutgers' academic expertise on climate prediction, planning and resiliency
3. Facilitate broader conversation on how climate change is impacting New Jersey.

## Activities

### *Content*

Five articles formed the foundation of the campaign. Written by our award-winning team of writers, the stories were crafted to captivate readers, illustrate the breadth of Rutgers climate-related expertise, and entice journalists to produce their own stories with Rutgers voices. The campaign's five pieces were:

Should Shore Residents Stay... or Go?: New Jersey needs to plan for at least a 3-foot sea level rise by 2100, Rutgers researchers warn

Where Will the Flood Water Go?: A professor of engineering leads an effort to digitalize New Jersey communities to predict flooding and gauge storm damage risk



The "Blue" Renewal: Rutgers ecologist heads bold experiment in building climate-resilient coastal communities

Tomorrow's Problem-Solvers: Training program created in wake of Superstorm Sandy brings graduate students from varied disciplines together to solve real-world climate problems



The Robot and The Storm Prophet:  
Researchers continue to advance hurricane science, leading to increased forecast accuracy and lead times

### *Microsite*

With the written content as our framework, we then created an image- and video-heavy microsite. Ambient videos and in-house photography complemented the story package, headlined “Revelation and Resilience After the Superstorm.”



In addition to the story content, we featured eight Rutgers experts of environmental, climate, transportation and biological sciences in a “Hear from the Experts” section. Selected quotes and photos were placed on the microsite, with a link to more in-depth interviews. Scrolling navigation and photo treatments were developed by our design team.



# Robin Leichenko

Co-Director, Rutgers Climate Institute

Professor of Geography, School of Arts and Sciences

Rebuilding and resiliency responses since Sandy have been highly uneven in coastal New Jersey. In many shore communities, we've seen larger, elevated homes replacing more modest one-story bungalows. These new homes are more climate resilient but also typically much less affordable than the homes they've replaced. This is sometimes described as a process of "climate gentrification," whereby climate resiliency efforts are associated with new housing development that bring in higher income homeowners or investors.

In some respects, Sandy "cleared the deck" for a lot of redevelopment in coastal New Jersey. Ensuring that this new development is accessible and affordable is a critical challenge going forward.



The feature, called "The Forecast," was designed to showcase how Rutgers experts break down the policies, infrastructure changes, social justice reforms and other essential work that lies ahead. We used these quotes as teasers in our PR and media outreach activities (see "Outcomes").

At the footer of the microsite, we added a photo scroller with historic photographs, many taken by R-Comm staff, who themselves were affected by the storm.

## Revisiting the Devastation

Members of the Rutgers community personally experienced the impact of Superstorm Sandy all across New Jersey. Take a look back at images of the intense damage and inspiring recovery shared by faculty, staff, and others.



Observers stand on the bridge in Mantoloking, where Superstorm Sandy caused severe damage and formed an inlet from the ocean to the bay.

Kenneth Miller

To showcase news coverage generated by our campaign, we created an “In the News” scroller. We also built a “Stay Connected” CTA to strengthen the university’s network of climate-related contacts.

## Stay Connected

Sign up to receive climate news and action updates from the [Rutgers Climate Institute](#), [New Jersey Climate Change Alliance](#), and [NJ Climate Change Resource Center](#), and learn more about the ways Rutgers is working to address climate change.

Sign Up for Climate Newsletters

Climate Change Resources in NJ

Rutgers' Strategic Climate Action Plan

Read More: The Rising Tide

### Outcomes

R-Comm sits at the top of the university’s communications funnel, and our content is designed to stand alone, to be used by other university departments for their own communications planning, and to generate external media coverage. On all three measures the Sandy campaign was a huge success.

*Media coverage: owned*



The package’s stories, videos, and research resources were redistributed widely by university departments, schools, alumni networks, and used for fundraising. They were published on Rutgers Today, the university’s daily news portal; shared in Rutgers’ government affairs newsletter, which is read by policymakers at the state and federal levels; and the School of Engineering.



### Media coverage: earned

The timing of our package was optimal, coming on the heels of Hurricane Ian, which struck landfall a few weeks before the Sandy anniversary. This raised interest in the topic and drew journalists from around the country to our package.

In total, we counted more than 40 pieces of content, stories and interviews in some of the country's most influential media outlets – from ABC's "Good Morning America" to Politico. It was, in other words, a bullseye for Rutgers' missions – leveraging research expertise for the benefit of humanity.

Coverage included:

#### Broadcast:

1. [How climate change, rising sea levels are transforming](#): ABC's "Good Morning America" interviews Ken Miller (SAS).
2. [The Role storms play in the transformation of our coasts](#): ABC News Live "Prime with Linsey Davis" interviews Ken Miller (SAS).  
(<https://twitter.com/ABCNewsLive/status/1595225749031723008>)
3. [Why Flood Insurance is Important Even If You Are Not in a Flood Zone](#): AccuWeather interviews Lisa Auermuller (SAS).
4. [Superstorm Sandy's major impact on health in NJ: NJ Spotlight News interviews Jeanne Herb \(Bloustein\).](#)
5. [Tough decision: Rebuild or retreat. Superstorm Sandy survivor and sea-level expert made his: FOX Weather interviews Ken Miller \(SAS\).](#)
6. [Reinvestment in New Jersey's Coastal Communities](#): Fox Business "America's Weather Weekend" re-airs Ken Miller FOX Weather interview (SAS)
7. [Jersey Shore housing went big after Sandy](#): NJ Spotlight News interviews Brooke Maslo (SEBS).
8. [Climate change: How can New Jersey prepare?: NJ Spotlight News interviews Robert Kopp \(SAS\).](#)
9. [What Superstorm Sandy Taught Us About Our Climate Future: NBC LX interviews Kenneth Miller \(SAS\).](#)
10. [Poll: Most NJ Residents Say Climate Change is Real, Support Taking Action: NJ 101.5 features a Rutgers-Eagleton climate poll.](#)

11. [A decade after Sandy, devastated Meadowlands towns still adding defenses, still vulnerable: NJ Spotlight News interviews Brooke Maslo \(SEBS\).](#)
12. [What happens when a neighborhood disappears? News 12 New Jersey interviews Brooke Maslo \(SEBS\).](#)
13. [What happens when a neighborhood disappears? News 12 Connecticut interviews Brooke Maslo \(SEBS\).](#)
14. [Rutgers University plays key role in advancing hurricane science: FOX Weather interviews Travis Miles \(SEBS\).](#)
15. [New Jersey properties converted to flood-protection zones following Superstorm Sandy FOX Weather interviews Brooke Maslo \(SEBS\).](#)
16. [Studying Rising Sea Levels On the Jersey Shore: NBC 4 New York interviews Lisa Auermuller \(SAS\) and staffers of the Rutgers Marine Field Station.](#)
17. [New Jersey Transit 10 Years Later: WNYC's "Morning Edition" interviews Jon Carnegie \(Bloustein\).](#)
18. [Protecting Coastlines from Storm Surge: NBC 4 New York interviews Robert Kopp \(SAS\).](#)
19. [Experts tout success of transforming suburban New Jersey neighborhood back to natural state for flood resiliency initiative: CBS New York interviews Brooke Maslo \(SEBS\).](#)
20. [A decade later, Shore builds back bigger: NJ Spotlight News interviews Brooke Maslo \(SEBS\).](#)
21. [The legacy of 'Sandy cough' and why mold is still a major problem after storms: WNYC's "Morning Edition" interviews Mitch Rosen \(SPH\).](#)
22. [10 years since Sandy hit NJ — What made the storm so unique?: NJ 101.5 interviews David Robinson \(SAS\).](#)
23. [Most NJ residents say climate change is real and support taking action: NJ 101.5 features a Rutgers-Eagleton poll.](#)

#### **Print/Online:**

1. [Post-Sandy Boom: The Philadelphia Inquirer interviews Clinton Andrews \(Bloustein\)](#)
2. ['We're not ready': NY, NJ still building for extreme weather 10 years after Hurricane Sandy: Politico interviews Clinton Andrews \(Bloustein\)](#)
3. [NY, NJ still building for extreme weather 10 years after Hurricane Sandy: Yahoo! picks up Politico piece.](#)
4. [10 years after Sandy, N.J. remains as vulnerable as ever to nature's fury: The Star-Ledger/NJ.com interviews Clinton Andrews \(Bloustein\)](#)
5. [10 years after Superstorm Sandy, we need a more resilient vision of the future | Opinion: Lisa Auermuller writes an opinion piece for The Star-Ledger/NJ.com.](#)
6. [NJ homeowners are using old flood data to protect their homes, putting 'lives at risk': The Asbury Park Press interviews Lisa Auermuller \(Bloustein\).](#)
7. [NJ homeowners are using old flood data to protect their homes, putting 'lives at risk': Courier-Post syndicate](#)
8. [NJ homeowners are using old flood data to protect their homes, putting 'lives at risk': Burlington County Times syndicate](#)
9. [NJ homeowners are using old flood data to protect their homes, putting 'lives at risk': MyCentral Jersey syndicate](#)
10. [NJ homeowners are using old flood data to protect their homes, putting 'lives at risk': New Jersey Herald syndicate](#)
11. [Get ready for another super storm like Sandy, experts say: The New York Post interviews David Robinson \(SAS\).](#)



12. [Superstorm Sandy Taught NJ Some Hard Lessons, Rutgers Experts Say: Patch Newark runs R-Comm “In Sandy’s Wake” package.](#)
13. [Not Just A Hurricane: What Made Sandy A Superstorm: Tom’s River Patch interviews David Robinson \(SAS\).](#)
14. [10 years later, Hudson County is better prepared to handle a Superstorm Sandy: The Jersey Journal interviews Anthony Broccoli \(SEBS\).](#)
15. [A decade after Sandy, devastated Meadowlands towns still adding defenses, still vulnerable: The Bergen-Record/NorthJersey.com interviews Anthony Broccoli \(SEBS\).](#)
16. [N.J. residents support climate change defenses but don’t want to pay for them, new poll finds: The Star-Ledger/NJ.com features a Rutgers-Eagleton climate poll.](#)
17. [Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc with NJ Transit. 10 years later, resiliency is a priority: Gothamist interviews Jon Carnegie \(Bloustein\).](#)
18. [<https://nj1015.com/10-years-since-sandy-hit-nj-what-made-the-storm-so-unique/Poll: Jerseyans support climate-related policies — but not who should pay for them: ROI-NJ features a Rutgers-Eagleton climate poll>.](#)
19. [New NJ plan to defend against climate change:](#) NJ Spotlight News covers NJAdapt, a suite of online tools to help resilience planners.

### *Social media*

A comprehensive social media campaign was launched across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, generating 44,735 impressions and 807 engagements. These metrics were primarily from organic (unpaid) posts because Facebook was not allowing ads about “sensitive issues” to run during that time due to the elections.

### **Summary**

In total, R-Comm spent less than \$5,000 on the Sandy campaign, a small sum compared to the huge return on investment. Our campaign’s content generated exponentially more content – from broadcast coverage to opinion articles – demonstrating that in the decade since Sandy, Rutgers has been at the leading edge of climate change prediction and coastal resiliency.