



# EarthWatch Rhode Island



**Air Date: January 14, 2007**

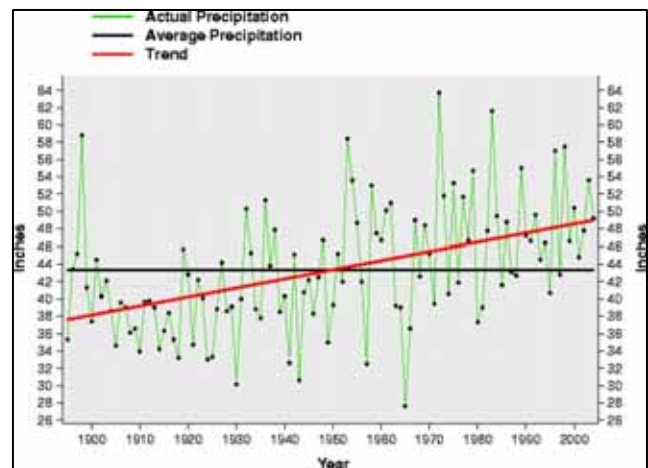
## **Topic: Global Warming Is Here In Rhode Island Now: Our Climate, Narragansett Bay And Our Fisheries Have Changed Significantly Since 1900.**

Since 1900 our climate has gotten warmer and wetter<sup>1</sup>. The average annual temperature rose 2.3 ° Fahrenheit and annual precipitation increased from 38 inches in 1900 to 49 inches in 2004 with more frequent and intense storms and more rain than snow. More intense rain events and less snow means more flooding. Less snow cover and more hot days in summer mean more frequent drought and more conflict among residential, agricultural and industrial water users. More hot days and more extremely hot days in summer mean more sickness, more hospitalizations and even deaths for older people, young children and people with heart and lung disease.

The Bay is warmer, we are losing profitable coldwater fish and shellfish, and sea level is rising, threatening development along RI's Coast. Narragansett Bay is warming even faster (3° Fahrenheit since 1950)<sup>2</sup> than the overall RI climate. URI scientists believe the warmer Bay is a likely factor in the steep declines in commercially valuable cold-water fish and shellfish like winter flounder and lobster. And sea level has risen over ½ a foot in Providence and ¾ of a foot in Newport.

We need to act now to slow global warming and even bigger changes to Rhode Island's climate. Scientists predict that the climate of Rhode Island will be more like that of Atlanta, Georgia by the year 2100 leading to more unwelcome changes such as more heat-related death and illness, more powerful and frequent storms, more high ozone days, more water shortages, more warm weather species (i.e. mosquitoes), etc.

Addressing global warming pollution is no simple task. That's why DEM and the State Energy Office teamed up with business, citizen and environmental groups and came up



Rhode Island's average annual temperature has risen by 2.3 ° since 1900.

<sup>1</sup> Clean Air- Cool Planet and Cameron P. Wake, New England Regional Assessment 2005 and NOAA Climate at a Glance

<sup>2</sup> RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife survey

with 52 ways to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that cause global warming in the 2001 Greenhouse Gas Action Plan. The actions range from buying more clean energy and energy efficient products to making cars cleaner and less polluting and could even save Rhode Islanders \$700,000,000! Government entities and businesses throughout the state have implemented many of the actions and DEM continues to work with the group to develop the others.

As government and business does its part to slow climate change, DEM also encourages Rhode Islanders to make choices that can reduce climate change impacts. Every time we drive a car, flip on the light switch, or turn up the heat, we are contributing to climate change pollution. Some easy ways for consumers to help slow global warming are:

- Reduce electricity and heating usage at home and work
- Choose products with the Energy Star logo whenever possible
- Choose a more fuel efficient or hybrid vehicle the next time you buy a car
- Walk, bike, carpool or take the bus whenever you can
- Buy products that are made locally to save pollution from shipping

Most climate change solutions are about making smarter choices that not only reduce global warming pollution but also save money and reduce our dependency on foreign oil as well. Individual actions may seem small, but if everyone makes a few simple changes it can make a big difference.

- If every American changed just 5 high-use light bulbs with Energy Star bulbs, we would keep more than a trillion pounds of greenhouse gases out of the air, which is equal to the emissions of 8 million cars!
- Programmable thermostats can save energy and save money on utility bills — when used properly, about \$100/year<sup>3</sup>
- In most households, the refrigerator is the single biggest energy consuming kitchen appliance. Replacing a refrigerator bought in 1990 with a new ENERGY STAR qualified model would save enough energy to light the average household for nearly four months.<sup>4</sup>



Jim Barry of J's Broadway Appliance store gets ready to talk about the environmental and economic benefits of buying Energy Star appliances.

### Resources for Consumers:

- EPA's Energy Star website: [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)
- Alliance to Save Energy [www.ase.org](http://www.ase.org)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=thermostats.pr\\_thermostats](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=thermostats.pr_thermostats)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=refrig.pr\\_refrigerators](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=refrig.pr_refrigerators)

- Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Action Plan: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/climate>

**Interviews:**

- Michael Sullivan, Director, DEM
- Terri Bisson, Programming Services Officer, DEM
- Jim Barry, Sales Manger, J's Broadway Appliance

Jim Barry of J's Broadway Appliance store gets ready to talk about the environmental and economic benefits of buying Energy Star appliances.