

# For Immediate Release

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## Acadia Center Releases Findings on Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Impacts and Recommendations for Future Changes

**RGGI States Saw Faster Economic Growth, Greater Consumer Benefits and Larger Reductions in Pollution Than Other States but Must Direct Improvements to Environmental Justice Communities**

Boston, MA – As participating states undertake the Third Program Review of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), Acadia Center today released its third RGGI Review report, which analyzed the programs impacts to date and offers recommendations for adjusting RGGI in coming years.

“Acadia Center’s analysis found that the nine states which have consistently participated in RGGI (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont) have experienced a more rapid *increase* in GDP per capita and a more rapid *decline* in power sector CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and retail electricity prices than other states.” said Daniel Sosland, president of Acadia Center. “RGGI has significantly contributed to state efforts to reduce climate pollution and benefit consumers.”

“Since its inception in 2008, RGGI auctions of pollution permits have generated over \$6.2 billion in funds that states have used to invest in clean energy, energy efficiency and other benefits” noted Ben Butterworth, Director, Climate, Energy and Equity Analysis. “These funds have helped support the transition to a clean energy economy and directly benefited residents and employers.”

Notwithstanding these large benefits, the Acadia Center Report also found that RGGI needs to focus intentionally on addressing the impacts of power plant pollution on local communities. “Over a third of RGGI plants that emit significant levels of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions are located near high asthma communities and over two-thirds of RGGI plants that lack active air quality monitoring are located within a 3-mile radius of environmental justice or high asthma communities” pointed out Paola Tamayo, Policy Analyst, and primary analyst of the report. “The Report maps the locations of these plants throughout the region and scores their public health threat. Smaller power plants that are not covered by RGGI can still produce high levels of NO<sub>x</sub> pollution. Acadia Center is calling on RGGI states to lower the threshold for generating units to 15MW to cover these facilities.”

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“This groundbreaking environmental justice analysis of RGGI highlights that the investments, monitoring and pollution reductions from RGGI facilities need to be more targeted in order to better protect the health of people with asthma and those in low-wealth communities and communities of color,” said Dr. Mark Mitchell, Associate Professor of Climate Change, Energy, and Environmental Health Equity at George Mason University. “Acadia Center deserves much credit for undertaking such exhaustive and valuable analyses.”

Sharon Lewis, Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition for Economic and Environmental Justice commented that “The work of Acadia Center has offered valuable insights into the economic benefits and emissions reductions associated with RGGI. However, their report has also highlighted the program's failure to effectively address the unequal emissions reductions that adversely affect the health of marginalized communities. We intend to use this report as a resource to push for greater urgency in prioritizing the reduction of criteria air pollutants in environmental justice communities and to demand greater transparency regarding the impact of RGGI spending on the health of these communities.”

Acadia Center recommends four principal changes to the RGGI program in the state’s review:

- **Set a revised Cap in line with State Climate and Clean Energy Goals**
- **Require that no less than 40-50% of RGGI proceeds are invested in environmental justice communities**
- **Seek decreases in NO<sub>x</sub> emissions** at power plants that pose the largest respiratory health risks, and increase funding and enforcement of air quality monitoring, especially in EJ communities.
- **Lower the 25 MW Threshold Capacity for RGGI Regulation to 15MW, or lower for co-located facilities**

“States can redouble their efforts to continue RGGI while improving the program to benefit all residents. We look forward to working with the states and many partners in the coming months,” said Sosland.

*Acadia Center is a nonprofit research and advocacy organization committed to advancing the clean energy future. [Acadiacenter.org](http://Acadiacenter.org)*