RMI
ENERGY. TRANSFORMED.

QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT
SUMMER 2026

Accelerating the pace of change.

RMI's vision of a clean energy future commits us to THINK bigger, DO boldly, and SCALE globally.

Keeping Clean Steel On Track

As United States steelmakers make once-in-a-generation investment decisions, RMI's latest analysis identifies practical ways to avoid locking new facilities into decades of natural gas use. Strategies include designing plants so they can switch to clean hydrogen as it becomes available and negotiating fuel contracts that don't require long-term reliance on natural gas. By preserving these options, RMI is helping industry make smarter investments today while preparing for a more competitive, resilient, and lower-emissions steel sector for the future.

Making Heat Pumps Mainstream

Using RMI's Green Upgrade Calculator, new analysis found that replacing electric resistance heating* with heat pumps* could save the average household $1,530 each year while reducing winter peak electricity demand nationwide in the United States. The findings provide policymakers and utilities with compelling evidence that one technology can improve affordability, strengthen grid reliability, and reduce emissions simultaneously.

Preparing Geothermal for Growth

Next-generation geothermal can provide reliable, around-the-clock clean electricity, but supply chain constraints could slow its expansion. RMI's latest analysis identified practical ways to strengthen domestic manufacturing and leverage existing oil and gas expertise. By helping industry and policymakers address these challenges early, RMI is helping one of the most promising clean energy technologies scale more quickly.

THINK | TESTING OUR ANALYSIS

UP TO 18°F

That's how much this white paint cooling technology can lower indoor temperatures on hot days — without electricity.

Cooling Tech for a Hotter Future

This summer, RMI and Third Derivative launched a pilot at an affordable housing community in Boulder, Colorado, to evaluate an innovative cooling material designed to help keep buildings cooler without using additional energy. By reflecting sunlight and releasing heat, passive daytime radiative cooling technology has the potential to reduce indoor temperatures and improve comfort for residents who are often most vulnerable to extreme heat. The pilot will generate independent, real-world performance data to better understand how the technology performs in occupied buildings and help inform broader adoption of low-energy cooling solutions.

Preparing States in a New Era of Electricity Demand

As electricity demand grows across the country, RMI is helping states build more affordable, reliable, and resilient energy systems. In Arizona, RMI helped shape statewide recommendations on energy efficiency, battery storage, advanced transmission*, and virtual power plants (VPPs)*. In New Jersey, RMI's technical expertise helped lawmakers incorporate distributed energy resources (DERs)* and VPPs into legislation responding to rapidly growing demand from data centers. Together, these efforts are helping states meet new energy needs while reducing costs and strengthening the grid.

Powering a Resilient Future for Islands

Building on years of work with island communities, RMI launched its Global Islands Energy Program to help islands around the world build cleaner, more resilient, and more affordable energy systems. The program draws on lessons from successful projects — including virtual power plants* in the US Virgin Islands — to create scalable blueprints that strengthen energy security, support economic opportunity, and help communities thrive in the face of growing climate and energy challenges.

DO | PILOTING SOLUTIONS

Unlocking Billions for Clean Energy

Five years ago, RMI launched the Climate Finance Access Network (CFAN) to help countries unlock climate finance by embedding expert advisors within governments and regional institutions. What began with 8 advisors in Pacific Island nations has grown to 15 advisors serving countries across the Pacific and Caribbean, supporting a project pipeline exceeding $2.6 billion. By building local expertise instead of relying on outside consultants, CFAN is helping countries secure funding for cleaner energy, stronger infrastructure, and more resilient communities — creating lasting capacity that continues to deliver results long after individual projects are complete.

Discover how virtual power plants are keeping the lights on in the US Virgin Islands. Explore the story at rmi.org/usvi-vpp

Energy Explained

A few terms from this issue.

Advanced Transmission - Technologies that enable existing power lines to carry more electricity safely and efficiently.

Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) - Local energy resources — such as rooftop solar, batteries, and smart appliances — that generate, store, or manage electricity.

Electric Resistance Heaters - Electric furnaces and baseboard heaters that generate heat directly using electricity.

Heat Pumps vs. Electric Resistance Heating - Electric resistance heaters (such as furnaces and baseboard heaters) generate heat directly using electricity. Heat pumps move heat instead, making them much more efficient.

Virtual Power Plants (VPPs) - Networks of connected energy devices that work together to reduce demand and strengthen the electric grid.

SCALE | CATALYZING MARKETS

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

The Future Looks Brighter

As communities work to expand clean energy, one challenge is becoming increasingly clear: finding places to build it without sacrificing productive farmland or undeveloped green space.

Across the United States, hundreds of thousands of former industrial sites, closed landfills, and abandoned mines sit vacant — land that many communities see as too costly or complicated to reuse. RMI sees something different.

These previously disturbed, often-contaminated sites — also known as brownfields — many of them abandoned for decades — can become brightfields: renewable energy projects that transform yesterday's liabilities into tomorrow's clean energy assets.

The opportunity is significant and largely untapped. The US Environmental Protection Agency has identified more than 190,000 brownfields with potential for renewable energy development. More than 363 gigawatts of clean energy have been installed nationwide through 2025, yet only 4.4 gigawatts have been built on brownfields and other contaminated lands, largely because brightfield projects typically involve more specialized design and more costly site preparation to develop.

Recognizing that untapped potential, RMI's Brightfields Accelerator has spent the past several years working with local governments, communities, utilities, state agencies, and energy developers to make brightfields a more common, practical solution. Our team has helped communities move from idea to implementation, including developing site concept plans, state and federal grant applications, financial models, and procurements. This means new deals signed and solar panels installed on closed landfills.

This 4 megawatts solar project, in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, supplies enough electricity to power 500 homes. Photo courtesy of Jackie Lombardi

A 16.8 megawatts landfill solar development in Annapolis, MD. Photo courtesy of BQ Energy Development, LLC.

Helping Communities Build Brightfields

The Brightfields Accelerator, launched by RMI in 2022 in partnership with Kansas State University's Technical Assistance to Brownfields program, connects communities with the expertise needed to advance clean energy projects on brownfields. By bringing together local governments, developers, state agencies, and technical experts, the Accelerator helps communities move promising projects from planning to implementation.

By the Numbers:

- 50+ communities supported
- 3 state agencies engaged
- 19 megawatts of projects advanced and approved across 3 closed landfills
- Featured at 3 national brownfields conferences
- And now, Colorado legislation informed

To learn more about how your community can participate in the Brightfields Accelerator, contact Matthew Popkin at mpopkin@rmi.org.

This spring, our team achieved a new milestone in Colorado.

On May 27, 2026, Colorado Governor Jared Polis signed House Bill 26-1268 into law, creating a new toolbox to encourage renewable energy development on brownfields, closed landfills, and former mine sites. The legislation allows communities to establish Renewable Energy Investment Areas for these sites to unlock land that might otherwise remain unused. RMI helped develop the policy foundations that ultimately were integrated into the legislation and educate key stakeholders about the technical potential of brightfields in Colorado.

Colorado's new law offers another model for how states can expand clean energy while revitalizing underused land and empowering local governments. As more states confront rising electricity demand, brightfields offer a powerful reminder that some of our greatest opportunities can be found in places we've long overlooked.

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

> "What drew me to RMI in the formative phases of my career still resonates with me today: a rigor that is imaginative, a systems view that is practical, and an optimism grounded in analysis and moral imagination."
>
> — Leigh Alvarado Benson
> RMI donor and Legacy Society member

As a graduate student, reading Amory Lovins' "Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?" transformed the way she approached complex problems. That systems-thinking mindset shaped a career spanning environmental engineering, data science, and artificial intelligence in support of several industries, as well as more than 25 years of teaching.

Leigh met Amory in person in May 2026, an exciting moment for someone whose life and career were profoundly shaped by his work.

Today, Leigh and her husband have included RMI in their estate plans, ensuring the ideas that influenced their lives continue to shape future generations. "To me, legacy giving isn't about being remembered," she says. "It's about helping good ideas outlive us."

Read Leigh's full profile at rmi.org/donor-profiles-leigh-benson

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn more about any of this work (and more) and how you can take part in the clean energy transition by scanning this QR code with the camera app on your smartphone or visiting: rmi.org/impact-summer-2026