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Restore America's Estuaries Announces \$4.5 Million in Grants for Clean Water and Healthy Coasts in Southeast New England

In September, Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced \$4.5 million in new funding for local organizations working to restore clean water and healthy coastal ecosystems in Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts. The funding is provided under the 2018 Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Watershed Grants, a collaboration between RAE and EPA Region 1. The goal of the grant program is to build and support partnerships to tackle the region's most pressing environmental issues, such as nutrient pollution and coastal habitat loss.

RAE selected 14 grant recipients through a rigorous competitive process. The awardees include municipalities, non-profit organizations, state agencies, universities and regional planning organizations, each of which is leading an innovative, high-impact project of regional importance. The \$4.5 million in federal funds will be matched by an additional \$1.8 million in state and local dollars – providing altogether more than \$6.3 million in funds to protect and restore Southeast New England's environment.

The 2018 SNEP Watershed Grants are funding more than \$2 million in Rhode Island projects, including:

- Town of Bristol to restore Silver Creek on Bristol Harbor (\$300,000);
- City of Pawtucket to build a "green and complete street" – integrating clean water and transportation improvements – adjacent to a new rail station (\$376,000);
- RI Dept. of Environmental Management (RIDEM) to upgrade environmental monitoring equipment in Narragansett Bay (\$300,000);
- Save The Bay to restore clean water in Hundred Acre Cove in Upper Narragansett Bay (\$132,000);
- University of Rhode Island for a scientific study of groundwater pollution to Narragansett Bay and the South Shore salt ponds (\$475,000); and
- RIDEM to work with the State of Connecticut on restoring the Pawcatuck River Estuary and Little Narragansett Bay (\$450,000);

The grants are funding more than \$2.1 million in Massachusetts, including:

- Association to Preserve Cape Cod to restore water quality in the Three Bays estuary in Barnstable through an innovative watershed management program (\$350,000);
- Buzzards Bay Coalition to reduce nitrogen pollution to Upper Buzzards Bay and foster economic development by leading a project to expand the capacity of the Wareham wastewater treatment facility (\$419,000);

- Cape Cod Commission to develop a Cape-wide water quality database and management system, to support clean water restoration efforts by federal, state and local organizations (\$400,000);
- Falmouth Rod & Gun Club for an innovative cranberry bog and river restoration project in Falmouth and Mashpee (\$450,000);
- Martha's Vineyard Commission for an innovative project to reduce groundwater pollution to Lagoon Pond on Martha's Vineyard through installation and testing of a Permeable Reactive Barrier (PRB) (\$250,000); and
- Pleasant Bay Alliance to restore water quality in Cape Cod's largest estuary by leading a coordinated program by the Towns of Brewster, Chatham, Harwich and Orleans (\$250,000).

In addition, 2018 SNEP Watershed Grants are funding \$350,000 in interstate projects:

- New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission to develop a new method of assessing coastal water quality, providing an important new tool for state and local clean water restoration efforts (\$250,000); and
- Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District to continue leading the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network, a collaboration among communities working to preserve and restore the Taunton River watershed (\$100,000).

The grants were announced in September at events at Pawtucket City Hall in Pawtucket, RI, and Mass. Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay, MA. The Rhode Island event featured Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse; Congressmen Jim Langevin and David Cicilline; EPA Regional Administrator Alexandra Dunn; and RIDEM Director Janet Coit. The Massachusetts event featured Congressman Bill Keating; Regional Administrator Dunn; Deputy Commissioner Gary Moran of the Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection; and Rear Admiral Francis X. McDonald, President of Mass. Maritime Academy.

"This federal funding will go a long way toward helping us continue the great progress we've made in cleaning up our estuaries and preserving our state's natural beauty," said Senator Jack Reed. "Pollution does not respect state lines, and we must work together to confront the environmental challenges we face across Southeast New England. Maintaining healthy watersheds and coastal ecosystems has direct impacts on the economies of our coastal communities and our quality of life. I applaud everyone involved in this process and I pledge to continue working in Washington on behalf of our coastlines and our environment as a whole."

"Few things are more valuable to Rhode Island than our beautiful waterways and coastline. Protecting them is one of the smartest investments we can make," said Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. "Thank you to the Rhode Islanders who secured this funding and will carry out this vital work."

"The investment of federal money into these types of projects is critical," said Congressman David Cicilline. "Clean water and vibrant coastal systems help keep people healthy and play an important economic factor by supporting tourism activities in our state and region."

“Protecting iconic waters like bays and estuaries in Southern New England is a priority for EPA, and these projects will help further that goal,” said EPA New England Regional Administrator Alexandra Dunn. “The funding announced today will help protect clean water and establish innovative, watershed-based models that are vital to the ecological resiliency and economic vitality of our coastal communities.”

“The biggest threats to clean water and healthy coastal ecosystems – such as climate change, nutrient pollution, and habitat loss – demand collaborative, innovative, and targeted responses, which the recipients of the Southeast New England Program Watershed Grants are poised to deliver,” said RIDEM Director Janet Coit. “Rhode Island is grateful for these additional resources to tackle the challenges confronting us. We will continue to cooperate closely with Massachusetts and Connecticut to protect the vitality and resiliency of our shared waters and watersheds.”

“The City of Pawtucket is honored to have been selected as a recipient of the SNEP Watershed Grants thanks to the collaboration between Restore America’s Estuaries and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We thank our Congressional Delegation, who have always been great advocates and friends to Pawtucket,” said Pawtucket Mayor Donald R. Grebien. “The Green and Complete Streets Project funded by this program will add green infrastructure and complete street design elements in a highly urbanized area that is expected to undergo substantial redevelopment in the next 10 years.”

Senator Ed Markey said, “Massachusetts and Rhode Island are leading the country in coastal innovation. That’s why it comes as no surprise that communities from both states are being recognized for their hard work with a \$4.5 million EPA grant from the Southeast New England Program. Congratulations to the award recipients and to the entire Southeastern New England region for their leadership. This funding will bolster our shared coastal ecosystems and communities for generations to come.”

“Reducing pollution and improving water quality is critical to the health and well-being of our families, our communities, and our environment,” said Senator Elizabeth Warren. “These federal grants will help keep the Commonwealth’s waterways and watershed areas clean and will strengthen communities’ efforts to preserve our natural resources. I am grateful to RAE for this critical support and to our great local organizations for their commitment to protecting our environment.”

“This program provides critical funding to so many projects here in southeastern Massachusetts and I am proud to have supported it throughout my tenure in Congress,” said Congressman Bill Keating. “SNEP has helped to improve and preserve the water quality of countless of our estuaries, bays, and rivers. This year’s projects not only highlight how this program supports critical regional initiatives to improve water quality on the Cape, the Islands, and South Coast, but also how important the science and conservation programs being undertaken in Southeast New England are. Their success shows that our community is taking seriously water quality issues in our region and is serious about addressing them.”

“It’s incredibly important that we continue to bring local, state, and federal partners together to preserve and protect our region’s water quality,” said Congressman Jim McGovern. “Congratulations to all of today’s recipients on their hard work to secure these grants – I know they will make a real impact in communities throughout Southeast New England.”

Congressman Joe Kennedy III said, “Investing in clean water strengthens our local economy, protects the health of our children and our community, and helps combat climate change. With this increased funding from RAE, Southeast New England and our Commonwealth’s local organizations can confront the unique challenges they face in their efforts to guarantee clean water for our region.”

“Nitrogen pollution in the estuaries of the South Coast of Massachusetts is a major problem, and the Commonwealth is partnering with local communities and the EPA to address this issue,” said Deputy Commissioner Gary Moran of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. “Massachusetts is grateful for these additional resources to assist in our efforts to improve water quality and protect our natural resources.”

Mass. Maritime Academy President Rear Admiral Francis X. McDonald said, "Massachusetts Maritime Academy is in a unique position to support and participate in the Multi-community Partnership to Reduce Nitrogen in Upper Buzzard’s Bay program. The Academy is bordered on three sides by the bay, and we have our own effective wastewater treatment plant which received the Regional EPA Operation and Maintenance Excellence Award in 2015. Protecting and working on the water is our mainstay."

Restore America’s Estuaries President Jeff Benoit said, “We are excited to see communities and organizations working together to improve water quality and coastal habitat throughout Southeast New England. This is important not only economically, but also for the quality of life in the region.”

By funding locally based partnerships that are working to reduce pollution and restore coastal habitats, the SNEP Watershed Grants program is helping to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for Southeast New England communities. For more about SNEP Watershed Grants, see www.snepgrants.org.

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