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EPA Support for Local Groups Will Help Protect and Restore Rhode Island's Environment

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Providence, RI — The Southeast New England Program (SNEP) is a regional initiative, funded by Congress and managed by the US Environmental Protection Agency, working to preserve and restore coastal waters by providing grants and technical assistance to communities, local organizations and partnerships in Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts. Today, SNEP is announcing \$1.9 million in grants for 11 high-priority projects throughout Southeast New England; Rhode Island communities will be beneficiaries of six of the grants, totaling \$1.2 million. SNEP is also providing technical assistance to nine communities, four of which are in Rhode Island, that will receive free support to advance their stormwater management and climate resilience priorities.

The grants are awarded under the 2022 SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants (SWIG) program, a partnership between Restore America's Estuaries, a national non-profit organization, and EPA Region 1. The technical assistance is provided by the SNEP Network, EPA's partnership with the New England Environmental Finance Center, a non-profit technical assistance provider located at the University of Southern Maine, part of the University of Maine System.

The awards will be announced at an event led by Senator Jack Reed at 11 a.m. today, at Roger Williams Park Botanical Center, 1000 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02907. **Speakers will include Sen. Reed, Cong. Jim Langevin, Cong. David Cicilline, EPA Regional Administrator David Cash, Mayor Jorge Elorza of Providence, and Sue Kiernan, Administrator of the Office of Water Resources for the RI Dept. of Environmental Management.**

Beautiful and historic Roger Williams Park was chosen as the location for the event to highlight SNEP's support of the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center (PSIC). PSIC is a collaboration between the Providence Parks Department, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and many other public and private organizations working to improve stormwater management practices and restore clean water – both fresh and salt – in the park and elsewhere throughout the Ocean State. PSIC will be receiving a \$184,000 (its second SWIG grant). The SNEP Network is also continuing its support of the PSIC for monitoring stormwater BMPs in the park and for delivering stormwater and green infrastructure trainings.

Following the speaking portion of the program, representatives of the Parks Department, SWIG and the Network will lead a tour of stormwater management installations in the Park. As water from the Park ponds flows into the Pawtuxet River and Narragansett Bay, these efforts benefit communities throughout Rhode Island and beyond.

The Southeast New England Program works to promote a resilient ecosystem of clean water, healthy diverse habitats, and sustainable communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

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Roger Williams Park is just one example of SWIG and the Network working together to accomplish the goals of EPA's SNEP program: safe and clean water, healthy habitats and coastal ecosystems, and thriving communities throughout Southeast New England. Since 2012, SNEP has provided nearly \$45 million in funding and technical assistance to help municipalities, non-profit organizations, state and tribal governments, and other organizations accomplish these goals. By funding partnerships, promoting information-sharing, and helping to develop new technologies, SNEP is building capacity for better management of the regional environment while providing on-the-ground benefits for communities and ecosystems and introducing resources and funding options to underserved communities.

The \$1.9 million in SWIG grants will be matched by about \$1 million in non-federal funds secured by the SNEP grantees, resulting in nearly \$3 million in new funding for local projects to improve the coastal environment of Southeast New England.

"This federal funding advances several key restoration projects that will enhance water quality and improve the overall health and well-being of our communities, waterways, and estuaries," said **Senator Reed**, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee who created SNEP.

"The Ocean State will be hit hard by rising sea levels, increasing precipitation from more intense storms, and changing temperatures in the years ahead. Now's the best time to build resilience to the coming effects of climate change," said **Senator Whitehouse**. "This funding and technical assistance will help sustain the health of the watersheds and coastal ecosystems that are so vital to Rhode Island's economy and way of life."

"I am proud to lead the annual House appropriations request for SNEP, and I am thrilled that our federal funding makes these grants possible," said **Congressman Langevin**. "Every year, I am impressed by the latest projects that these local, grassroots organizations are doing in our communities. I'd like to congratulate this year's awardees and thank them for their important work to protect our waterways and ecosystems."

"I am proud to work with the rest of our delegation every year to secure funding for the Southeast New England Program. Through today's announced investments, the Southeast New England Program is helping to ensure Rhode Island's waters and coastal habitats are clean, healthy, and resilient for generations to come," said **Congressman Cicilline**. "Congratulations to all of this year's successful awardees."

"Southeast coastal New England is very special, shaped by its history of innovation and its iconic bays, estuaries, and landscapes. But we know it is also under increasing threats from climate change, nutrient pollution and other stressors," said **EPA New England Regional Administrator David Cash**, "and those stressors are particularly acute in our underserved communities. Today's announcements underscore EPA's commitment to bringing financial and technical resources through the Southeast New England Program to those and other areas. Working with our state and local partners, Restore America's Estuaries and the SNEP Network, we are advancing effective practices and increasing local capacity through funding, collaboration, and innovative approaches --- essential for meeting our communities' needs and contributing to the sustained ecosystem health and economic vitality of our coastal communities."

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"Protecting our environment, including greenspaces and clean water, is essential to developing a sustainable future for our entire community," said **Mayor Elorza**. "The City of Providence is proud to be a founding member of the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center. Thank you to Restore America's Estuaries, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and our federal delegation for recognizing the success of the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center and supporting their ongoing work through this grant, as well as for their investment in Community MusicWorks here in Providence."

"Restore America's Estuaries appreciates the commitment of Senator's Reed and the entire Rhode Island Congressional delegation, as well as the numerous state agencies and municipalities involved in shepherding the values of the Southeast New England Program" said **Daniel Hayden, President and CEO of Restore America's Estuaries (RAE)**. "With more than \$1.9 million funding 11 exciting projects in the 2022 round of the SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants, RAE is confident we will continue to expand the vital work aimed at improving water quality and coastal resilience in the SNEP region."

"It is important that communities and technical assistance providers come together to address the effects of climate change from a resilience perspective" said **Martha Sheils, Director of the New England Environmental Finance Center**, the administering organization of the SNEP Network. Over the past 3 years, the SNEP Network has provided free technical assistance to SNEP communities to advance their climate resilience goals. This year, the SNEP Network is excited to work with four Massachusetts communities and one tribe to incorporate nature-based solutions in their stormwater planning, improve community outreach, perform ordinance reviews, and move their projects forward toward funding and implementation".

The event is free and open to the public and press, and will include photo, video and interview opportunities. Grantees and community assistance recipients will be available to discuss their projects following the speaking portion of the event.

2022 SNEP Grant Recipients

The recipients of the 2022 SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants were selected through a competitive process from among \$6 million in requests. The 11 projects to be funded are:

Rhode Island Grants

Town of Glocester, RI | Chepachet Village Wastewater Improvements | \$250,000

Audubon Society of Rhode Island | Providence Stormwater Innovation Center | \$183,948

Southern Rhode Island Conservation District | Westerly's Resilient Riverfront Renewal | \$200,000

Rhode Island Chapter of Trout Unlimited | Capwell Mill Pond Dam Removal Study and Design | \$124,000

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Community MusicWorks | Community MusicWorks Center Water Retention Parklet | \$150,000

Massachusetts Grants

Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) | Weir Creek Tidal Restoration | \$138,616

Center for Coastal Studies | Removal of Ghost Fishing Gear from Cuttyhunk Shorelines | \$55,206

City of Brockton | Nature-Based Flood Resilience for Urban Economic Redevelopment in the Trout Brook Riparian Corridor | \$150,000

Town of Nantucket | Sesachacha Pond Ecological Enhancement and Resilience Strategies | \$158,456

Groundwork Southcoast | Developing Fall River Resilience: Cook Pond Project | \$215,569

Interstate Grants

New England Water Pollution Control Comm. | Community-Based Habitat Restoration: Water Chestnut Management in Blackstone & Ten Mile Watersheds | \$262,077

2022 SNEP Community Assistance Recipients

The 2022 SNEP Network Community Assistance Projects were selected through a competitive process. Nine projects were selected to receive free technical assistance from the SNEP Network. The SNEP Network is managed by the New England Environmental Finance Center that provides on-the-ground local technical assistance and offers free engineering consultant support to advance projects. This year's community assistance projects are:

Rhode Island Assistance

Town of North Kingstown, RI | Participation in training to develop conceptual designs for stormwater retrofits and green infrastructure solutions

Middletown, RI | Development of a 5-year climate resilience capital improvement plan; recommendations on sustainable funding and financing mechanisms; support in enhancing Climate Leadership Collaboration on Aquidneck Island in close partnership with the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank and the Regional Resilience Coordinator

Burrillville Land Trust | Development of a training on priority topics in land use planning, watershed protection, and ecosystem services for communities in the Blackstone Watershed

South Kingstown, RI | Development of a buffer restoration plan that includes a detailed planning plan, conceptual designs for managing sheet flow surface runoff, and order of magnitude costs estimates to implement the buffer restoration plan.

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Massachusetts Assistance

Buzzards Bay Coalition | GIS analysis for developing spatial hydrologic response units (HRU), a combination of land use type, soil infiltration capacity, and land cover slope, to characterize the watershed conditions

Groundwork Southcoast with New Bedford, MA | Participation in training to develop conceptual designs for stormwater retrofits and green infrastructure solutions

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and the Town of Mashpee | Analysis of baseline monitoring data and assistance with community engagement, communications, and partnership building; finalization of watershed-based plan; technical support for grant applications to leverage Town match

Town of Marion, MA | Participation in training to develop conceptual designs for stormwater retrofits and green infrastructure solutions

Town of Shrewsbury, MA | Review and revision of current rules and regulations to integrate new low impact design and green infrastructure requirements; participation in training to develop conceptual designs for stormwater retrofits and green infrastructure solutions

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For more on EPA's Southeast New England Program, see www.epa.gov/snep

For more about SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants, see www.snepgrants.org

For more on the SNEP Network, see www.snepnetwork.org

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