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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1 workshop to focus on progress and partnerships in the Taunton River watershed

FALL RIVER, MASS. – Sept. 18, 2018 – On Monday, October 1 at Fall River Heritage State Park, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) and the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN) will host [a workshop on the major environmental factors affecting the Taunton River, its tributaries, surrounding lands and Mount Hope Bay](#). The 9 a.m. event spotlights this major source of freshwater to Narragansett Bay as a follow-up to the 2017 *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed*, one of the most comprehensive scientific reports on the watershed written to date. To highlight the importance and impacts of collaboration, NBEP will present awards to local champions that have created lasting change in the watershed. These awardees exemplify NBEP's and RTWN's goals of working through partnerships across organizations, municipalities, states, and disciplines to protect and restore water quality and habitat.

“The focus of data, analysis, and synthesis on the Taunton River watershed has highlighted the important work of our partners in this area and has highlighted key gaps in our knowledge and understanding of this region. Continued collaboration to fill these gaps remains a high priority for the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program,” said John King, chair of NBEP’s Science Advisory Committee.

The health of the Taunton River watershed is critically important thanks to this river’s role in the regional ecosystem, which is home to nearly 700,000 people and hundreds of species of plants and wildlife. It is the second-largest watershed in Massachusetts, spanning 42 towns and 562 square miles, and is the largest source of freshwater flowing into Narragansett Bay. It is also the longest undammed tidal river in New England, supporting the most productive herring run in Massachusetts, and flowing 40 miles downstream to Mt. Hope Bay. Because of its outstanding natural, cultural and recreational value, it has been designated a

National Wild and Scenic River, which carries with it protections that safeguard its special character while also recognizing the potential for appropriate recreational use and development. A recent analysis by RTWN partner Manomet found that 30 percent of the watershed consists of unprotected natural lands that are of high priority for both human and ecological resilience. This knowledge creates an opportunity to foster greater preservation efforts in the midst of accelerated urbanization.

Conference and workshop topics to be discussed during the half-day workshop include:

- Current state of the Taunton River watershed
- Water quality monitoring efforts
- Narragansett Bay's response to changes in the watershed
- Nature-based solutions to protect land
- Restoration of the Taunton River and surrounding lands
- Adaptation strategies to save our coastal habitats
- Building partnerships for progress

“The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program considers the public discussion of its *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed* report in partnership with the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network to be a genuine watershed moment. The joining of bi-state expertise to inform ecosystem health within natural, rather than political, boundaries is a major cause for celebration by all who value our beautiful streams and rivers that serve habitat and human health,” said Judith Swift, chair of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program’s steering committee.

Partners hosting this event include: Resilient Taunton Watershed Network, Taunton River Watershed Alliance, Mass Audubon, Save The Bay, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission. In addition, major sponsors include Fuss & O’Neill and Horsley Witten Group.

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