

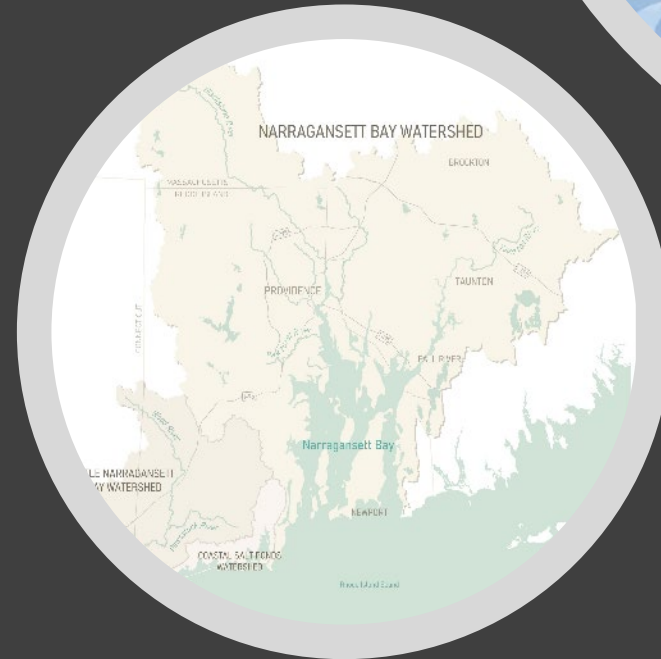
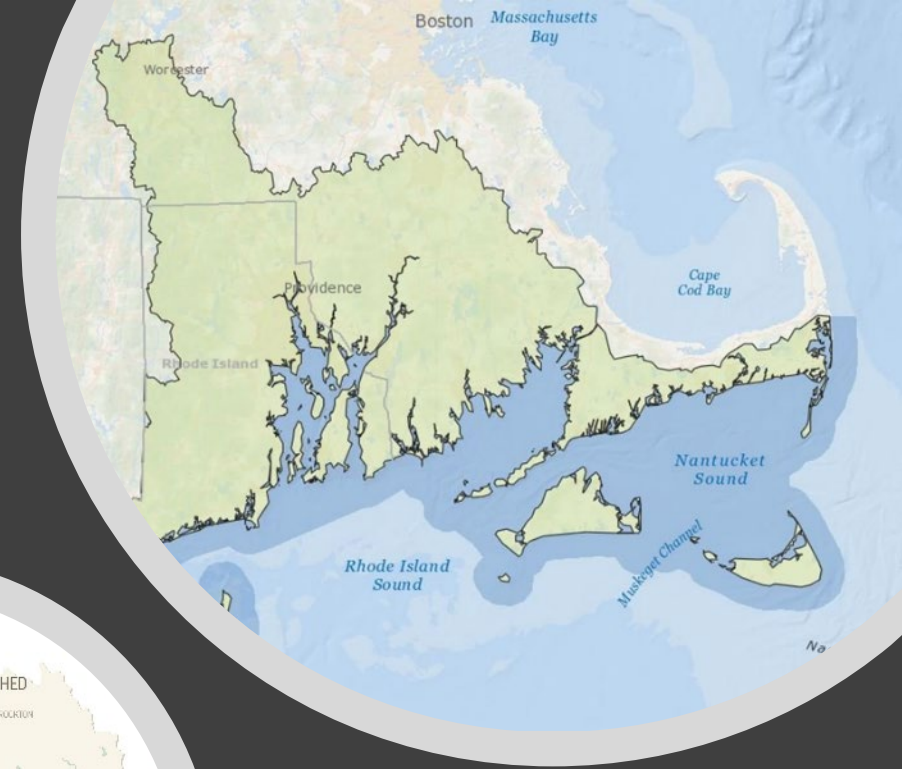
**NARRAGANSETT BAY  
ESTUARY PROGRAM**

# Blackstone River Watershed Needs Assessment



# Project Origin

- Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) builds partnerships, communicates science, and funds restoration in the Narragansett Bay Region
- The Blackstone River Watershed Needs Assessment Project responds to local feedback at NBEP's Blackstone Workshop in April 2019
- EPA's Southeast New England Program (SNEP) agreed to fund project in fall 2019



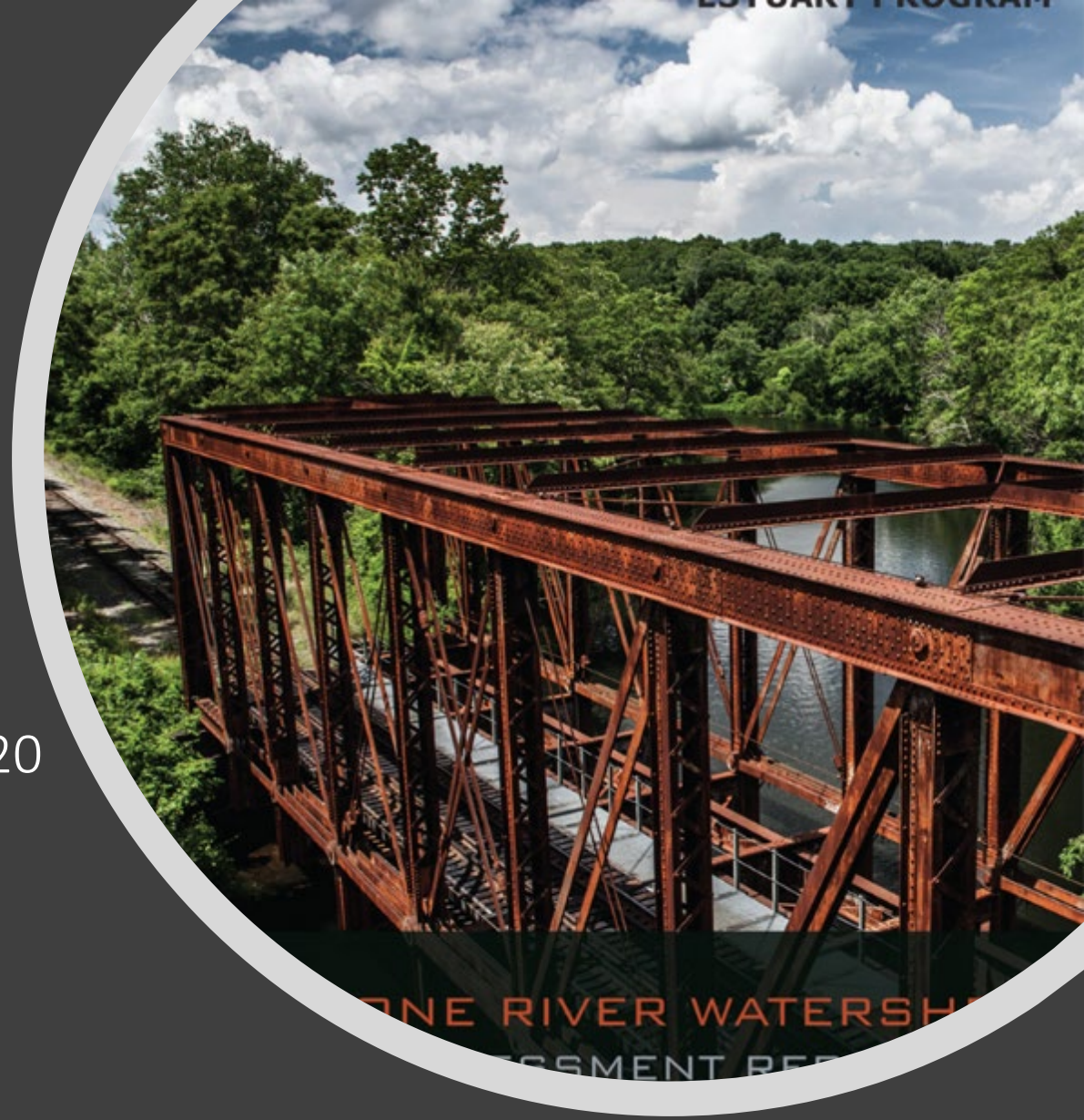


# Project Process

- Goal was for local people to collaboratively identify needs that once addressed will improve water quality, habitat, and quality of life in the watershed
- Used “iterative” process (tweak along the way) to identify, prioritize, respond, and refine needs AND responsive actions
- NBEP budgeted capacity funding to support plan development and future implementation

# Project Results

- 7 meetings—discussed needs and successes
- Average of 33 attendees during COVID!
- Nearly 50 interests participated
- First draft assessment released March 2020
  - 33 comments received
- Final draft released June 2020
  - Includes **20 Recommended Actions**
- **Positive feedback** so far on report



# Recommended Actions

## New Plans

1. Develop a coordinated **fundraising plan** to increase and diversify funding to the watershed.
2. Create an **education strategy** that informs and energizes the public.
3. Develop a new **wetland restoration strategy** for the Blackstone.
4. **Study surface water supply** to identify existing and future flow-challenged areas.





# Recommended Actions

## Enhance Existing Programs

5. Maximize effectiveness of existing **monitoring programs** to influence action.
6. Update existing **local regulations** that enable implementation of **nature-based solutions**.
7. Increase support for **permanent land protection**.
8. Increase support for planning for and installation of **low impact development practices**.
9. Advance more **aquatic connectivity** projects from headwaters to estuary.

# Recommended Actions

## New Programs

10. Prioritize specified project types and geographies as a watershed (e.g., polluted waters, important habitats, overburdened communities).
11. Establish a **green jobs program** with a focus on maintenance.
12. Create **bridge funding** to help municipalities more quickly protect undeveloped lands.
13. Launch new program to **recognize developers and communities** that execute sustainable development.





# Recommended Actions

## “New” Projects

14. Accelerate management of **water chestnut** to support habitat and recreation.
15. Create pre-conditions for fish passage on the **four dams on the lower main stem Blackstone**.
16. Complete new sections of the **Blackstone River Bikeway-Greenway**.
17. Increase **free and equitable access** to use and benefit from waterways.

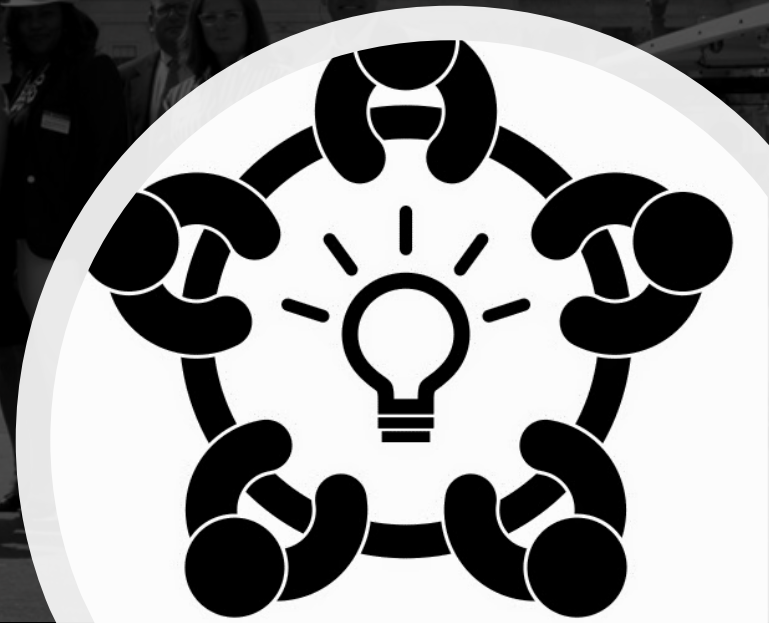


# Recommended Actions

## Implementation!

18. Clark University has hired a **Watershed Coordinator** to establish and maintain a **Blackstone Collaborative**.

19. Pursue **coordinated advocacy** to advance these recommended actions and future priorities.



# Next Steps

- Formal public comment from **June 27<sup>th</sup> to September 3<sup>rd</sup>**.
  - Download the report here: [www.nbep.org/news-reel/blackstone-needs-assessment-public-comment](http://www.nbep.org/news-reel/blackstone-needs-assessment-public-comment)
  - Send comments to Mike Gerel [mike.Gerel@nbep.org](mailto:mike.Gerel@nbep.org)
- **Future public meetings** expected to be held through September by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in Pawtucket, RI and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor/Mass Audubon in Worcester, MA
- Final Blackstone Needs Assessment meeting **September 28, 2021**
- **Blackstone Collaborative** and new coordinator will then take the baton!

Thank you!  
Comments or Questions?

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