National Estuary Program Funding

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

FY2023 Annual Workplan for §320 and SNEP Funds



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**QA/QC Plan Required:** Yes

**Project Period:** October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2026

**Resources Requested:** This is a new award. Total budget is $2,200,000 (FY2022 funds and required non-federal match). Attachment A provides the FY2023 budget summary and itemized budget for this award.

**Federal Cost:** Current request: $1,100,000 (FY2023 funds)

**Non-Federal Match:** The attached match documentation includes $1,100,000 received from various partners for FY2023.

**Abstract:** This [Narragansett Bay Estuary Program](http://www.nbep.org) (NBEP or program) Narrative Workplan (workplan) includes 4 objectives and 17 tasks that will be undertaken with this FY2023 allocation of [Clean Water Act §320](https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/33/1330) and [Southeast New England Program](https://www.epa.gov/snep) (“Base” funding) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to its host, Roger Williams University (RWU), for this third year of this multi-year Cooperative Agreement with EPA that started Oct 1, 2021. The agreement has a three-year project period (October 1, 2023 – September 2026). This annual NBEP Base Workplan for FY2023 includes efforts that the program has the authority, capability, and funding to complete, have support by the NBEP [Steering Committee](https://www.nbep.org/steering-committee), and are intended to advance NBEP’s [Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](https://www.nbep.org/s/NBEP-CCMP-2012.pdf) (CCMP) for the program’s [Study Area](https://narragansett-bay-estuary-program-nbep.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/73cc1e5845c247e2959ac141f9b8c4b5_0/explore) of Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Ponds, and their watersheds in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

1. **Objectives**

This work plan includes four objectives that align with NBEP’s mission, CCMP, services, and funding requirements. The objectives are grouped by NBEP’s core services: (1) Program Management; (2) Collaborative Planning; (3) Science Communications; and (4) Partner Funding. The CCMP objectives addressed in this workplan are listed for each NBEP objective. Each NBEP objective includes specific tasks, with target completion dates and expected outputs and outcomes.

**Summary of FY2023 NBEP Base Workplan Objectives and Tasks**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective** | **Task** |
| 1. Ensure sound **program management** consistent with NBEP’s mission, bylaws, and CCMP. | 1. Program Leadership. |
| 1. Host Institution Program Support. |
| 1. Base Workplan and Budget Development. |
| 1. Committee Support. |
| 1. Subaward and Contract Management. |
| 1. Land Acknowledgment Development. |
| 1. Grant Writing. |
| 1. Provide **collaborative regional planning** to advance more resilient, sustainable, and equitable natural resource management, use, and enjoyment. | 1. Vision 2032 Completion. |
| 1. Science Working Group Convening. |
| 1. Regional Research, Restoration, Monitoring, Financial, & Outreach Planning. |
| 1. Southeast New England Program Support. |
| 1. **Communicate science** in ways that is understood and useful to researchers, managers, other priority audiences. | 1. Science Updates. |
| 1. Annual Science Event. |
| 1. Targeted Outreach. |
| 1. **Award funding** to partners to help implement the CCMP. | 1. Small Education and Outreach Subawards. |
| 1. RIDEM Fish & Wildlife Data Analysis Subaward. |
| 1. RINHS Biodiversity Database Subaward. |

**NBPE Core Services**

**Program Management**

**Objective 1**:**Ensure sound program management consistent with NBEP’s mission, bylaws, and CCMP.**

Primary 2012 CCMP Objectives Addressed:

* This objective supports all 24 CCMP objectives.

**Task 1a: Program Leadership**

The Executive Director and delegated NBEP staff will work with the Steering Committee, the [Executive Committee](https://www.nbep.org/executive-committee), and other committees to assure sound governance, performance, and standing of NBEP. This will be accomplished by (1) ensuring work is consistent with grant agreements, the NBEP’s [bylaws](https://www.nbep.org/s/Narragansett-Bay-Estuary-Program-Bylaws_31722-FINAL-APPROVED.pdf),current CCMP, and annual workplans and amendments; (2) assuring an approach that is science-based, collaborative, community-driven, and otherwise consistent with the National Estuary Program (NEP) model; (3) maintaining relationships, pursuing new partnerships, and representing NBEP in appropriate forums to optimize awareness of NBEP’s unique role and value; (4) EPA cooperative agreement and re-granting oversight, progress tracking, and reporting; (5) providing day-to-day management of the NBEP office, including direct supervision of staff and interns, collaborating with the host institution on staff and intern hiring and performance reviews, development of staff and intern work plans, and ongoing mentoring; and (6) elevating and amplifying diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice consistent with NBEP’s [2022 DEIJ Assessment](https://www.nbep.org/deij-evaluation). Note that NBEP plans to hire an Ecologist in by January 2024with §320 funds to broaden our technical expertise to fill gaps in the region by helping to implement Tasks 1e, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 4b, and 4c. Through these responsibilities, the Executive Director assures delivery of additive, actionable information, tools, and funding that advances water quality, wildlife, and quality of life in the Study Area. Task 1a will be accomplished via personnel time of NBEP staff.

**Task 1b: Host Institution Program Support**

RWU will support NBEP by providing specific services that enable the program to employ quality staff, meet a high standard of financial management, and otherwise operate consistent with legal requirements, NBEP’s bylaws, and annual workplan. This will be accomplished by (1) employing all NBEP staff and RWU student interns; (2) overseeing staff hiring and performance review; (3) serving as the program’s fiscal sponsor; (4) formally applying for, accepting, and distributing public and private funding on behalf of the program; (5) developing contracts, subawards, and attendant documentation (including those funded using BIL funding); (6) establishing and managing NBEP office space agreement; (7) submitting required reports to funders; (8) support joint NBEP/RWU communications and events as appropriate; and (9) coordinating with the Executive Director and EPA as needed. Task 1b will be accomplished through personnel time of RWU staff.

**Task 1c: Work Plan and Budget Development and Tracking**

The Executive Director will develop workplans and budgets for review by the NBEP Executive Committee and approval by the NBEP Steering Committee in June each year. RWU will complete a final annual grant application for submission to EPA in July each year. For FY2023 NBEP will complete one set of materials for Base funding (the [FY2022-FY2023 BIL Workplan](https://www.nbep.org/s/NBEP-FY2022-FY2023-BIL-Workplan-Final_83022.pdf) was developed and approved by the Steering Committee last year). The Executive Director and RWU will collaborate to track and report progress toward completion of workplan tasks consistent with funder requirements, and as otherwise requested by the Steering Committee or EPA. Task 1c will be accomplished with personnel time of NBEP and RWU staff.

**Task 1d: Committee Support**

NBEP is guided by three standing committees: Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and [Science Advisory Committee](https://www.nbep.org/science-advisory-committee). Presently there are also three subcommittees: Vision 2032, Grants, and Nominating. The Steering and Executive Committees meet quarterly, and the Science Advisory Committee three times a year. The Executive Director in collaboration with the committee Chairs, lead the Steering and Executive Committees, while the Staff Scientist with the committee Chair(s) lead the Science Advisory Committee. Refinement of the Science Advisory Committees priority roles and framework consistent with NBEP’s bylaws will be explored into FY2023 to assure best of the committee in advancing the CCMP and regional science. NBEP leads schedule meetings; develop agendas, program reports, and recommendations for consideration; recruit speakers; conduct meetings; draft notes; and post meeting materials publicly as appropriate. Meetings are designed to inform members, seek their expertise and approval of staff recommendations per NBEP bylaws, facilitate member coordination and relationships, and engagement with stakeholders as appropriate. NBEP proposes to provide meals, in this case a light lunch, for all quarterly Steering Committee meetings, and up to the equivalent of four other meetings, held during normal business hours to enable longer meetings, encourage active participation, and acknowledge the considerable commitment people make as a member of these committees (Steering Committee meetings: approximate cost per person $15; anticipated attendance 30; total cost per meeting: $450; total cost for the equivalent of 8 meetings: $3,600). Further, participant support contracts (up to $650/day) may also be provided to compensate non-committee members who attend to offer presentations, public comment, or otherwise provide their expertise and life experience. Task 1d will be accomplished through personnel time of NBEP staff, meals, and participant support contracts.

**Task 1e: Subaward and Contract Management**

NBEP will distribute 60% of its funding to external parties for the FY2018 to FY2023 period. The program expects to have over 30 active subawards and contracts during FY2023. These numbers include those funded with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) monies. Some of these awards are highlighted [here](https://www.nbep.org/projects-we-fund). Management of these awards is currently spread across three staff and includes collaboration with RWU on scope, budget, and agreement development, review and approval of quarterly reports and invoices, processing of amendments, and routine interaction with EPA, RWU, and awardees. Because oversight of these awards now takes considerable time, this work is called out as a separate task in this workplan. Task 1e is completed through personnel time of NBEP staff.

**Task 1f: Land Acknowledgment Development**

Indigenous people have occupied NBEP’s study area since time immemorial. First people’s homelands in the region include the Eastern Nehantick, Mohegan, Narragansett, Nipmuc, Pequot, Pokanoket, Wampanoag, and perhaps others. Land Acknowledgments are completed to recognize the traditional land stewardship, contributions, and continuation of these people. NBEP intends to create a Land Acknowledgement that recognize that indigenous voices are still here and document the program’s commitment to working with them as equals to attain shared goals. The program intends to partner with indigenous people, scholars, and others to authentically and respectfully develop a Land Acknowledgement consistent with the insights of Loren Spears of the Tomaquag Museum found [here](https://www.tomaquagmuseum.org/belongingsblog/2020/3/22/a-guide-for-land-acknowledgements-by-lorn-spears). Work will be coordinated with RWU administration, as well as faculty with expertise in the area. This task was included in the FY2022 Workplan but was delayed until FY2023. Task 1e will be accomplished through personnel time of NBEP staff and interns, participant support contracts, and a consultant contract, the later funded by remaining FY2022 funds.

**Task 1g: Grant Writing**

NBEP staff will develop up to two (2) proposals independently or with partners to augment and diversify program funding each fiscal year. Proposals will be developed, submitted, and any awards administered in compliance with the NBEP’s bylaws, EPA’s [*FY2021-FY2024 Clean Water Act §320 National Estuary Program Funding Guidance*](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/cms.santamonicabay.org/wp-content/uploads/NEP-Funding-Guidance-2020-24-FINAL-10-13-2049259.pdf) (Funding Guidance) dated October 13, 2020, and [OMB’s Uniform Guidance](https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-policies/omb-uniform-guidance-2014.html). NBEP will explore a range of grant opportunities, update the Executive and Steering Committee on prospects, and draft proposals. RWU will submit proposals and administer any awarded funds. The finance plan described in Task 2c will guide whether NBEP pursues grant writing or other fundraising for internal purposes and/or to help implement the CCMP. NBEP staff may also provide letters of support for partner proposals that are consistent with the CCMP. Task 1f will be accomplished via personnel time of NBEP staff.

| **FY2023 Tasks, Completion Dates, Outputs, and Outcomes** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task and Staff Leads** | **Completion Date** | **Outputs** | **Outcome** |
| **Task 1a: NBEP Program Leadership**  (Executive Director) | Ongoing | Oversee implementation of NBEP annual and staff workplans and amendments.  Maintain relationships with up to 500 existing partners.  Develop 30 new partners.  Represent NBEP in at least 5 forums.  Collaborate with the host institution on hiring a new Ecologist, RWU interns, and completing. performance reviews.  Compile and submit 1 NBEP annual report and 1 NEPORT report to EPA.  Travel for meetings. | Administrative and programmatic performance, reputation, and morale is such that NBEPs mission and CCMP are advanced. |
| **Task 1b: RWU Program Support**  (RWU Associate Provost for Global and Community Engagement, RWU Research and Sponsored Programs, RWU Finance, RWU Office of General Counsel) | Ongoing | Develop and submit EPA Base Cooperative Agreement application and amendments to Base and BIL agreements as needed.  Oversee staff hiring and performance review.  Submit up to 2 other proposals.  Submit NBEP reports, close-out documents, and other paperwork as required.  Accept funding, execute contract and subaward paperwork, and pay invoices. | Program operations are efficient and effective such that the it is consistent with NBEP bylaws and federal rules, advances the CCMP, and staff and partners are afforded high quality support. |
| **Task 1c: Work Plan and Budget Development**  (Executive Director) | July 2024 | Base Workplan, budget, and any amendments are drafted and approved by the Steering Committee and provided to RWU. | Work plan is consistent with federal requirements, aligns with the program’s core services and funding, and outputs/outcomes are achieved that advance the CCMP. |
| **Task 1d: Committee Support**  (NBEP staff and interns) | Ongoing | 4 Steering Committee meetings, materials, and notes.  4 Executive Committee meetings, materials, and notes.  Up 3 Science Advisory Committee meetings, materials, and notes.  Up to 4 NBEP subcommittee meetings and materials.  Up to 4 participant support contracts.  Meals for the equivalent of 8 committee meetings.  Staff travel for meetings. | Committee oversight of the program is consistent with the bylaws and meetings are efficient, inclusive, and useful. |
| **Task 1e: Subaward and Contract Management**  (Staff Scientist, Watershed Outreach Manager, Ecologist) | Ongoing | Up to 40 subawards and contracts awarded under §320 and BIL managed. | NBEP subawards and contracts are professionally managed to assure adherence to rules and obligations. |
| **Task 1f: Land Acknowledgment Development**  (Watershed Outreach Manager and interns) | May 2024 | Up to 4 participant support contracts.  Land acknowledgement approved by the Steering Committee.  Staff travel for meetings. | Land Acknowledgments in place that recognize the traditional land stewardship, contributions, and continued presence of indigenous people in the area. |
| **Task 1g: Grant Writing**  (Executive Director, Staff Scientist, Watershed Outreach Manager) | September 2024 | Up to 2 grant proposals developed. | NBEP funding is augmented and more diversified. |

***Objective 2: Provide collaborative regional planning to advance more resilient, sustainable, and equitable natural resource management, use, and enjoyment.***

Primary 2012 CCMP Objectives Addressed:

* Objective 1.1: Reduce pollution from wastewater sources.
* Objective 1.2: Reduce pollution from stormwater sources.
* Objective 1.4: Manage estuaries, rivers, streams, and lakes to protect and restore beneficial uses.
* Objective 1.5: Improve funding for water projects and monitoring.
* Objective 1.6: Improve information, science, and analysis to restore fresh and salt waters.
* Objective 2.4: Increase and retain recreational opportunities and public access to the shore.
* Objective 2.5: Improve science, information, and communications for land use management.
* Objective 2.6. Increase the role of local organizations and municipalities in watershed management.
* Objective 3.3. Manage habitats to sustain and enhance function.
* Objective 3.4: Monitor, control and prevent terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.
* Objective 3.5: Improve science and communication to guide management of habitats and biodiversity.
* Objective 3.6. Build capacity to implement and cooperate on ecological restoration at state/local levels.
* Objective 4.2. Improve public and private infrastructure to withstand anticipated climate change impacts.
* Objective 4.5: Improve science and information necessary for preparedness and response.
* Objective 4.6: Ensure that coastal habitat restoration and conservation efforts consider climate change.

**Task 2a: Vision 2032 Completion**

Since late 2019 NBEP has been developing its next CCMP, called Vision 2032. EPA requires NEPs to develop these guiding documents roughly every 10 years in accordance with the [*National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Revision and Update Guidelines*](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-02/documents/nep_ccmp_revision_and_update_guidelines_final_5-3-16_1.pdf), May 2016 (CCMP Guidance). The program’s first plan released in [1992](http://nbep.org/publications/NBP-92-114.pdf) and the current update in place since [2012](https://www.nbep.org/s/NBEP-CCMP-2012.pdf). The new plan will respond to best available science and local perspectives with a short-list of actions that can address priority problems in the region within the next decade. NBEP has held 17 [meetings](https://vision2032.org/meetings/), received EPA concurrence on a [Vision 2032 Blueprint](https://vision2032.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NBEP-Vision-2032-Blueprint_Version-4_Final_8.20.20.pdf) in August 2020, received OMB approval to release two public surveys [March 2021](https://vision2032.org/get-involved/) and [October 2021](https://www.nbep.org/deij-evaluation), created an [Action Planning Worksheet](https://vision2032.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-4-19-NBEP-Action-Plan-Worksheet-Template.docx) in October 2022 that enables proposed actions to be sketched out and considered through the lenses of climate resilience, sustainable resource use, and equity, hired [Coastwise Partners](https://prepestuaries.org/01/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CoastWise-Partners-Holly-Greening-and-Rich-Batiuk.pdf) to consult on plan development, and maintained a [Vision2032.org](file:///C:\Users\cschmidt\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\5L6G1WYF\in%20March%202021) site for engaging the public. Based on significant feedback to date, the program set four topline goals (improving partner capacity to act, water quality, habitat quality and resilience, and the public’s access to nature) in October 2022, identified [15 objectives and 38 actions](https://vision2032.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-4-4-NBEP-Vision-2032-Action-List-Spring-2023-2.pdf) for meeting those goals in March 2023, and completed worksheets for all 38 actions in May 2023. NBEP also finalized a novel plan structure organized by target audience—for the public, short stories by established authors as prologues to each goal-chapter, for conservation practitioners, 38 2-pp Action Plans, and mostly for EPA, an appendix with required checklists. Hiring of authors, photographers, graphic designers, and drafting of Action Plans is ongoing.

NBEP will finish Vision 2032 under this workplan. The program will assemble the draft plan, seek public comment, pursue Steering Committee and EPA review and approval, formally publish by June 2024, and seek media attention, including separate publication of the prologue stories, as a call to action to kick-off implementation. Task 2a will be achieved through personnel time of the NBEP staff and consultant contracts, the later funded by remaining FY2022 funds.

**Task 2b: Science Working Group Convening**

In the early 2000s, NBEP helped lead a Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Team. This team served as a multi-interest/disciplinary habitat restoration workgroup to increase collaboration, effectiveness, and government funding for restoration. The formal convening of this team phased out in the 2010s as NBEP focused on development of the 2017 Report. Starting in 2020 at the suggestion of members of the Steering Committee, the program stepped back into this space by forming several science working groups to aid coordination and decision-making on key issues not being addressed by other organizations or venues, including salt marsh and SAV restoration, water clarity monitoring, use of fisher’s ecological knowledge, and development of social science indicators. These groups have been cross-boundary (e.g., state) and “purpose-driven,” in that they only meet when necessary and don’t just ‘meet to meet.’ NBEP staff will continue to host the existing working groups as needed and potentially form new groups. Habitat project prioritization and interstate water quality and habitat monitoring are topics stakeholders have said could benefit from new forums. NBEP will involve the Science Advisory Committee members with relevant expertise as appropriate. Further, hiring of a new NBEP Ecologist will expand our capacity to assist in this space. Task 2b will be accomplished through the personnel time of the NBEP staff.

**Task 2c: Regional Research, Restoration, Financial, and Engagement Planning.**

EPA CCMP and funding guidance call for NEPs to develop several a host of plans to support their operation and CCMP implementation. Monitoring, finance, outreach, and habitat restoration plans are specifically mentioned. NBEP has chosen not to develop these big picture plans to date for a host of reasons. NBEP was not viewed as an expert in these areas, stakeholders in each state were content following their own path, and the program was focused on completing foundational work, like publishing the Status and Trends Report and new bylaws, shifting to a new host, developing a new CCMP, and its niche in regional conservation. However, based on new programmatic stability and staffing, the program finds that development of several, where appropriate cross-boundary (e.g., states, towns, watersheds), regional plans would now be additive and useful in FY2023. NBEP expects to develop the following:

* Research Plan informed by regional research needs identified in the 2017 Report, FY2022 interviews with the Science Advisory Committee and subsequent committee meetings, and current literature,
* Engagement Plan that describe the target audiences, purpose, tactics, tools, and timing of NBEP’s outreach work,
* Finance Plan that identifies the cost, benefits, and sources of funding for implementing Vision 2032,
* Habitat Restoration prioritization support that enables the region to acquire and deploy more funding, and
* Monitoring coordination support, including but not limited to, collaboration with the URI Coastal Institute/RI Environmental Monitoring Collaborative on water quality and cross-state habitat monitoring building on the RI specific efforts in Tasks 4b and 4c in this workplan.

Task 2c will be accomplished through the personnel time of the NBEP staff.

**Task 2d: SNEP Support**

NBEP has received funding and otherwise offered technical support to the SNEP program since its inception. NBEP staff participate actively on the following SNEP planning committees: SNEP Steering Committee, SNEP Policy Committee, SNEP Network Advisory Committee, and Restore America’s Estuaries Grant Review Committee. Staff also help organize or attend SNEP forums, webinars, and other events. Due to an increase in requests for NBEP staff time from SNEP, the program will be strategic about its participation in SNEP activities. Task 2d will be accomplished through personnel time of NBEP staff.

**FY2023 Tasks, Completion Dates, Outputs, and Outcomes**

| **Task and Leads** | **Completion Date** | **Outputs** | **Outcome** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task 2a: Vision 2032 Completion**  (NBEP staff and interns) | June 2024 | Up to 38 Actions Plans developed.  Up to 5 authors hired.  Draft Vision 2032.  Comments on draft plan.  Final Vision 2032 approved by SC/EPA.  At least 5 articles on the new plan. | Vision 2032 published and implementation begins. |
| **Task 2b: Science Working Group Convening**  (Staff Scientist, Ecologist) | Ongoing | At least 6 working group meetings.  Staff travel for meetings. | Greater coordination, information exchange, and collaborative decision-making for priority issues. |
| **Task 2c: Regional Planning**  (Staff Scientist, Watershed Outreach Manager, Ecologist, interns) | Ongoing  March 2024  September 2024  Ongoing | At least 6 meetings.  Research Plan and Engagement Plan.  Finance Plan, habitat prioritization and monitoring coordination work  Staff travel for meetings. | Regional engagement, research, fundraising, and habitat restoration is more coordinated and effective at implementing the CCMP. |
| **Task 2d: SNEP Support**  (Executive Director, Staff Scientist, Watershed Outreach Manager, Ecologist) | Ongoing | 10 SNEP activities attended.  Staff travel for meetings. | Improvement of SNEP and its impact on the Study Area. |

**Objective 3: Communicate science in ways that is understood and useful to researchers, managers, other priority audiences.**

Primary 2012 CCMP Objectives Addressed:

* Objective 1.1: Reduce pollution from wastewater sources.
* Objective 1.2: Reduce pollution from stormwater sources.
* Objective 1.3: Reduce pollution from combined sewer overflows.
* Objective 1.4: Manage estuaries, rivers, streams, and lakes to protect and restore beneficial uses.
* Objective 1.6: Improve information, science, and analysis to restore fresh and salt waters.
* Objective 2.4: Increase and retain recreational opportunities and public access to the shore.
* Objective 2.5: Improve science, information, and communications for land use management.
* Objective 2.6. Increase the role of local organizations and municipalities in watershed management.
* Objective 3.3. Manage habitats to sustain and enhance function.
* Objective 3.5: Improve science and communication to guide management of habitats and biodiversity.
* Objective 3.6. Build capacity to implement and cooperate on ecological restoration at state/local levels.
* Objective 4.5: Improve science and information necessary for preparedness and response.
* Objective 4.6: Ensure that coastal habitat restoration and conservation efforts consider climate change.

**Task 3a: Science Updates**

NEPs periodically release complete a comprehensive status and trends report for their Study Area. NBEP’s last status and trends report published in 2017, titled [*State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watersheds*](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dgeBNAZ7QofUJDAO7yKG9-uo_642dRvs/view?usp=sharing) (Report) and included 24 condition and stressor indicators. NBEP has worked with the Science Working Groups to publish Science Updates on an existing indicator ([water clarity](https://www.nbep.org/waterclarity-working-group)), potential new indicators ([social science](https://www.nbep.org/soc-sci-working-group)), and will continue to periodically publish updates that present new information related to existing/potential new indicators and emerging issues. These materials may take the form of Science Updates, Story Maps, geospatial information system (GIS) tools, data dashboards, white papers, newsletter pieces, data reports, or other means to best convey complex scientific information to specific target audiences, from restoration practitioners, to resource managers, to the general public. Exploring means to understand ecosystem change and advancing the initial social science indicators, especially public access to nature, are priorities. Further, in preparation for beginning full-scale development of the next status and trends report in FY2025, NBEP will create and seek Steering Committee and EPA concurrence on a “roadmap” for the next full Report. A quality assurance project plan (QAPP) to cover these updates was approved that runs from February 2023 to December 2024. NBEP staff will work with the Science Advisory Committee, working groups, and other experts to prioritize topics for updates and the next Report. Task 3a will be done via personnel time of NBEP staff and interns.

**Task 3b: Annual Science Event**

NBEP has been a leader in regional science for many years. Over 100 scientific reports funded by the program and the status and trends report have created a baseline of knowledge. NBEP will collaborate with the Science Advisory Committee and regional partners to design and host an annual science conference, workshop, or equivalent that addresses a topic that is especially germane to the Study Area and would benefit from deeper discussion. NBEP will be hosting a day-long symposium on regional biodiversity and rare species stories, challenges, and opportunities at RWU on October 6, 2023. A meeting announcement, all presentations, and a meeting summary will be posted on the NBEP website. NBEP proposes to provide meals, in this case a light lunch and snack for up to 150 meeting attendees during normal business hours to attract and keep participants (Rough cost per person $30; anticipated attendance 150; total cost: $4,500). Task 3b will be undertaken with personnel time of NBEP and RWU staff, program participation contracts, and contracts for event hosting.

**Task 3c: Targeted Outreach**

NEPs are community-based organizations. NBEP has been making a concerted effort to authentically connect with more people impacted by natural resource challenges and related actions in the Study Area. The desire it to drive more understanding of complex issues, avenues for providing input, and ownership of solutions. Further, a clear lesson from Vision 2032 outreach is that storytelling about the region’s successes (e.g., reduced nutrient pollution, open shellfishing areas) and challenges (e.g., climate change, environmental justice, emerging contaminants) is absolutely vital to realizing this deeper engagement. Hope over pessimism will be the rule. The ultimate goal is two-way learning and relationship-building from all engagement. Direct outreach avenues include attendance at NBEP’s own convenings, regional meetings and workshops, one-on-one meetings, and an active and growing MailChimp contact list of 520 partners. Indirect engagement is accomplished through publication of Science Updates, Story Maps, fact sheets, GIS tools, a monthly newsletter, press interviews and releases, and website updates. NBEPs outreach to date has generally been project-specific and opportunistic. NBEP plans to become more strategic by developing the Engagement Plan noted under Task 2c. Task 3c will be accomplished through the time of NBEP staff, consultant contracts, and the small outreach subawards noted under Task 4a.

| **FY2023 Tasks, Completion Dates, Outputs, and Outcomes** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task and Leads** | **Completion Date** | **Output** | **Outcome** |
| **Task 3a: Status and Trends Updates**  (Staff Scientist, Geospatial and Design Manager, Ecologist, interns) | Ongoing  Ongoing  June 2024 | Up to 5 science updates created.  3 GIS/web-based tools developed.  1 roadmap for next Status and Trends Report. | Greater understanding and availability of scientific information on the Study Area. |
| **Task 3b: Annual Science Event**  (Watershed Outreach Manager, Geospatial and Design Manager) | October 6, 2023 | 1 science event completed.  1 set of event materials posted.  Up to 7 program participation contracts.  Meals for the event.  Travel for the event. | Event advances knowledge of an issue of local importance and NBEP/RWU as leaders in regional science. |
| **Task 3c: Targeted Outreach**  (Watershed Outreach Manager, interns) | Ongoing | Up to 10 new/revised outreach publications.  At least 6 monthly newsletters.  At least 10 presentations offered.  50 meetings/events joined.  1 set of NEP communications materials from Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP).  Up to 5 program participation contracts. | Greater understanding by the interested public of the environmental issues facing in the Study Area and NBEP’s and partners work to address them. |

**Objective 4: Award funding to partners to help implement the CCMP.**

Primary 2012 CCMP Goals Addressed:

* Objective 1.4: Manage estuaries, rivers, streams, and lakes to protect and restore beneficial uses.
* Objective 1.6: Improve information, science, and analysis to restore fresh and salt waters.
* Objective 2.2: Preserve open space and natural systems.
* Objective 2.5: Improve science, information, and communications for land use management.
* Objective 2.6. Increase the role of local organizations and municipalities in watershed management.
* Objective 3.1: Conserve natural landscapes at risk by development and climate change.
* Objective 3.3. Manage habitats to sustain and enhance function.
* Objective 3.4. Monitor, control and prevent terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.
* Objective 3.5: Improve science and communication to guide management of habitats and biodiversity.
* Objective 3.6. Build capacity to implement and cooperate on ecological restoration at state/local levels.
* Objective 4.5: Improve science and information necessary for preparedness and response.
* Objective 4.6: Ensure that coastal habitat restoration and conservation efforts consider climate change.

**Task 4a: Small Education and Outreach Subawards**

NBEP is looking to extend its outreach work to new audiences in the Study Area. Tasks 2c and 3c speak to this plan. The program is pursuing direct engagement with certain interests, and recently began funding local partners with their own outreach programs whose goals align with the CCMP (e.g., Blackstone Watershed Collaborative, Blackstone River Watershed Council, RI School of Design). This indirect outreach via partners has worked well, especially building new trusting connections with indigenous communities. NBEP intends to expand and formalize this support by creating a Small Education and Outreach grant program that will fund partners’ programs and events that connect new people to local environmental issues and provide ready opportunities to celebrate successes and take action to address problems moving forward. A request for proposals (RFP) or direct awards may be used to share funds. NBEP expects to provide up to 10 subawards that range from $5K-$15K. Task 4a will be accomplished through the time of NBEP and RWU staff under Tasks 1a and 1b and subawards up to $58,800.

**Task 4b: RI Department of Environmental Management Fish & Wildlife Data Analysis Subaward**

The RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) uses best science to manage Rhode Island’s marine ([RI Division of Marine Fisheries](https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/marine-fisheries), DMF) and freshwater, diadromous, and terrestrial ([RI Division of Fish & Wildlife](https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/fish-wildlife), DFW) resources to assure sustainable and equitable use. Staff in these divisions of the RIDEM Natural Resources Bureau and collaborating organizations conduct resource monitoring, stock and habitat assessments, mapping, and directed research to advance the knowledge base on specific resources and broader ecosystems, track against effectiveness measures, understand how these systems are changing, and ultimately, inform management decisions. Examples of regular monitoring completed by DMF include Narragansett Bay, coastal pond, and river fish surveys; benthic and reef habitat mapping; and oyster and other shellfish assessments. While DFW and a long list of partners pursue single-species, guild-focused, and habitat-focused monitoring and assessment of anadromous fish (e.g., river herring), freshwater fish, amphibians, reptiles (e.g., Diamondback Terrapin), birds, other fauna, and their habitats.

NBEP and Narragansett Bay Estuarine Research Reserve staff were invited to participate in discussions at the *RIDEM—TNC Partnership Research Summit 2023* hosted in March 2023 by DMF and The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island. Based on this meeting and subsequent discussions with partners engaged in fish and wildlife habitat work, it was evident that RIDEM and TNC-RI are collecting a significant volume of data. However, short staffing in RI is constraining efficient organization, analysis, and sharing of all this data. Specifically, staff changes have left the bureau without a dedicated person to assemble data, run and build models, coordinate with neighboring states, and deliver information in a format that is readily useable by managers for tracking performance/system change and adapting programs. This role is being assumed by Divisional management staff after hours and actionable analytical results are often delayed. NBEP will subaward $75,000 through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to RIDEM to cover three-quarters of a term staffer (the remaining time covered by RIDEM) to provide these services. NBEP will manage the subaward, including the agreement with RIDEM that will define the tasks to be completed by the new hire, but will not be involved in the hiring process. The program intends to support this position at some level over the next few years to allow time for development of valuable work products that help the state establish a more permanent position. Task 4b will be accomplished through NBEP and RWU staff under Tasks 1a and 1b and subaward to ASMFC.

[NBEP IS AWAITING A DOCUMENT FROM RIDEM DMF THAT WILL SPECIFY OUTPUTS FROM THE HIRE.]

**Task 4c: RI Natural History Survey Biodiversity Database Subaward**

The [RI Natural History Survey](https://rinhs.org/) (RINHS) connects people with knowledge about the state’s animals, plants, and natural systems with each other and those who can use that information for research, education, and conservation. Documentation of RI’s plants and animals are spread across individual monitoring databases, assessments, restoration project reports, and volunteer initiatives, often only in printed form that are scarce. This wealth of data on the state’s rare species, invasive species, and overall biodiversity is not compiled and collated in one place where restoration practitioners and managers can access this information. This data isolation at the site level prevents evaluation of status and trends at other geographic and conceptual scales where ecological restoration is best pursued. A comprehensive biodiversity database has been needed some time that illuminates conditions, priorities, management decisions at the landscape scale. In the early 2000s, RINHS built an all-taxa biodiversity database, the Biota of Rhode Island Inventory System (BORIIS) to document species presence. Due to data quality concerns and technical reasons, BORIIS has limited usability and updates ceased in 2008. A successor database, BORIIS2, has been under development for several years, which would create a more complete and useable index of species, observer, date, location, and evidence. A proposal by RINHS submitted to the RI Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Trust Fund to advance BORIIS2 for wetlands plants was viewed very favorably by the review committee, but not competitive for the funding source.

NBEP will subaward $100,000 to RINHS to develop a “beta” RI biodiversity database (called BORIIS2 or otherwise). The existing BORIIS/2 work will be leveraged as appropriate, data captured, cleaned, and input, and the tool tested to guide creation of queries and reports, assess user experience, and inform more final development steps. The goal is a beta database that creates a curated index of best available biodiversity data that is usable by RINHS staff and at least select restoration partners and is ready for final development. The extent of RI biota included and degree of functionality and public accessibility of the beta version will be determined in the final subaward agreement between RWU and RINHS. Task 4c will be accomplished through NBEP and RWU staff time under Tasks 1a and 1b and a subaward to RINHS.

[NOTE: THIS TASK WAS HIGHLY RANKED IN THE EXERCISE AT THE LAST SC MEETING. MEETING WITH RINHS IS PENDING TO FURTHR DISCUSS THIS PROPOSED SUBAWARD.TASK CAN BE MADE MORE GENERAL TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TBD FOR IMPROVING RI BIODIVERSITY DATA MANAGEMENT IF NECESSARY.]

| **FY2023 Tasks, Completion Dates, Outputs, and Outcomes** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Completion Date** | **Outputs** | **Outcome** |
| **Task 4a: Small Education and Outreach Subawards**  (Watershed Outreach Manager) | Ongoing | One RFP and related solicitation documents (if used)  Scopes of work, budget, and agreements with subawardees  Up to 10 outreach efforts funded.  Final reports. | People are more knowledgeable about the environmental challenges facing the area and how they can help. |
| **Task 4b: RIDEM Fish & Wildlife Data Analysis Subaward**  (Ecologist) | Start Jan 2024 | 1 scope of work, budget, and agreement.  1 data analyst position hired by RIDEM.  Specific outputs from the new hire TBD.  Quarterly and final reports, including funding strategy for coming years. | RIDEM has the capacity to analyze existing fish and wildlife data, analysis is used to inform management decisions, and the position’s value is established. |
| **Task 4c: RINHS Biodiversity Database Subaward**  (Ecologist) | Start Jan 2024 | 1 scope of work, budget, and agreement.  1 working beta biodiversity database.  Quarterly and final reports, including next steps to achieve a final version. | Beta biodiversity database that offers sufficient data and functionality to improve the quantity, quality, and availability of information on RI biota. |

1. **Non-Federal Match**

NBEP’s Steering Committee includes many partners that are implementing projects that directly implement the actions consistent with the 2012 CCMP. A summary of each entity providing 1:1: non-federal match for this FY2023 cooperative agreement is included below and match documentation is provided for each source of funds:

* TBD

**Appendix A: New Subawards and Contracts Using FY2023 Funding\***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task(s)** | **Project** | **Amount** | **Major Outputs** | **Procurement** | **Funding Close** |
| All tasks | All tasks. | $20,000 | Up to 4 non-RWU students hired to support NBEP or partners. | Contract | 9/30/26 |
| Task 1d, 1e, 3b, 3c | Participant Support Contracts for specified tasks. | $9,750 | Up to 20 outside people paid to speak, attend, or otherwise offer their experience. | Contract | 9/30/26 |
| Task 3c | Targeted Outreach. | $4,000 | 1 set of NEP communications materials from ANEP. | Contract | 9/30/26 |
| Task 4a | Small Education and Outreach Subawards | $58,800 | Up to 10 outreach efforts funded. | Subaward | 9/30/26 |
| Task 4b | RIDEM Fish & Wildlife Data Analysis Subaward | $75,000 | 1 data analyst position hired by RIDEM through ASMFC and TBD outputs. | Subaward | 9/30/26 |
| Task 4c | RINHS Biodiversity Database Subaward | $100,000 | 1 working beta biodiversity database created. | Subaward | 9/30/26 |

\*Partial funding for participant support contracts (Tasks 1d, 1e, 3b, 3c) and full funding for the Land Acknowledgement (Task 1f) and Vision 2032 Completion (Task 2a) are included in the FY2022 Base Workplan.

**Appendix B: Grant Performance Report**

The attached quarterly reports satisfy the obligation to submit an annual performance report as required under the terms and conditions of the Cooperative Agreement (CE00A00967). [WILL BE INCLUDED WITH FINAL VERSION]

**Appendix C: Travel Report**

The attached report satisfies the obligation to submit documentation on how §320 funds were used for travel as required by the Funding Guidance. [WILL BE INCLUDED WITH FINAL VERSION]