

CRMC funds 11 habitat projects

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In its 14 years, the Trust Fund has helped restore more than 300 acres of coastal and estuarine habitat.

The CRMC recently awarded funding for eleven habitat restoration projects, through its RI Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund (CEHRTF). Projects approved for funding include a salt marsh restoration and enhancement project, a statewide salt marsh monitoring effort, eelgrass monitoring and assessment, two coastal resiliency projects, construction of a fishway, an urban habitat restoration pilot project, and evaluation of strategies to facilitate salt marsh migration.

As with the previous two years, in its request for proposals the CRMC put special emphasis on projects that would enhance the resiliency of the state's coastal habitats to climate change and sea level rise. One of the funded projects, improving coastal resiliency at Longmeadow coastal access site, exemplifies these goals. Through the Trust Fund, the R.I. Department of Environmental Management was awarded \$4,225 to restrict vehicular access over sensitive coastal habitats that have been damaged by traffic.

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The CRMC awarded \$15,000 for coastal barrier protection and plant community restoration at Napatree Point Conservation Area in Watch Hill. (Photo: Watch Hill Conservancy)

Despite summer closure, aquaculture industry shows growth in 2016



Oysters ready to ship (Photo: Ocean State Shellfish Cooperative)

The aquaculture industry in Rhode Island experienced growth in 2016 despite an algal bloom during the late summer (August and September) that impacted the amount of product ready to be sold at-market and product value, according to the CRMC's annual status report, "Aquaculture in Rhode Island." In 2016, the farm gate value (the value for the product paid to the farmer) of the state's aquaculture products decreased, from \$5.4 million in 2015 to \$5.3 million. The number of farms increased from 61 to 70, and acres farmed grew by 33.15 acres, a 13.7 percent increase, to a total of 274.53 acres farmed. Oysters remain the aquaculture product of choice in the state, with more than 7.8 million sold for consumption, down 453,978 from last year, directly related to the rust tide

bloom or *Cochlodinium polykrikoides*, which is not toxic to humans but is harmful to shellfish. Because oysters – which are usually eating larger volumes of food to plump up for winter – do not like the rust tide, they didn't eat as much and fewer were large enough to bring to market.

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New NOAA sea level rise projections dramatically increase by 2100

The CRMC will be using the latest global sea level rise (SLR) projections from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that anticipate a worst-case scenario of eight (8) feet (2.5 meters) by 2100.

Unfortunately, the Northeast Region will experience an additional 1 to 3 feet of relative SLR above the global projection due to several factors. Sea levels in the Northeast region, as well as some other areas in the country, will rise significantly faster than the global average, according to a recent report from NOAA. See: https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/publications/techrpt83_Global_and_Regional_SLR_Scenarios_for_the_US_final.pdf. Robert E. Kopp, an associate professor at Rutgers University's Department of Earth and Planetary Science, coauthored the report, which details six scenarios intended to help decision makers plan for the future at both a regional and national level.

In Rhode Island there are approximately 7,000 people living within the 7-foot sea level rise inundation zone, according to a Rhode Island Statewide Planning report.

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