

CRMC enforcement supervisor receives AG Justice Award

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CRMC Enforcement Supervisor Laura Miguel received the Attorney General's Justice Award on October 18, 2017. She is one of eight Rhode Islanders who received the award, which is given out annually to recognize individuals and organizations that have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to justice. Miguel has been employed by the Council since 1992. She first served as an environmental biologist, then as a member and supervisor of the two-person enforcement team, where she has worked to enforce the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program for the coastal region of the State of Rhode Island.



CRMC's Laura Miguel with presenter Arlene Violet

"Laura has served the CRMC admirably for more than 20 years, and has always been responsive to violators, applicants and concerned citizens, and respectful of all of the parties involved in each enforcement situation she has had to resolve," said Grover Fugate, executive director of the CRMC. She and the other enforcement officer (the CRMC has two to cover all of Rhode Island's coastal zone) handle 150 to 200 complaints each year, with an average of 100 of those going from complaint, through the enforcement process, to resolution (through fine hearings, restoration, fines, or other legal action). Miguel addresses everything regarding enforcement of the program, from minor infractions (a homeowner mowed their buffer, unaware of the regulations) to major violations (like significant land development without CRMC review, impeding public access, or acts that pose immediate threat to the environment).

[Learn more](#)

Coastweeks 2017: Salt Marshes 101 with CRMC

While it might not be possible to save all of the remaining salt marshes in Rhode Island – an estimated 4,000 acres – the CRMC is hoping to buy



Ninigret salt marsh, post-restoration

them a bit more time in the face of accelerating sea level rise. "Tidal inundation is what drives the composition of marsh plant communities," said Caitlin Chaffee, CRMC's coastal policy analyst and salt marsh specialist one warm September morning as she spoke to a group of Coastweeks 2017 participants on Ninigret salt marsh in Charlestown. The marsh was the site of a recent CRMC-led restoration and elevation enhancement project designed to make it more resilient to climate change impacts. "They're very dynamic systems – essentially they build up over time. The tide brings in sediment and organic matter accumulates on the marsh surface."

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Spotlight on SLAMM maps

As of 2010, coastal wetlands in Rhode Island comprised about 4,000 acres in and along Narragansett Bay and the coastal lagoons of the southern coastline.

In order to preserve these critical habitat areas from the threat of sea level rise and development, the CRMC sought to identify areas for protection and restoration through the development of the SLAMM maps (Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model), which are now part of the CRMC's coastal program and a tool in the R.I. Shoreline Change (Beach) SAMP arsenal.

Three sea level rise scenarios utilized in the SLAMM maps depict changes in salt marsh under a 1, 3 and 5-foot sea level rise, and show in the near and long-term time frames, Rhode Island faces substantial losses of coastal wetlands and some freshwater wetlands near the coast. Total statewide losses of existing coastal wetlands are projected, according to the SLAMM report, at 13 percent, 52 percent, and 87 percent under the 1, 3, and 5-foot scenarios, respectively, if there is no planning to allow for these wetlands to migrate inland naturally, with no manmade obstruction.

To learn more about these maps, click [here](#).

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