

CRMC funds six habitat restoration projects

The R.I. CRMC has awarded funding for six habitat restoration projects in the 16th round of its RI Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund (CEHRTF).



URI student Marina Capraro holds a terrapin at Potowomut Marsh near Rocky Hill School, a 2018 Trust Fund project. (Photo: URI Department of Natural Resources)

The Council approved the funding at a March semi-monthly meeting in Providence. Projects approved for funding include two salt marsh restoration and resilience enhancement projects, two projects involving fish passage or riverine habitat improvements, and one urban pollinator habitat project. As with the previous years, in its request for proposals the CRMC put special emphasis on projects that would enhance the resiliency of Rhode Island's coastal habitats to climate change and sea level rise.

Bristol County Water Authority and its partners were awarded \$75,000 from the Trust Fund for the first phase of a project to remove the Upper Kickemuit River dam in Warren. The work to be done includes design, engineering and permitting of a project that will restore 16 acres of anadromous fish habitat and freshwater wetlands. In 2007, DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife and its partners constructed a fish ladder at the Lower Kickemuit River dam, but the river herring population has not recovered since that time partly because of check valves on the flow outlets of the upper dam. The dam's removal will be the first step in abandoning this vulnerable drinking water supply and will enhance river connectivity, improve fish passage into the upper river, increase freshwater wetland habitat and reduce infrastructure flooding.

This was the second year of funding for the salt marsh restoration and enhancement project in Quonochontaug Pond, with \$50,000 awarded to CRMC for a collaborative project with partners Save The Bay, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Town of Charlestown. The project includes restoring approximately 30 acres of salt marsh and eelgrass habitat, and will raise the elevation of the Quonochontaug marsh using material dredged from the pond. The project is similar to the successfully completed restoration and enhancement project at Ninigret. Save The Bay is planning planting efforts for this



Quonochontaug salt marsh in early 2019, immediately after dredged material was spread over heavily degraded sections. (Photo courtesy of Save The Bay)

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CRMC rewards RI science, engineering fair participants

The RI Coastal Resources Management Council has awarded gift cards to six Rhode Island junior, middle and high school students for their winning projects in the 2019 Rhode Island Science and Engineering Fair.

This year's science and engineering fair took place March 16 at the Community College of Rhode Island's Knight Campus in Warwick, and showcased engineering, science and environmental projects from 25 schools and 232 students from grades 6 through 12. This year students showed a total of 174 projects, and the CRMC awarded VISA gift cards for projects on water quality, microplastics, oil and oil spills, coral reefs, and fish populations.

The six students were winners of the individual science fairs at their schools; teachers are allowed to send as many as 15 winners per school. The CRMC awarded prizes in the special awards category, which allows organizations and groups to set their own criteria and choose their own winners.

The Council has been giving out special awards for the science fair for almost 20 years. Special awards were established as a way for local businesses and organizations to promote what they do and get students interested in science and engineering-related research. The top two winners of the Rhode Island fair's general awards category will go on to compete in the international science fair later this year.

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