

2025-2026

# CHARLESTOWN BREACHWAY

REPAIR AND DREDGING PROJECT

For Immediate Release

For Media Availability

Oct 8, 2025

## Project At a Glance –

**Project Partners:** Town of Charlestown, RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Salt Ponds Coalition, Save The Bay, University of Rhode Island (URI)/Rhode Island Sea Grant (RISG)

**Project Cost:**

\$8.4 million which includes breachway restoration, dredging in the channel with beach re-nourishment and creation of two sand dunes with plantings planned

**Timeframe:** Work will begin November 1, 2025, and continue until March 26, 2026

**Project Overview:** Contractors will reconstruct the west breachway wall in two tiers of stone. Once the channel is dredged the material will be beneficially reused to restore the Town beach, fill in eroded areas on the west side of the wall, and create two storm-resilient dunes on the same side.

**Funding Sources:**

- \$5M: Governor Daniel McKee and the RI General Assembly
- \$2M CRMC (as the state dredging sponsor)
- \$1.4M Town of Charlestown

**Additional Info:**

<https://charlestownri.gov/breachwayinformation>

*Photo Courtesy of Town of Charlestown*

# Project Narrative

The Charlestown Breachway, constructed in 1952, experienced a structural failure in the winter storms of late 2023 and early 2024. An emergency repair was done in October 2024, in collaboration between the Town of Charlestown, CRMC, and DEM. Though successful, long-term solutions are needed to ensure safe navigation, protect the coastline and support ecological balance, water quality and economic stability. With \$7 million from the State and \$1.4 million from the Town, Stephen McCandless, Charlestown's coastal geologist and GIS coordinator led the planning effort, with permitting guidance from CRMC's Coastal Geologist Emily Hall.

In October 2024 the Town, CRMC and URI/RISG held an informational gathering at the site to educate residents about the work done to-date and to discuss future plans. There was an additional informational meeting on the project in May 2025 to let the public know how to interact with the breachway for the 2025 season. In August, a final public meeting took place where the Town, CRMC, URI, and the Salt Ponds Coalition discussed outreach efforts, and the permitting and design process, as well as funding sources for the future reconstruction.

At a 9/22/25 Charlestown Town Council meeting, the following contracting bids were accepted:

- **RMA Environmental LLC** – Engineering oversight and project management (engineer of record)
- **CAB Construction** – West wall repair, construction, and beach/dune restoration
- **J.F. Brennan Company, Inc.** – Dredge work

Equipment staging will be at Blue Shutters parking lot beginning on October 20, 2025; stone will be brought in starting on October 24, 2025. Rocks will be brought to the site and added to the breachway beginning November 1, 2025, with 90 percent completion expected by December 1.

J.F. Brennan will mobilize and set up the pipeline in early December. Beach and dune work, including building the eroded sections of the west side of beach back to grade and creating two dune structures on the west side of the wall to act as storm buffers, will begin January 2026, as dredging commences. Dredging, including re-nourishing the adjacent beach, is expected to be completed by February 2026.

Construction and dredging are expected to finish before the March 1, 2026 dredge window deadline, with dune plantings to occur by then or in the spring. The Charlestown Breachway and East Beach Campgrounds will close on 10/31/25 and re-open on 4/1/26 as scheduled. Construction vehicles will access the site via Blue Shutters parking lot and east down East Beach. DEM, Save The Bay and USFWS will also use the East Beach Sand Trail for invasives management and habitat restoration. The public is encouraged to use the East Beach lot for access to the area.

