SNEP 2023 Priority Research Grants Informational Webinar

U.S. EPA, Southeast New England Program

June 22, 2023, 12:30-2:00PM (EST)

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

SNEP Southeast New England Program

Funding Opportunity Information

- CFDA: 66.129

- RFA Link: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=348530

- Opportunity #: EPA-R1-SNEP-2023R

Webinar Logistics

- Please mute/video off during presentation
- This meeting is being recorded
- Slides/recording will be posted to SNEP webpage
- Questions will be addressed at the end of the presentation
- Questions and answers will be posted on SNEP webpage

Agenda

- SNEP Overview
- Background and Priority Topics
- Funding Overview
- RFA Review Criteria
- Other Important Information
- Question & Answer Period

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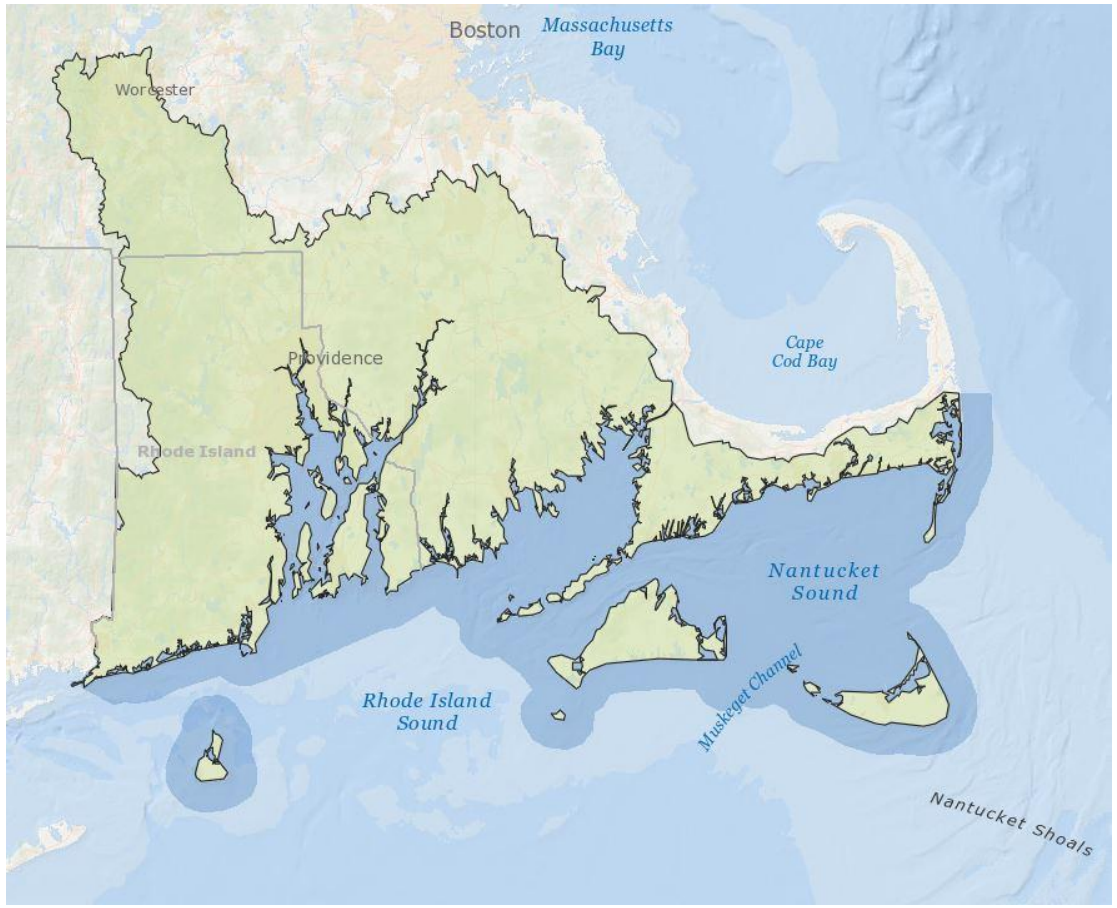
Background

SNEP Overview

- Southeast New England Program
- EPA Led (Region 1)
- Established in 2012, funded since 2014
- Rhode Island and S.E Massachusetts
- Foci:
  - Water Quality/Habitat
  - Climate Resilience
  - Innovation
  - Collaboration
  - Transferability
  - Holistic Approaches
  - Environmental Justice



Goals and Key Actions

Program Vision 2050

A resilient ecosystem of safe and healthy waters, thriving watersheds and natural lands, and sustainable communities in the SNEP coastal watershed region

Resilient Ecosystem of Safe and Healthy Waters

- Waters support native seagrasses and aquatic life, plentiful native fish and shellfish, and a variety of water-based recreation opportunities

Thriving Watersheds and Natural Lands

- Watersheds provide essential ecological functions, species diversity, and protection from both human-based and naturally occuring environmental stressors, and healthy, connected natural lands support a variety and range of native plan and wildlife communities

Sustainable Communities

- Communities share robust water-based economics, protect and provide access to natural lands, open spaces and parks, encourage local food sources, and are adapting for resilience to expected impacts of climate change

Goals and Key Actions

Increase Local Capacity to Complete Projects and Adopt New Policies

Increase Available Solutions

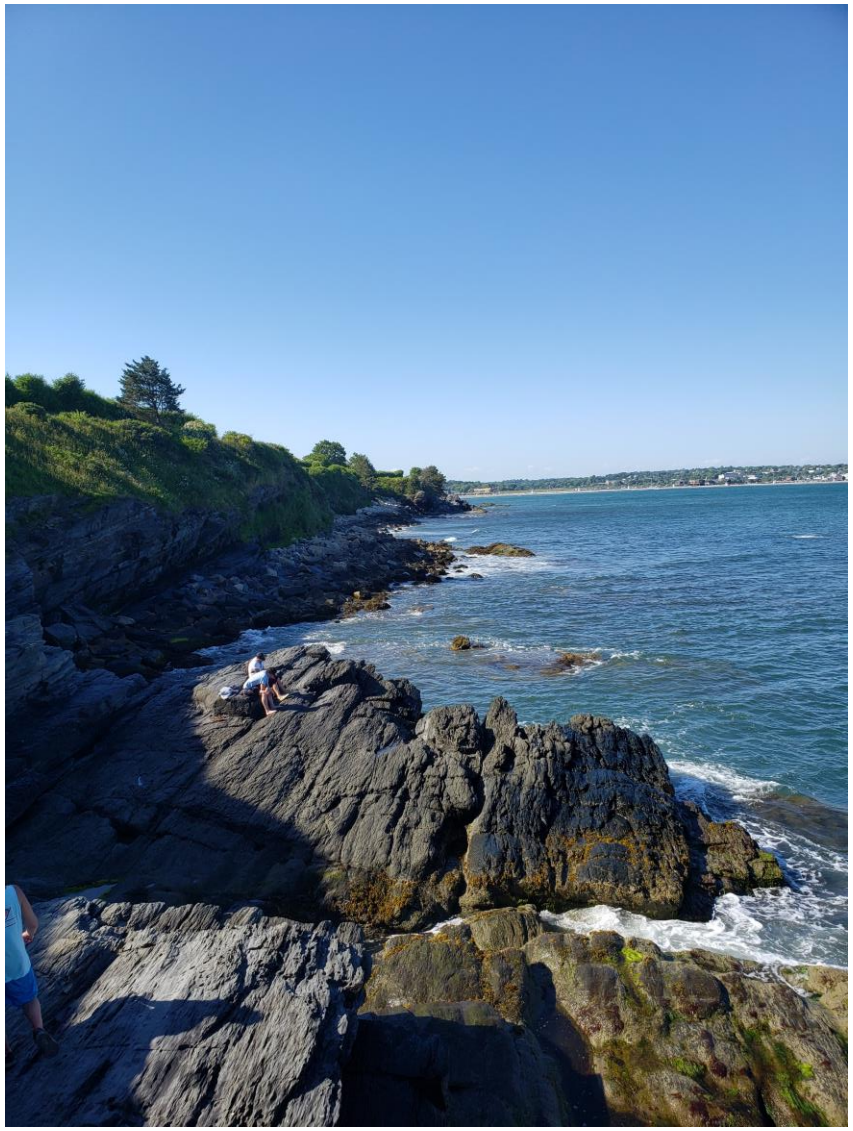
Ensure Diverse Representation in Program Decision-Making

Demonstrate Ways to Address Common Challenges

Increase Community Leaders' Understanding of the Benefits of Restoration Projects

Current Foci

- Reducing nutrients from septic systems, stormwater, and fertilizer
- Addressing and monitoring harmful algal blooms
- Testing innovative solutions such as permeable reactive barriers and aquaculture
- Restoring saltmarsh, eelgrass, and riparian buffers
- Evaluating and quantifying ecosystem service benefits



Background

- Dense Development and Nutrient Pollution
- Topics Developed with SNEP Steering Committee
- Numerous Lakes and Ponds; Challenging to Monitor
- How are Permeable Reactive Barriers Performing? What Can We Learn?
- How Can we Improve Eelgrass Restoration?

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Priority Areas

Modeling and Assessing Coastal Lake and Pond Health

- Build of refine a localized lake and pond model for one or more sub-region(s) that utilizes existing ground-truthed data for clearer picture of regional lake/pond health
- Potential research questions:
  - Can a global or regional model created from colored dissolved organic matter and satellite imagery be created/adapted on a spatial and temporal scale fine enough to be prescriptive of local conditions in the SNEP coastal region or within sub-regions for end users?
  - Can predictive modeling be implored to forecast lake and pond environmental conditions?
  - Can remote sensing models forecast conditions in response differing climate scenarios?
  - What do trends analyses from satellite records show on historic and current conditions of coastal lakes and ponds in the SNEP region?

Lessons Learned from implementing Permeable Reactive Barriers

- Research is needed to compile results and lessons learned from previously installed PRBs used to capture nitrogen in ground water to advance our understanding of how to best install and maximize performance of PRBs in the future.
- Potential research questions:
  - How many groundwater PRBs have been installed in the SNEP coastal region, where are they located, and what type of carbon source is used to treat nitrogen?
  - What, if any, issues were experienced during their installation? How were issues resolved?
  - Are installed PRBs installed at varying times functioning as intended? Have any changes to their design, siting, or operation been necessary to maximize their effectiveness?
  - On average, how much nitrogen is removed from groundwater sourced? What is the N-removal impact on surface waters and is there a seasonal effect on their efficacy?

Eelgrass Viability: Flowering and Seeding, Impacts of Climate Change, Long-Term Prognosis

- This opportunity specifically seeks to initially fill a knowledge gap related to the phenology and timing of eelgrass flowering, which is relevant to understand optimal seeding methodologies and elements of long-term successful restoration of eelgrass beds.

- Potential research questions:

  - Where are the highest flowering rates in the SNEP region or in subregions?
  - When and where do subpopulations of eelgrass beds flower and when is the optimal seed harvesting time following flowering?
  - Can harvested eelgrass seeds exposed to variable environments in mesocosm experiments exhibit hardness and viability when replanted in the field?
  - What are the most important factors contributing to long-term successful restoration of eelgrass in previous seeding efforts in Southeastern MA and New England?

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Funding Overview

SNEP 2023 Priority Research Grants

Funding:

- $800,000 total
- $100,000-$300,000 per grant
- Up to 6 grants total
- 15% match requirement

Project Period:

- Up to 3-year project period

Other Details:

- Applications completed through **grants.gov (CFDA 66.129)**

SNEP 2023 Priority Research Grants

Important Dates:

- Opened: 06/05/2023
- Informational Webinar: 06/22/2023 12:30-2:00pm (EST)
- Last Day to Ask Questions: 07/24/2023
- Application Deadline: 07/28/2023 11:59PM (EST)
- Notification of Selection/Rejection: Fall 2023
- Public Announcement: TBD

SNEP 2023 Priority Research Grants

- All applicants must substantially comply with eligibility requirements (Sections III & IV of RFA)
- Eligible Entities:
  - State, Local, Tribal Governments/Departments
  - Institutions of Higher Education
  - Nonprofit Institutions and Organizations
  - Interstate Agencies
- Ineligible Entities
  - Private Business*
  - Federal Agencies*
  - Individuals*

*these entities are encouraged to partner with eligible entities

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- Submissions must be received before July 28, 2023 11:50PM (EST) via Grant.Gov
- Must Support EPA's Strategic Plan Goals (Section I.E)
- Must Include all Mandatory Documentation (Section IV.F)
- Must Address at Least One Priority Topic
- Must Occur in the SNEP Region
- 12 Pages Max

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Mandatory Documents:

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
- EPA Form 4700-4 Pre-Award Compliance Review Report
- Budget Detail (Budget Narrative Attachment Form)
- Project Narrative Attachment Form: Use this to submit your Project Narrative, prepared as described in Section IV.F
- Supporting Documents (See Next Slide)

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Supporting Documents ("Other Attachments Form")

- Resume or CV of staff that will be working on the grant
- Letters of commitment from any partners identified in the proposal in order to confirm their partnership
- List documenting past or ongoing federal and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements administered by the applicant, including documentation supporting grant performance and meeting of reporting requirements
- Documentation of non-profit status if appropriate
- Verification of proposed sources of leveraged funding

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Request for Applications
Review Criteria

Review & Grant Process

- Threshold Eligibility Determination/Notification
- Merit Review by EPA, State Staff, Experts (as Applicable)
- Review Meeting
- Topic/Geographic Distribution/ Plan Linkage
- Selection Finalization/ Notification
- Processing by Grants Department/ Project Officer
- Award

Scoring Criteria

Scoring Criteria (100 Points Total)

- Problem Description/Site Selection (20 pts)
- Project Approach (10 pts)
- Past Performance and Program Management (20 pts)
- Cost Effectiveness and Match (10 pts)
- Data Management, Distribution, and Sharing of Results (20 pts)
- Monitoring/Tracking of Results (10 pts)
- Project Timeline and Budget (10 pts)

Problem Description/Site Selection

- Understanding of the information and technical gaps identified in the priority research areas, including knowledge of previous or ongoing efforts in those areas
- That the proposed project location relates to at least one of the identified priority research areas and is likely to serve as an effective test site and
- Justifies their proposed project area.

Project Approach

- Clearly and concisely describes the specific research questions/knowledge gap to be addressed, including the overall work program, with steps, timeframe, research team and qualifications, laboratory capability if necessary, monitoring plan and preparation for necessary QAPPs, and anticipated results relevant to SNEP goals and their value for addressing the current knowledge gap.

- Demonstrates how their proposed project incorporates existing data and consolidates previous results and/or provides new or additional information to assess or contribute to improved management and condition of water quality, habitat, and/or resilience to expected impacts of climate change.

- Provides clear, actionable findings to inform SNEP priorities

Past Performance and Program Management

- Past performance in successfully completing and managing within the last three years the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.A of the solicitation, and similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project;

- History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.A and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements

Past Performance and Program Management (cont'd)

- History of thorough, well-documented reporting on progress or impediments in achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements
- Organizational experience and staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project

Cost Effectiveness and Match

- Organizational overhead, indirect cost, prudent cost allocation over the life of the award, organizational and partner resources brought to the effort, including leveraging; consistency with proposed budget detail; and ability to perform the duties within the operational range of budgets provided by SNEP. Additionally, applicants will be evaluated based on their description of how they will meet the required 15% Match.

Data Management, Distribution, and Sharing of Results

- How data collected will be managed and plans to share results with regional decision-makers, partner organizations, and the public through presentations, reports, publications, etc. throughout the course of the project.

Monitoring/Tracking of Results

- The plan to monitor anticipated environmental results and how those results will fulfill identified knowledge gaps, inform, or add to the understanding of the priority research area, including potential next steps that would be identified by the project's outcomes.
- How the outcomes and outputs will be tracked, including any metrics related to their proposed project as applicable.
- Describes the specific SNEP metrics they propose to track and report on during the life of the grant. (**See Appendix D**)

Project Timeline and Budget

- Approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner including a description of a proposed budget timeline, organized by task, if applicable.

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Other Important Information

Quality Assurance, Data Distribution, Publications

- Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP) required before data can be collected
  - Please submit QAPPs at least 60 days before scheduled data collection to allow for EPA QA review

- Publication/presentation of information in peer-reviewed literature, reports, and regional/national conferences.
  - Eligible expense
  - “Open access” journals encouraged

- Public data sharing required
  - Monitoring data must be uploaded to the Water Quality Exchange (WQX) if relevant

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Please Direct Additional Questions to SECoastalNE@epa.gov
by July 24, 2023, 11:59p EST

Application Deadline: July 28, 2023, 11:59p EST

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Question and Answer Period

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Thank You For Your Time and Attention!