

## STAC Roundtable Updates - August 2025

*Members: ahead of every meeting, please transcribe your roundtable updates under your affiliation. Updates will be reviewed by members ahead of meetings and discussed during designated roundtable review.*

### State Agencies

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)

The following updates are from the Division of Watershed Stewardship (DWS) Conservation Programs Section (CPS). The Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program just received final allocation figures from the EPA for its FY25 Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319 Grant award. The federal allocation is in line with previous fiscal years. However, the FY26 allocation is very much in question. President Trump's FY26 budget proposal recommended the elimination of 16 categorical grant programs of which the CWA Section 319 grant is one of those grants. The NPS Program has been budgeting, to the best of its ability, for a possible scenario where no federal funds are available for the FY26 CWA Section 319 grant. Work

The NPS Program, at this time, will be planning on running its annual Request for Proposals (RFP) from December 2025 through March 2026. Over the next couple of months, the NPS Program will be revising RFP guidelines and making applicable updates to its website. It is also anticipated that the Chesapeake Bay Implementation Program (ChIP) will be concurrently advertising its Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant (CBIG).

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP)

PA is hosting the 2026 Pennsylvania Aquatic Resource Restoration Conference in State College, PA on March 3-4, 2026. The purpose of the conference is to facilitate knowledge transfer among scientists, regulators, and practitioners involved in aquatic resource restoration work in a scientifically sound manner using an evidence-based approach in recognition of modern constraints that results in the restoration of resilient aquatic resources. More information can be found here: <https://pacleanwateracademy.remote-learner.net/course/view.php?id=1540>

PA DEP is currently reviewing an application for the South Wetlands Park project, an approximately 10-acre restoration / creation site on the tidal Delaware River. The site is located in Philadelphia and is anticipated to create a gradient habitat transitioning from intertidal zones to upland areas. Application number is E5101225-007.

PADEP's coastal zone grants closed yesterday (8/27/2025). PADEP has been funded through NOAA through 2026, but coastal programs were cut \$1.5 million. Support for municipalities to reestablish shellfish beds

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

- Natural Climate Solutions round 2 open – rolling deadline - [NJDEP| Climate Change | Natural Climate Solutions Grant.](#)

Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC)

- Meetings: <https://www.nj.gov/drbc/meetings/>
  - Commission meeting on September 10
  - Water Quality Advisory Committee on September 15
  - Water Management Advisory Committee on October 15
- WQ monitoring: DRBC BoatRun, bacteria, 6-PPDq, etc.
- Aquatic life designated use project:  
<https://www.nj.gov/drbc/programs/quality/designated-use.html>
- Working on winter salt reduction (SIFT workgroup):  
<https://www.nj.gov/drbc/programs/quality/chlorides-monitoring.html#4> )

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

- Southeastern Fisheries Management has recently investigated new locations for invasive Northern Snakehead in the Schuylkill River watershed expanding the range of this harmful species.
- Freshwater mussel species targeting federal listed Dwarf Wedgemussel in the Upper Delaware River were partially completed this summer. Preliminary results suggest the population in the Pennsylvania portion of the Delaware River is depressed compared to past survey reports.

#### Federal Agencies

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Region 2

Region 3

NOAA/Sea Grant

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

#### Nonprofit

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE)

- Very busy field season! Here's our successes this summer:

- Successfully launched and retrieved 11 ARUs to study soundscapes in tidal wetlands along the salinity gradient in the Delaware Estuary. Launched 6 more ARUs to capture late summer/migration soundscapes (4 in the Delaware Estuary, 1 near Brigantine)
- Performed vegetation assessments at four long term monitoring tidal marsh sites
- Lead site ecological assessments for NJ-based “pipeline of projects” effort in Barnegat and Brigantine—these assessments are geared towards gathering data to inform conceptual designs for beneficial use of dredged material
- Please don’t circulate widely, but we were able to get our shell recycling into a Shinyapp to show our progress/inventory to date! Check it out here: [https://leeann-haaf.shinyapps.io/Shell\\_shiny/](https://leeann-haaf.shinyapps.io/Shell_shiny/)
- We've been successfully propagating some Vallisneria from seed and have also set up ex and in situ trials to begin exploring relationships between SAV and freshwater mussels.
- Freshwater mussels have also been deployed at a few new ponds in PA, NJ, and DE as part of trialing a grow out pond network for future stock production

#### Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ

- New Funding: CWF is a partner on a new, one-year NFWF-AFSI grant to test/improve American oystercatcher monitoring methods in salt marsh habitats (Cape May and Ocean Counties). Project lead is The Wetlands Institute. Fieldwork begins in October.
- We expect to hear soon regarding another NFWF proposal (DWCF), led by Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, to ground-truth Saltmarsh Sparrow and American Oystercatcher predictive occupancy models in Delaware Bay marshes. If funded, project would begin in 2026.

#### Industry

- PSEG
- Philadelphia Water Department (PWD)
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#### Private Sector

- AKRF
- Roux
- Sovereign Consulting

#### Academia

- Drexel University
- Monmouth University
- Rutgers University

1. Core oyster programs are ongoing. We continue to support the oyster fishery which has been struggling lately with a reduced quota following some years of low recruitment and low market abundance.
  - a. In the planning stages for a set of dredge calibration experiments that will update the capture efficiencies for our survey dredge.
2. We are developing a proposal to increase efforts with NJDEP and DRBC to better understand how water management and climate impacts are interacting with the fishery to improve our enhancement strategies.
3. The Regional Shellfish Seed Biosecurity Program (RSSBP) continues to grow and expand with 17 shellfish hatcheries now participating in the biosecurity compliance program (including one from Delaware and two from NJ) and most states from Maine to Texas using the program to help facilitate the safe transfer of shellfish seed to support their aquaculture industry and restoration efforts.
4. The DARPA Reefense project in collaboration with PDE as one of 8 other collaborating institutions has been a tremendous success. The project has
  - a. developed low carbon concrete mixes reducing the CO2 footprint by about 60%,
  - b. developed wave attenuating/habitat creating reef modules
  - c. developed a 'mosaic' habitat strategy with PDE's input. These efforts were tested in the US ACOE's wave basin facility in VA and collaborators at the University of Central Florida and the University of Western Australia are developing models with the Army Corps that will allow the methods to be adapted and applied anywhere. The Army Corps is planning a formal report that will enable them to implement these methods and quickly permit projects using these methods.
  - d. demonstrated the ability to use genomic selection on local oyster populations to rapidly develop desired traits such as rapid growth, colonization and disease resistance to jump start oyster reef breakwaters as part of a living shoreline nature-based solution.
2. The Fish Tagging Research and Education Program (FiTREP) is a pilot, volunteer-based initiative studying summer flounder movements in New Jersey's coastal estuaries. Working with charter captains, anglers, and community volunteers, the project uses T-bar tags and acoustic telemetry to investigate ecosystem connectivity and seasonal migration patterns. FiTREP emphasizes public engagement to better understand flounder movements across estuaries and ocean waters. A proposal to fund this initiative was recently submitted to the New Jersey Sea Grant Biennial Research Competition.
3. Pending proposal to collaborate with the commercial blue crab industry in Delaware Bay on the removal of derelict traps and to pilot strategies aimed at preventing future gear loss. If funded, the project would begin this winter and involve a partnership with Stockton University, leveraging their experience and established connections with industry.

Villanova University

Stevens Institute of Technology

- New semester starts next week
- 2 new masters students starting (Drexel/UD)
- Summer field work highlights

- Collected wave/water level/GPS/drone data at 3 sites in NJ as part of TNC's marsh pipeline project.
- Collected wave/water level/GPS/drone data at Jeffreys Creek (Toms River) NJ to inform a conceptual design of a living shoreline creek mouth stabilization project.
- Collected GPS and photo/video data at several beaches in NJ before/after Erin
- New funding
  - SEECPRS – Stevens Extreme Event Coastal Preparedness and Response System ~ \$700k for USVs & UAVs with a variety of sensors.