STAC Roundtable Updates – December 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

1. Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)

- DNREC released results of a statewide survey of residents on PFAS awareness: https://news.delaware.gov/2025/11/06/delaware-survey-reveals-opportunities-to-increase-awareness-of-pfas/?utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery
- DHSS and DNREC launched a new grant program to support community education and outreach regarding PFAS: https://dnrec.delaware.gov/waste-hazardous/remediation/pfas/
- The Nonpoint Source Program is currently accepting water quality BMP project proposals for the 319 and Chesapeake Bay Implementation Program (ChIP) now until March 6 to address nonpoint source pollution in eligible watersheds. https://de.gov/319grants and https://de.gov/cbig

2. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP)

3. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

4. Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC)

5. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat

Federal Agencies

1. US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
    a. Region 2
    b. Region 3
2. NOAA/Sea Grant
3. US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Nonprofit

1. Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE)
1. Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey

a. This fall, CWF began work on a new NFWF (AFSI) funded project aimed toward optimizing methods for monitoring marsh-nesting American oystercatchers (AMOY), which are less monitored and less understood compared to their beach-nesting counterparts. One year pilot study will focus on marsh-nesting AMOY in two study areas: Hereford Inlet (Cape May County) and Little Egg Inlet/Barnegat Bay (Atlantic County). The project is led by The Wetlands Institute, and CWF is contracted to survey the northern study area. Fieldwork will include American oystercatcher migration surveys, breeding productivity monitoring, habitat analyses, and movement tracking (banding and radio transmitters). We are hoping to build upon this pilot study in the future, potentially expanding to marsh-nesting AMOY in other regions like the Delaware Bay.
b. In late Oct/early Nov, CWF assisted Ducks Unlimited and USFWS with implementing marsh restoration designs at Garrison (Natural Lands). Designs were the product of a low-cost/low tech marsh restoration assessment study in the Delaware Bay Region, in which CWF provided technical assistance at New Jersey sites. DU, USFWS, and PDE were leading partners.
c. NFWF (DWCF) funded rare turtle research in Southern Delaware River Basin is ongoing. Last spring, CWF completed our first season of spotted turtle demographic trapping assessment at six sites across Burlington and Salem Counties. Preparation has begun for next season, which will include bog turtle demographic surveys and spotted turtle telemetry deployments.

<u>Industry</u>

1. PSEG
2. Philadelphia Water Department (PWD)

<u>Private Sector</u>

1. AKRF
2. Sovereign Consulting, Inc
3. Roux, Inc.

<u>Academia</u>

1. Rutgers University
    a. Bushek Lab
        i. Field sampling for the annual DE Bay, NJ oyster stock assessment survey is complete; data workup is in progress.
        ii. The Annual Delaware Bay, NJ Oyster Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) will be held the first week of February 2026 at HSRL.
        iii. Oyster Seedbed Monitoring Update: Dermo continues to be a driving factor in oyster mortality, but development of disease resistance to dermo is gaining momentum, particularly with the advancement of genomic selection tools which we demonstrated recently in our DARPA project. MSX remains

in the Bay, but the population and Rutgers stocks remain highly resistant. A related parasite SSO (Sea Side Organism = Haplosporidium coastale) has been appearing in high salinity waters and noted elsewhere in the world so we are keeping an eye out for it.

iv. RSSBP (Regional Shellfish Seed Biosecurity Program) continues to expand with new hatcheries applying and developing SOPs to reduce disease risk in the seed they sell and transfer. More state regulators are beginning to adopt or incorporate RSSBP or its principles into their regulations along the East Coast and this is expanding into the Gulf with interest developing on the West Coast.
    1. Maryland DNR is applying these principles to freshwater mussels, so mussels imported into Maryland will have to undergo a quarantine period.
    2. RSSBP is collaborating with a URI-led project to investigate unexplained mortalities in shellfish hatcheries that limit production for both aquaculture and restoration.

v. DARPA Reefense project period of performance ended Nov 3rd. Reporting wraps up this month. Key Takeaways:
    1. Developed a low-carbon footprint Reefense ModuleTM.
    2. Applied and demonstrated the value of genomic selection for diseases like dermo disease, advancing the rate of traditional breeding by a factor of three.
    3. Used Refense ModulesTM to develop a Living Shoreline MosaicTM strategy that is adaptable for use anywhere shorelines need protection in bays and estuaries.
    4. To continue this work, Rutgers is creating a Reefense Research Collaborative which includes PDE to continue these efforts with the larger global team.

2. Drexel University
3. Monmouth University
4. Stevens Institute
5. Villanova University