

## STAC Roundtable Updates – October 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)
  - The Delaware Statewide Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (DESSAV) Workgroup meets 10/16 in Lewes in the Cannon Lab. <https://www.delawaresav.org/dessav-workgroup>. Reach out if you are interested in joining in-person or virtually.
  - Div. of Climate Coastal and Energy is getting ready to release the 2025 Climate Action Plan this fall <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/climate-plan/>
  - Funding is available through the Community Water Quality Improvement Grant. Proposals are due Oct. 29 and encourages nonprofit groups, conservation districts, community organizations and homeowners' associations to apply for implementation projects that improve water quality on developed lands with specific watershed improvement plans and strategies. <https://news.delaware.gov/2025/09/25/dnrec-accepting-community-water-quality-improvement-project-grant-proposals-4/>
  - Planning is underway, and registration is open for the Delaware Wetlands Conference Jan. 27-28 in Wilmington. Presentation abstracts are being accepted through Oct. 17. <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/watershed-stewardship/wetlands/conference/>
  - DNREC continues to work with Senator Hansen on a draft bill that proposes a state wetland program that covers all wetlands including freshwater wetlands.
  - Div of Fish and Wildlife is updating their Wildlife Action Plan. [Comments](#) are being accepted for the draft [Species of Greatest Conservation Need](#) and [Associated Threats and Actions](#)
2. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP)
3. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)
  - a.
4. Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC)
  - a. DRBC Advisory Committee Meetings (<https://www.nj.gov/drbc/meetings/advisory/index.html>)
    - i. Water Management Advisory Committee on October 15
    - ii. Toxics Advisory Committee on October 27
    - iii. WQAC and MACC in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter
  - b. 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr Public Hearing on November 5
  - c. 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr Commission Business Meeting on December 10
  - d. Water quality standards to protect aquatic life in the Delaware River

- i. EPA issued a final rule:
  - 1. <https://www.nj.gov/drbc/programs/quality/designated-use.html>
  - 2. <https://www.epa.gov/wqs-tech/water-quality-standards-delaware-river>
- ii. DRBC, estuary states, and stakeholders would work on implementation
- e. FYI: EPA Wetland Program Grant available: <https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/360587>

## 5. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Several grant opportunities are currently open for applications through the PA Fish and Boat Commission to support education, research, or boating facilities:

-Tulpehocken Creek Watershed (Deadline 12/19/2025):

<https://www.pa.gov/services/fishandboat/tulpehocken-quittapahilla-watershed-grant>

-Statewide Boating Facility (Deadline 12/1/2025):

<https://www.pa.gov/services/fishandboat/boating-facility-grant>

-Statewide R3 Education (Deadline 12/1/2025):

<https://www.pa.gov/services/fishandboat/r3-grant>

## 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)
  - a. We wrapped up another year of long-term monitoring across tidal marshes in the Delaware Estuary. Data for 2025 will be sent to NJDEP for continued inclusion in the [NJ Tidal Wetland Monitoring Network \(NJTWMN\) website](#).
  - b. Restoration planning with partners continues: 1) we'll be wrapping up low-cost low-tech assessments with Ducks Unlimited and US Fish and Wildlife Service this month—this project has led to a few conceptual designs for low-cost hydrological repair in tidal marshes with two projects nearing the implementation phase (Garrison and Lighthouse Center); 2) TNC's NJ Pipeline of Projects will wrap up in the first quarter of 2026 will similar conceptual designs for beneficial use of dredged material—at least one project site is already entering an implementation phase (Boot Island, Brigantine).

- c. This fall, we're kicking off a greenhouse gas sampling effort in forested wetlands of the Mullica River watershed with Rowan University and NJDEP DSR (we're using this as a training opportunity for greenhouse gas sampling). Next step projects are already underway that will use the same field methods to understand greenhouse gas emissions in tidal wetlands.
- d. We finally received a fully executed contract for the 2022 Natural Climate Solutions opportunity through NJDEP—our project, which will implement along with Rutgers Haskin Lab, Stevenson Institute, Ducks Unlimited, and USFWS, will be a shellbag based design near Matts Landing in the Maurice River. Permits will likely be submitted by the end of 2025 for the 2026 installation.
- e. This spring, with the Wetlands Institute, we deployed automated recording units (ARUs) at 9 tidal marshes in the Delaware Estuary and 2 near Stone Harbor. Preliminary analyses of the soundscapes of those datasets are underway. We also deployed 4 ARUs in August, and plan to retrieve them in the next 2 weeks.
- f. Living shoreline monitoring has been consistent throughout the fall, and will continue through November for various projects, including long-term installations at Mispillion, Lewes, and on the Maurice River. The second year of our DEEDS shellfish recruitment study monitoring will evaluate two years of annual oyster and ribbed mussel recruitment as well as seasonal recruitment that has occurred since May 2025.

2. Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey

Industry

- 1. PSEG
- 2. Philadelphia Water Department (PWD)

Private Sector

- 1. AKRF
- 2. Roux, Inc.

Academia

- 1. Rutgers University
  - a. **Bushek Lab:**
    - i. Core oyster programs are ongoing. The annual stock assessment survey is scheduled for the end of October and will be conducted in conjunction with a series of dredge calibration experiments.
    - ii. The Regional Shellfish Seed Biosecurity Program (RSSBP) continues to grow and expand with 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.

- iii. Funding for the DARPA Reefense project has been cut, and the project will end this month.
  - 1. There is growing interest in NJ and elsewhere in developing the Reefense tactic for implementation more broadly. To maintain this effort, Rutgers is forming a collaboration with project partners to work together on raising funding to advance the work further.
  - 2. Some funds have been received to begin developing metrics to evaluate existing projects across the state that will build on some past work with PDE and also the NJRESTORE program that PDE was involved with.
- iv. MS student Leah Scott finished her thesis analyzing long-term trends of dermo disease since 2004. Results suggest a dampening of the cycle intensity which could be some combination of development of resistance, increased frequency of high runoff, or changes in growth leading to more large young oysters with less exposure to disease. The temperature signal suggests spring water temperature warms up three weeks earlier and fall temperatures arrive a week later on average, increasing the length of summer by about a month.
- v. A proposal has been submitted to the Blue Convergence Fund in collaboration with NJDEP and DRBC. The project is designed to highlight case studies of successful interagency-academic-stakeholder collaborations and to support and increase such interactions which we hope to do with DRBC and their ongoing review of reservoir management plans and strategies.

b. **Munroe Lab**

- i. Along with the Borsetti Lab, working on a very preliminary study with a local fisherman to look at white shrimp as a target species. White shrimp have been appearing more in Delaware Bay and off our coasts as waters have warmed. Our extensive marshes in DE Bay provide a wealth of habitat for them justifying their protection further.

c. **Borsetti Lab:**

- i. Rutgers University's 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.
  - 1. Update: ~160 summer flounder tags have been recaptured this season
- ii. A proposal has been accepted to collaborate with the commercial blue crab industry in Delaware Bay on the removal of derelict traps and pilot strategies aimed at preventing future gear loss. The project is on track to begin this winter and will involve a partnership with Stockton University, leveraging their experience and established connections with industry.

2. Villanova University

**a. Good Research Group**

- i. Microplastics: we have a forthcoming paper in *Science of the Total Environment* on getting a lab set up to perform MP analysis for environmental samples, including practical information on time, cost, and logistics – this effort was led by postdoc Dr. Erica Forgione, who is currently on the job hunt. PhD student Katie Ferry recently presented her work analyzing MPs in the Mohawk River (NY) as part of a larger project investigating co-occurrence of metals, biofilms, PFAS, and MPs (recording linked [here](#)).
- ii. Source water protection: my group continues to work on an NSF-funded project investigating bromide and iodine contributions in surface water sources, including targeted field sampling in partnership with water utilities. I was recently interviewed by E&E News-Politico on the EPA's decision to delay compliance for power plant wastewater regulations (see LinkedIn post about it [here](#)).

**b. Goldsmith Research Group**

- i. Engagement on municipal and residential use of road salt: We are partnering with the Lower Merion Conservancy on a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant focused on reducing municipal and residential loading of road salt. We are working with municipalities to help transition to roadway brining. Wireless water quality monitoring sensors have been deployed to collect preliminary water quality data prior to a switch. In collaboration with Dr. Joseph Toscano and Dr. Deena Weisburg from the Department of Psychology, we distributed a survey to document residents' perceptions and attitudes regarding the residential use of deicers. The survey results will guide our outreach efforts this winter.
- ii. Source and fate of macroplastics: We have been conducting quarterly sampling in 20 local suburban and urban headwater streams in the greater Philadelphia area for macroplastics and litter. We are currently testing the effectiveness of municipal plastic bag ordinances on reducing litter in streams.

3. Stevens Institute of Technology

**a. Coastal Engineering Research Group (Miller)**

- i. Continuing work on TNC's "marsh pipeline" project. Working with many partners to improve the pipeline implementation. Stevens work is involves site characterization and conceptual designs for 3 separate marsh islands
- ii. SEECPRS – Stevens Extreme Event Coastal Preparedness and Response System. Stevens received ~ \$700k to upgrade field capabilities. Major purchases will include USV with sidescan sonar,

- multiple UAVs with LiDAR + imaging capabilities and a Mobile Command Center (would love to talk about putting it to use!)
- iii. Working with NJDEP to better understand dune erosion during coastal storms. Part of this work includes evaluating the tradeoffs involved between “engineering optimized” and “ecology optimized” dunes.
- iv. Preparing for RAE tech transfer session on “Engineering for Ecology”. The session was inspired by recent PhD graduate Amy Bredes’ work looking at wave transformation over COR’s.