

CTP Strategic Plan Revision

July 2007



Introduction

The following strategic plan outlines the goals and objectives, partnerships, priority issues and audiences, training delivery system, monitoring and evaluation tools, and staffing and infrastructure of the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR) Coastal Training Program (CTP).

The goals and objectives of the NBNERR CTP will guide the development and implementation of trainings and products by integrating with other NBNERR Sectors while supporting the mission of the CTP Sector, the NBNERR, and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) as a whole. The NBNERR will achieve its goals, which reflect those of the NERRS, through specific objectives and strategies unique to Narragansett Bay and its watershed and the needs of its target audiences.

Goals of the NBNERR and NERRS:

1. Strengthen the protection and management of representative estuarine ecosystems to advance estuarine conservation, research and education.
2. Increase the use of Reserve science and sites to address priority coastal management issues.
3. Enhance peoples' ability and willingness to make informed decisions and take responsible actions that affect coastal communities and ecosystems.

Goal and Objectives of the NERRS CTP:

The **goal** of the NERRS CTP in particular is to improve decision-making related to coastal resources management at local and regional levels.

The **objectives** of the NERRS CTP are to:

- Provide the best available science-based information, tools, and techniques to those individuals and groups that are making important decisions regarding resources within coastal watersheds, estuaries, and nearshore waters;
- Increase networking and collaboration across sectors and disciplines related to coastal management issues in local and bio-geographic areas; and
- Increase understanding of the environmental, social and economic consequences of human activity within the coastal landscape.

Goals and Objectives of the NBNERR CTP

Goal 1: Increase the knowledge and skill levels of coastal decision-makers so that they can make informed decisions that will best preserve and protect the natural resources of Narragansett Bay and its watershed.

Objective: Identify specific training needs within the Narragansett Bay Watershed that CTP can address, either directly or through partnerships with other organizations.

Objective: Inventory existing training programs that have been/are being implemented throughout the watershed by other training organizations.

Objective: Deliver trainings and products, with appropriate partners, to coastal-decision-maker audiences.

Goal 2: Facilitate networking and information exchange between coastal decision-makers both within communities and between communities.

Objective: Build adequate networking time into trainings to allow coastal decision-makers to interact with and learn from their peers and experts in the field, thereby increasing the diversity of their contacts and their awareness of opportunities for collaboration on key issues.

Goal 3: Ensure that the knowledge and skills acquired by coastal decision-makers are applied effectively.

Objective: Continually monitor the success of the program by evaluating individual trainings and products and conducting long-term assessments.

Objective: Provide ongoing technical assistance and science updates that supplement and support CTP trainings and products.

Goal 4: Enhance collaboration, coordination and communication among trainers who provide coastal decision-makers with training and technical support on issues related to Narragansett Bay and its watershed.

Objective: Provide a venue for trainers to meet and exchange information and ideas on regular basis.

Objective: Continue to work with other trainers in utilizing an online community calendar created by the NBNERR CTP and GrowSmartRI, www.communityconnectionri.com, to post training events in RI and nearby CT and MA to reduce scheduling conflicts and avoid the duplication of training efforts in addition to publicizing land use and water resources-related training opportunities to coastal decision-makers.

Goal 5: Increase the visibility of the NBNERR CTP.

Objective: Continually market the NBNERR CTP through various mechanisms, including the NBNERR CTP website, brochures, newsletters, press releases, advertisements and other means.

Partnerships

Partnerships are a key element of implementing the goals and objectives of the CTP at the local, as well as the state and national, level. Partners include organizations identified by the Market Analysis as able to assist the NBNERR CTP in providing quality trainings and products to coastal decision-makers. Partnerships for specific training events will be based on the specific decision-maker audiences and priority issues targeted. New partnerships are always being considered based on the goals and objectives as well as the priority issues and audiences of the NBNERR CTP. Current and anticipated partners of the NBNERR CTP (and associated acronyms) are listed in Appendix I.

Priority Issues

Issues of National Priority

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System has identified the following four national priority issues:

- **Water Quality Degradation** – urban areas and farms are a major source of water contamination, causing health hazards from well water, beach closings, and shellfish advisories as well as the loss of habitat critical to many wildlife species' survival.
- **Habitat Loss and Alteration** – the process of rehabilitating damaged or injured ecosystems.
- **Changes in Biological Communities** – essential mechanisms to maintaining healthy and productive estuaries.
- **Land Use and Population Growth** – critical to human health as well as the health of the economy.

Priority Issues of the NBNERR CTP

Results of an initial formal Needs Assessment in 2003 along with ongoing informal needs assessments have shaped the identification of the priority issues that will be addressed by the NBNERR CTP over the next three years. The following categories and respective topics are of primary importance to decision-maker audiences:

- Valued Community Assets
 - Rural character
 - Amount of open space in communities
- Scientific
 - Wetlands ecology
 - Invasive species
 - Endangered species
- Economic Development/Growth
 - Planning town-wide greenways
 - Integrating affordable housing
 - Recreation/tourism development
- Planning/Management
 - Analyzing natural features to protect
 - How to incorporate water quality and supply issues into the planning process
 - Knowing what to ask to make sure designs fit into neighborhoods and surrounding landscape

The development of trainings and products on specific issues that that encompasses one or more of these topics are described below.

Conservation Development (Sept. 2007 – ongoing)

The NBNERR CTP, in partnership with RIDEM, will continue to deliver workshops on Conservation Development, a creative land use technique that enables a community to guide growth to protect important natural, cultural, and recreational resources and to create continuous open space corridors. Workshop participants will learn about the benefits of conservation development, how it fits into the Rhode Island legal framework for subdivision review, and other elements contained within the RI Conservation Development Manual, along with participation in a hands-on exercise to practice applying conservation development principles to an actual site.

Conservation Design Mapping Tool (Jan. 2008 – ongoing)

In partnership with RIDEM and URI, the NBNERR CTP will continue to deliver trainings on an electronic mapping tool that complements the Rhode Island Conservation Development Manual. Training participants will learn about basic mapping elements that are recommended to appropriately evaluate a site to be developed under the Conservation Development process, and be able to quickly and easily generate ready-to-print site analysis maps in which parcel boundaries in addition to local data may be included.

Riparian Buffer Restoration (Spring 2008, annually thereafter)

The NBNERR CTP, in partnership with RIDEM and RI NRCS, will continue to deliver workshops and technical assistance to individuals and groups interested in applying for RIDEM grants to restore riparian buffers in their communities. The workshops will target non-profit organizations, private landowners and others to learn about the Riparian Buffer Restoration Fund, a portion of the Narragansett Bay and Watershed Restoration Bond that Rhode Island residents voted on in 2004. The workshops will inform participants on what riparian buffers are and why they're important, the steps involved in a restoration project, an overview of the fund and the application procedure, how to apply for state grant money, and federal funding programs such as NRCS that can provide matching funds and further technical assistance.

Protection of Vernal Pools (Nov. 2007 – 2008)

The NBNERR CTP, in partnership with the RIDEM Office of Water Resources and URI, will provide workshops and technical assistance to towns in the Queen's River Watershed on how to prioritize non-regulatory protection of vernal pools, as outlined in a report recently released by URI. Training programs will focus on addressing

the gaps in the protection of different areas within the watershed that should be targeted for future land conservation efforts. Training participants will learn about different strategies for habitat protection including land acquisition and land-use planning mechanisms such as Conservation Development and other non-structural Low-Impact Development techniques, as well as how the results of the study can be used in conjunction with other data already available to them.

Groundwater Quality and Quantity (May 2008)

In collaboration with the NBNERR Stewardship sector, the NBNERR CTP will provide follow-up trainings to the Prudence Island Groundwater Workshop that was offered in June of 2007. Workshops will focus on groundwater supply issues specific to Prudence Island, along with implementation strategies for addressing the issue. Participants (mainly Prudence Island residents) will learn what they can do on a personal level to help preserve their groundwater resource as well as how to work with their municipal officials, state regulators and others to create a plan of action for the long-term protection of the groundwater resources of Prudence Island.

Conservation Easements and Open Space Management (July 2008 – ongoing)

The NBNERR CTP will deliver trainings on Conservation Easement and Open Space Management guidance manuals developed by a land-use attorney that was contracted by the NBNERR CTP. The manuals and trainings will help to ensure that target audiences, particularly attorneys and planners, working with conservation easements thoroughly understand the appropriate Rhode Island legal foundation and proper procedures for preparing, recording and enforcing conservation easements to guarantee that conservation parcels will remain protected for generations. They will also help to ensure that the target audiences understand the options for the ownership and management of conservation parcels as well as the elements of an effective stewardship program for protected open space lands.

LID/Phase II Post-Construction non-structural control methods (July 2008 – ongoing)

The NBNERR CTP, in partnership with the RIDEM Office of Sustainable Watersheds, will deliver a training to community planners, planning boards, and other local officials on how they can integrate Low-Impact Design (LID) principles into their land use regulations for new development to prevent stormwater impacts to water quality and to comply with the Phase 2 Stormwater Permit Post Construction Management Measure. A subsequent training will be developed for re-development using the principles of the RIDEM Urban Environmental Design Manual.

Human Use (April 2008)

In collaboration with the NBNERR Research Sector and URI's Department of Marine Affairs, the NBNERR CTP will develop strategies to implement the findings of the "Narragansett BayScope", a study that explores the humans uses of Narragansett Bay. The goal of the study is to explore spatial and temporal patterns of various water and shoreline activities that occur in the Narragansett Bay ecosystem. The NBNERR CTP will focus on the final component of a four-part research plan of the study, to "coordinate with NBNERR to develop a strategy for disseminating results to community planners and other local decision-makers", in effort to improve understanding of the distribution and diversity of human activities in Narragansett Bay so that effective coastal and marine management policies are developed.

Water and Sewer Issues in Mixed-Use Compact Growth Centers (July 2008 – July 2009)

A series of trainings delivered by the Rhode Island Land-Use Training Collaborative (of which the NBNERR CTP is a member) will focus on the benefits of directing growth toward mixed-used centers. The CTP will focus on the development of a training within the series that will address areas with different levels of water and sewer infrastructure. Specifics to be covered in the training include water availability and how withdrawal will impact surface water in infill development cases, the sequence of studies required to ensure that there is an adequate water supply for particular densities, and options for various technologies, how to fund projects, and operation and management strategies.

Aquatic Invasive Species (Spring 2008 – Spring 2009)

The NBNERR CTP will partner with the RI CRMC, URI, and RINHS to help implement the education and training objectives of the RI Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan, the first comprehensive effort to assess the impacts and threats of aquatic invasive species in RI, that is to be completed by the end of 2007. The NERRS CTP will help to develop and coordinate training opportunities for resource managers, industry representatives and others regarding their role in preventing the introduction and transport of aquatic invasive species.

Land and Water Conference (March 2008, annually thereafter)

The CTP will continue to support the annual Land and Water Conference as it has done over the last three years. The Land and Water Conference, hosted by the RILTC and the RIRC, is a daylong conference that features sessions on various topics of interest to land trusts, watershed councils, municipal staff and volunteers and others. In addition to co-sponsoring the conference, the NBNERR CTP will contribute to the planning effort and display an exhibit the day of the conference.

Priority Audiences

Results of the initial NBNERR CTP Market Analysis and Needs Assessment as well as input from the members of the NBNERR CTP Advisory Committee helped to identify the decision-maker audiences to be targeted by the NBNERR CTP, as described below. It is important to note that the NBNERR CTP will maintain enough flexibility to include other audiences highlighted by ongoing market analyses and needs assessments in its outreach efforts, and it will be open to partnership opportunities that address the needs of these groups.

Primary Audience: Municipal Officials

Land use planning decisions are made at the town level in Rhode Island, making it critical that municipal elected and appointed officials receive the best scientific information, tools and training possible to make informed decision that inevitably and ultimately impact the health of Narragansett Bay. Members of this audience include town planners, tax assessors, planning board, town council, zoning board and economic development board members, and conservation commissioners. The majority of the training opportunities and products created by CTP will reflect the needs of this audience, and ongoing needs assessments and evaluations will be conducted to determine audience needs over time.

Other Audiences

As issues evolve and new issues arise, NBNERR CTP trainings and products will be provided to other audiences within the Narragansett Bay Watershed. Private sector representatives, such as designers, developers, real estate agents, engineers, landscape architects and others will be targeted. Additionally, state regulators and non-profit organizations such as land trusts and watershed councils may benefit from the training programs offered by the NBNERR CTP.

Training Delivery System

The NBNERR CTP training delivery system is based upon the Needs Assessment conducted in 2003 as well as ongoing needs assessments. The various training delivery methods are described below.

Workshops

The training programs to be offered by the NBERR CTP over the next three years will be delivered mainly in the form of workshops. These trainings will be designed to educate larger groups of coastal decision-maker audiences on key issues in addition to incorporating a hands-on individual or group activity or other exercise to ensure that participants are prepared to apply the knowledge and skills presented to them once they leave the workshop. Workshops will offer continuing education credits to various audience members wherever possible.

Direct Assistance

In addition to workshops and other forms of coastal decision-maker training, the NBNERR CTP will provide assistance to particular coastal decision-maker individuals or groups, either directly or in partnership with other organizations. Such assistance may include providing model town ordinances, working with GIS-based mapping applications and other tools, and assisting with the acquisition of town-specific natural resource data.

Online Resources

The NBNERR CTP website will be continuously maintained and improved so that coastal decision-makers may have access to the most current information and training opportunities. Over the next three years, the NBNERR CTP will work to develop web-based training programs and tools such as watershed inventories and environmental audits to help communities assess the health of their watershed's natural resources. The NBNERR CTP will also continue to populate and publicize www.communityconnectionri.org so that coastal decision-makers may quickly and easily learn about land use and water resources-related trainings and other events in RI and nearby CT and MA.

Other Resources

The NBNERR CTP will create and provide fact sheets, brochures, and other publications on the priority issues of concern to local decision-maker audiences.

Marketing of the NBNERR CTP

Increasing the visibility of the NBNERR CTP via various marketing mechanisms is important in promoting the trainings and products available to decision-makers throughout the Narragansett Bay Watershed. The NBNERR CTP will make available brochures and other publications at all appropriate venues, as well as provide NBNERR CTP updates via the NBNERR newsletter and website. The NBNERR CTP will also provide advertisements to include in training event program guides and other materials of events that the NBNERR CTP will be involved with. The NBNERR CTP will also take advantage of opportunities to publish articles or other pieces in newspapers and other media as well as make presentations at appropriate venues.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At the NERRS CTP Sector level, training and technical assistance will be monitored and evaluated through the performance measures developed by the CTP community. In addition to this system, the NBNERR CTP will conduct informal evaluations on an ongoing basis to assess the training and information needs and training delivery preferences of coastal decision-maker audiences in order to track success and plan for the future. All results will be reflected in the CTP performance monitoring spreadsheet and accompanying narrative that is submitted to the NERRS on a semi-annual basis.

Evaluation forms will be distributed to all training event attendees to determine overall satisfaction with training and to establish training effectiveness. Six-month evaluations will also be conducted on selected training events to evaluate long-term impact. Audience members for technical assistance projects will be asked to fill out a survey every six months to determine assistance effectiveness.

Staffing and Infrastructure

Full-time staff for the NBNERR CTP includes one program coordinator employed through the Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI). The CTP Coordinator will pursue opportunities to employ a full- or part-time assistant or intern. Office space is available at the NBNERR on Prudence Island, RI as well as at the RIDEM headquarters building in Providence, RI, with meeting space available at both locations.

Appendix I: Current and Anticipated Partnerships of the NBNERR CTP

- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
- Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI)
- GrowSmart Rhode Island (GSRI)
- University of Rhode Island (URI)
- Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC)
- Rhode Island Land Trust Council (RILTC)
- Rhode Island Rivers Council (RIRC)
- Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program (RISWPP)
- Rhode Island Chapter of the American Planning Association (RI APA)
- Rhode Island Chapter of the American Society of Engineers (RI ASE)
- Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (RI AIA)
- Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA)
- Rhode Island Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (RI ASLA)
- Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (RI CRMC)
- Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS)
- Rhode Island Natural Resources Conservation Service (RI NRCS)
- Region 1 of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
- Southern RI Conservation District (SRICD)
- Northern RI Conservation District (NRICD)
- Save the Bay (STB)
- RI Non-Point Education for Municipal Officials (RI NEMO)
- Rhode Island Sea Grant (RISG)
- Rhode Island Association of Conservation Commissions (RIACC)
- Rhode Island Economic Policy Council (RIEPC)
- Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns (RILCT)