

# Tides

MAGAZINE

## Empowering a Climate Response

HOW THE RECENTLY FUNDED  
OSCAR PROGRAM WILL HELP RI  
WITHSTAND CLIMATE CHANGE

**SAVE THE BAY®**

NARRAGANSETT BAY

Hard-won  
Legislative Victories

BayCampers  
on the Rosie Q

Seasonal  
Bay Sights





*Summer isn't the  
only time to enjoy  
Narragansett Bay!*

**SEAL TOURS AND  
SEAL & LIGHTHOUSE TOURS**

**NEWPORT, R.I.**  
NOVEMBER - APRIL



**SEAL TOURS AND  
NATURE CRUISES**

**WESTERLY, R.I.**  
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER

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**SAVE THE BAY®**

NARRAGANSETT BAY

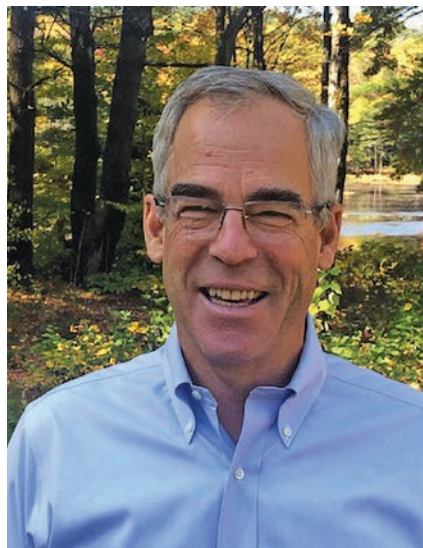
## FROM THE DIRECTOR

# Building Blocks

A few years back we researched and published a book on the decades-long cleanup of Narragansett Bay (*Saving Narragansett Bay*, by Todd McLeish, 2020). If there was one consistent theme in this narrative, it was that the threats to the Bay's well-being—pollution, development pressures, big energy projects, land use changes—evolve over time. The latest chapter in this story: climate change is affecting every aspect of Bay health.

Our ability to care for and protect Narragansett Bay depends on our ability to recognize that evolving challenges require new solutions and approaches. This is true of our habitat restoration program, where we have transitioned to a focus on resilience and adaptive management. It is true of our education program, where we are constantly developing new curriculum and hands-on learning experiences. And it is true of our advocacy work, where we build on prior campaigns to bring focus on emerging threats.

This issue's cover story is a great example of building on incremental progress to achieve major legislative advances. Over the course of five years, we helped educate legislators about the urgency of investing in the resilience of coastal ecosystems that sustain fisheries, protect against storm surges,



mitigate flood risks, improve water quality, and provide recreational opportunities. The result of this sustained effort is the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) fund, which the General Assembly authorized in 2021 and funded this year.

All of us involved in this cause—caring for Narragansett Bay—appreciate that progress is measured in steps, some small and some large, that build upon past successes. To achieve results, to be effective, requires persistence, dedication, resources, and a singular focus on the key environmental challenges we face. And every member of our community has a role to play as we work toward a better Narragansett Bay, one building block at a time.

With appreciation,

Jonathan Stone  
Executive Director

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### What's That Flag?

*Save The Bay staff have already begun working toward the goals set forth in our recently adopted 2027 Strategic Plan, and we look forward to sharing our progress with you! Starting in this issue, you will see markers, like the one shown below, noting that the story you're reading relates to a Strategic Plan initiative. Make note of which of our plan's three pillars the story refers to—Education, Advocacy, or DEI—and learn more at [savebay.org/strategic-plan-2027](https://savebay.org/strategic-plan-2027).*

⋮ **Strategic Plan Pillar: Education**

### ON THE COVER:

*As a leader in salt marsh restoration, Save The Bay shares its techniques with like-minded organizations from far and wide. In 2019, on an informational visit, Charlynn Robertson from the Clean Foundation (Nova Scotia) observed marsh migration in Sapowet Marsh.*



## COMMUNITY

# If You Could Have a Conversation With the Blackstone River, What Would You Say?



BY KATE MCPHERSON, RIVERKEEPER

That's the question that Emily Vogler asked me in May, as she gauged my interest in helping her plan and scout a river expedition from Worcester, Mass. to Providence, R.I. Emily, a Rhode Island School of Design professor, is one of the architects of the Blackstone River Commons, a movement that aims to celebrate the river and understand how she is part of our regional identity.

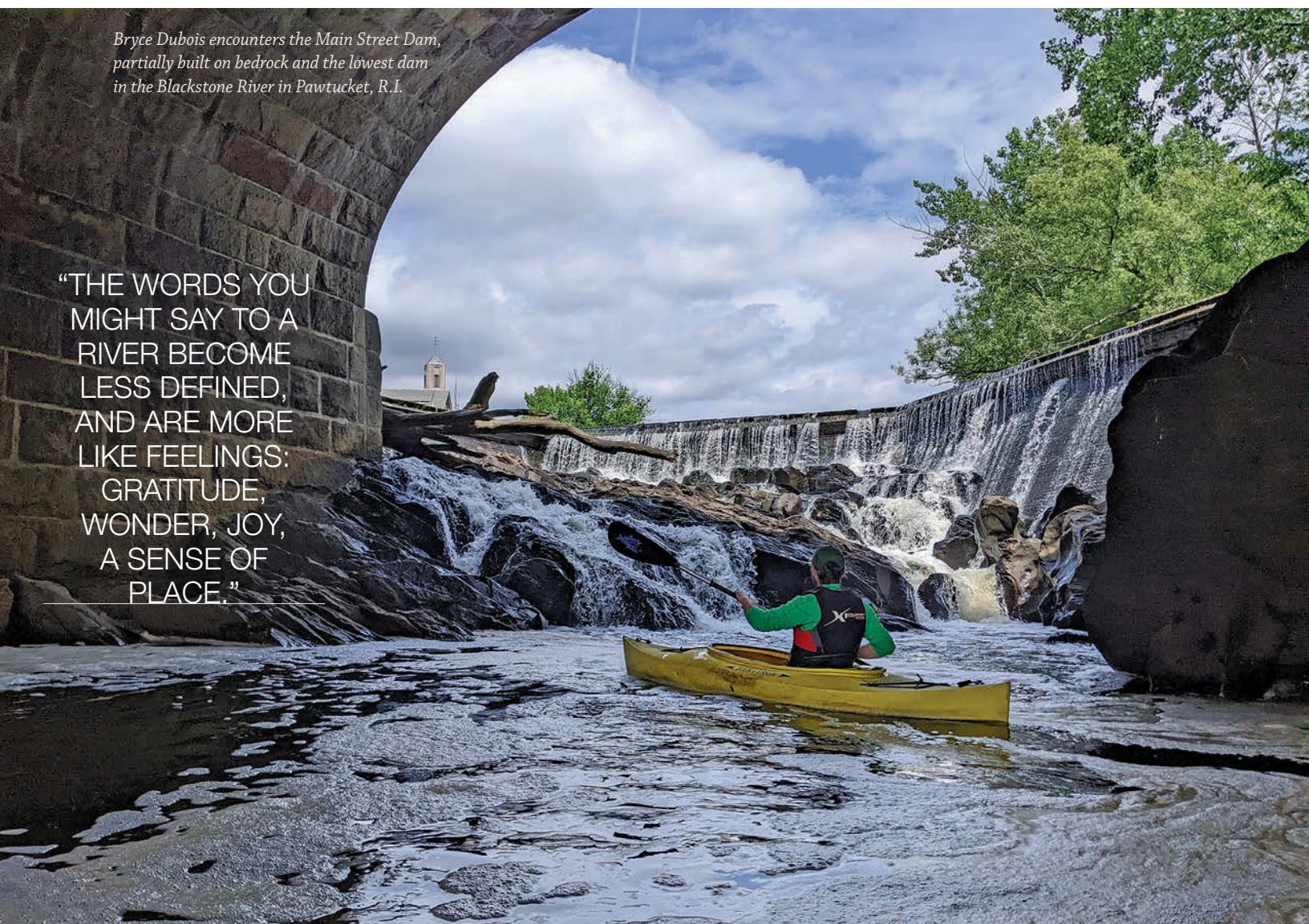
What do you even say to the Blackstone? During the Industrial Revolution, hundreds of mills were built on the river and her tributaries. In September of 1972, ZAP the Blackstone volunteers removed about 10,000 tons of trash from the riverbanks. In the early 1990s, Save The Bay was driven to publish "Bring Back the Blackstone"—

a report detailing problems with and recommendations to clean up the river—shortly after the 1990 EPA designation of the Blackstone as the most toxic river in the United States. *Do you write a letter to the river to tell her you're so sorry?*

Mid-May found us at Riverbend Farm with Stefanie Covino, Coordinator of the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative. The BWC includes all of the many watershed advocacy groups that have formed since that epic 1972 cleanup. We paddled up a calm section of canal before carrying our boats over a dam (one of many) into the lively river. By the end of the afternoon, folks were smiling and exhilarated. *Do you write to the river to thank her?*

*Bryce Dubois encounters the Main Street Dam, partially built on bedrock and the lowest dam in the Blackstone River in Pawtucket, R.I.*

"THE WORDS YOU MIGHT SAY TO A RIVER BECOME LESS DEFINED, AND ARE MORE LIKE FEELINGS: GRATITUDE, WONDER, JOY, A SENSE OF PLACE."







*CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Emily Vogler contemplates a break in the Singing Dam, a dam in the main stem of the Blackstone River that no longer serves a purpose in South Grafton, Mass.; Red maple trees in the background and ferns in the foreground of a forested floodplain in Millbury, on the banks of the Blackstone River. This beauty was in stark contrast to some of the conditions observed elsewhere on the river; and Riverkeeper Kate, Emily Vogler, and Frank Cortesa celebrate another portage: this time up and over the Elizabeth Webbing Dam, seen in the background. One of the major access issues for the river for kayakers and fish alike is how to get around dams safely.*

That day was the first of six river scouting expeditions, on which we scouted rapids, dilapidated dams, murky water pouring from outfalls, poison ivy-covered routes around spillways, and river braids gone dry with drought. I was delighted by the wildlife I didn't expect to see: spotted sandpiper, wood duck, bald eagle, and carp. We laughed with exhilaration at running rapids through old broken-down dams. We wanted others to experience what we saw. The words you might say to a river become less defined, and are more like feelings: gratitude, wonder, joy, a sense of place.

Following these scouting efforts, a hearty group of river advocates ran as much of the river as humanly possible from August 11-14. Meanwhile, the ZAP the Blackstone effort reconvened for its 50th anniversary this year, with another massive watershed cleanup effort involving Save The Bay and dozens of other partners. This renewed



focus on the Blackstone River is the result of a 2021 Needs Assessment published by the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program that set up the Watershed Collaborative enabling watershed groups to work together in the ways they work best: cleaning up trash, hosting a public paddle, planting trees, getting kids in nature.

The Blackstone River still needs our help, yet she remains a source of inspiration, a restful place to visit, a freshwater source to Narragansett Bay. We will not stop advocating for her. ■

If you would like to write a letter, story, poem, or present a drawing to the Blackstone—some of which will be published in the Blackstone River Commons anthology alongside essays, archival materials, interviews, and art—send physical letters to:

The Blackstone River  
P.O. Box 215  
Pawtucket, RI 02860-9998

Or email them to:  
[blackstonerivercommons@gmail.com](mailto:blackstonerivercommons@gmail.com)



## RESTORATION

# Sapowet: A Design for Marsh Survival



BY WENLEY FERGUSON,  
DIRECTOR OF HABITAT  
RESTORATION



*The saltmarsh sparrow spends its entire life in marsh habitats, including nesting directly on the marsh. As marshes have been flooding more with sea level rise, the sparrow's population has been declining at an alarming rate due to nest flooding. Scientists predict a population collapse in the next 50 years unless steps are taken to protect current and future nesting habitat.*

The area of Tiverton, Rhode Island known as “Sapowet” is a land of contrasts. Sapowet, an indigenous name for this region, means, “by the river.” Open fields lead directly into an expansive salt marsh and the Sakonnet River—more reminiscent of England’s coast than New England’s.

The salt marsh looks lush from the bridge that crosses the mouth of Sapowet Creek. Upon closer look, however, the marsh shows signs of degradation from hundreds of years of farming activities that altered the flow of water in and out of the marsh.

Beginning in the 1600s, farmers built embankments to keep the tides out of haying fields and stone walls to delineate areas where cattle would feed. Today, the embankments are very subtle features that can be seen as straight lines on the marsh. Over the years, the drainage structures and ditches that the farmers created through the embankments filled in, causing water to become trapped on the marsh surface. Meanwhile, still-visible stone walls trap freshwater from the upland, creating ideal mosquito breeding habitat.

Even though marsh grass can tolerate intermittent flooding, it can’t thrive in permanent pools of water since its roots need oxygen to survive, so Sapowet’s marsh grasses have begun to die off. Without growing plants to trap sediment and create the vegetation needed to maintain elevation, the marsh begins to sink. The peat or marsh soil, once firm enough for grazing cattle, becomes mucky and unstable.

Over the past four years, Save The Bay has been working with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management’s Division of Fish and Wildlife

and Mosquito Abatement Program to restore the tidal flow and save the remaining marsh, while also improving public health by eliminating the environment in which mosquitos breed.

In the marsh, our work involves digging—sometimes by hand and sometimes with RIDEM’s low ground pressure excavator—shallow drainage features called “runnels.” The runnels allow the trapped water to drain and the marsh plants to regrow. The excavated

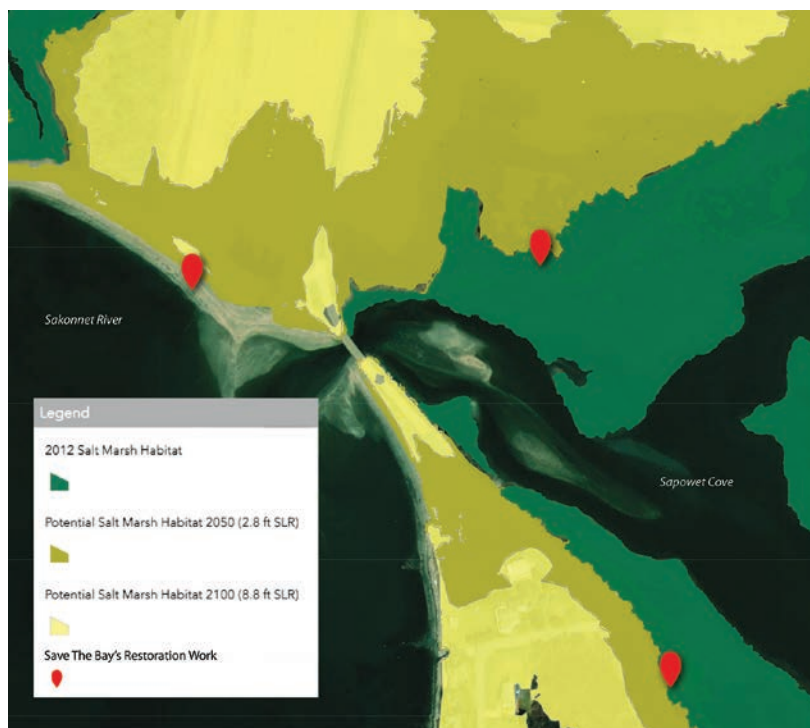


*Save The Bay interns hand dig runnels to drain the trapped water that causes marsh grasses to die and peat to subside.*

peat is placed in small mounds on the marsh, creating slightly higher conditions and allowing marsh grasses to thrive. As plants begin to revegetate and stabilize the sediment, we then extend the runnels to allow for more drainage. Each step of this process takes time and we will continue the work in the winter and spring of 2023 with the goal of addressing the hydrology of 116 acres of state-owned marsh.

Along the fields’ edges, our efforts involved removing small stone piles to both drain standing freshwater and create





*TOP: A stone wall, delineating an area where cattle once grazed, is shown here along the upper edge of the salt marsh. In the foreground, the trapped water that becomes mosquito breeding ground is visible. ABOVE: The University of Rhode Island has created maps that identify ideal areas for salt marsh migration. On these maps, Sapowet Marsh clearly has the opportunity to migrate inland, allowing it to survive sea level rise in the future.*

a path for the marsh to migrate inland as sea level rises. RIDEM further supported the development of this marsh corridor by converting former vegetable fields to native, salt-tolerant grasses that will adapt readily to salt marsh habitat.

Already, we have begun to see promising results at Sapowet. Edges of the former field are converting to salt marsh grasses, vegetation is returning to many marsh areas, and mosquito breeding habitat has been significantly reduced.

Much of Sapowet's success story rests with the proactive land conservation measures taken by RIDEM, the Town of Tiverton, the Tiverton Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy over recent decades. By protecting the lands surrounding vulnerable marshes, like Sapowet, future marsh migration is possible. Today, Save The Bay is continuing to work with these partners to protect additional open space along Sapowet Marsh so that we can support the resilience of this valuable habitat well into the future.

*Funding for the marsh migration facilitation and the tidal hydrology restoration at Sapowet Marsh was provided by the Coastal Resources Management Council's Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund and USFWS' Coastal Program. ■*



## WHO SAVES THE BAY? STAFF PROFILE

# Jeff Swanlund: Former BayCamper Inspiring Tomorrow's Bay Stewards



BY MACKENSIE DUPONT CROWLEY,  
CONTENT & DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

*Jeff Swanlund, a one-time BayCamper turned Explore The Bay educator, has a history with Save The Bay that illustrates how our work truly does inspire the Bay stewards of tomorrow.*

## Tell me about what you do on the Explore The Bay team.

I started at Save The Bay per diem as a seasonal staff member before joining the team full-time for BayCamp in 2019. In addition to my duties as an educator, I'm also the Afterschool Program Manager.

Save The Bay offers science-education programs to students after the school day is done in a more informal setting. Students come to the Bay Center or our staff travel to classrooms with lessons and animals, usually one day a week over four or eight weeks. In my role, I coordinate staffing for these programs and foster relationships with schools in the area.

## How did you get into environmental education?

As a kid, I always wanted to be at the beach or with animals. I actually attended BayCamp in Wickford in 2001. I remember being out on the M/V *Alletta Morris* with a few current staff members, like Captain



Eric Pfirrmann and director of education Bridget Kubis Prescott! I eventually went to the University of Rhode Island for marine biology, but I found environmental education to be more my style than being in the lab.

## How was this season of BayCamp?

This was our first summer back at full capacity following the COVID years, and it went really well. The kids were excited to be back in full force, especially the campers we see year after year. Having the new vessel, the *Rosie Q*, has been really fun. We get to try new programs in new locations, and explore different habitats around the Bay, like shorelines and tidal creeks, that we couldn't get to with our other vessels. (Read more about how the M/V *Rosemary Quinn*, or the "*Rosie Q*," has helped expand our BayCamp programs on page 18.)

## You've really come full circle, from a camper to a Save The Bay educator working BayCamp, yourself!

I remember being 10 years old at BayCamp and having so much fun catching blue crabs, trawling on the vessel, and playing a fish ladder obstacle course game. Now, it's cool to see the kids at camp get so excited to spend the whole day searching for animals in a habitat. They're pumped to use the nets and trawl. Their excitement reminds me so much of myself at that age, and it's awesome that I get to help recreate that experience for them. ■



*ABOVE: A group of BayCampers joins Jeff on a Save The Bay education vessel in 2019. LEFT: Jeff explains the geography of the Bay during a Newport Seal Tour in 2022, holding up a map with the help of one of the trip's younger passengers.*



# Save The Bay Action Updates

## Education + Engagement

- During spring and summer 2022, **1,428 volunteers cleaned up 16,292 pounds of trash** at 86 cleanups around Narragansett Bay.
- Our ambitious **volunteers marked 1,238 storm drains** in Johnston, North Providence, Bristol and Middletown R.I., and completed marking all known storm drains in Seekonk, Mass. as part of our efforts to improve water quality in Hundred Acre Cove.
- The 2022 Swim **engaged 202 swimmers and 145 volunteers** in our two-mile, open water swim and fundraiser, with an additional 46 participants contributing to the effort virtually. Our swimmers and event supporters raised more than \$240,000 in support of our mission to protect and improve Narragansett Bay.
- During another busy summer season, our education staff welcomed **548 BayCampers in grades K-12** to 27 camps this summer, while our aquarium team hosted **15,259 guests of all ages at our Exploration Center and Aquarium** in Newport, R.I.



## Habitat Restoration + Advocacy

- Ongoing habitat restoration efforts at Silver Creek in Bristol and Common Fence Point, Portsmouth, R.I., as well as on the Three Mile River in Taunton, Mass. engaged staff and volunteers alike in the **planting of 2,329 native plants**.
- In coordination with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, we began a salt marsh restoration project at Allens Pond in Dartmouth, Mass., during which staff from both organizations, as well as **volunteers and interns hand dug approximately 800 feet of runnels** to help the marsh drain.
- In another collaboration with the University of Rhode Island Watershed Watch program, **we collected 1,518 water samples** assessing dissolved oxygen, bacteria, and more.
- Continuing our commitment to public access, our team **surveyed 135 rights-of-way**, while also supporting the designation of five brand new rights-of-way in Portsmouth, R.I.
- In spring 2022, we **visited 15 vernal pools** at the Marion Eppley Wildlife Refuge (owned by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island) in Exeter to test remote mapping techniques. We confirmed the presence of several wildlife species that depend on this ephemeral wetland type, in this project developed in partnership with RIDEM, RI Natural History Survey, ASRI, USEPA and University of Rhode Island.

## Thank You...

*Sponsors make Save The Bay's special events possible! Many thanks to this year's supporters:*

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Citizens Bank  
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Rhode Island Turnpike & Bridge Authority Foundation  
Chisholm, Chisholm & Kirkpatrick Ltd.  
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Thorp & Trainer Insurance Agency



# Sights on a Cool Weather Bay

WHAT CAN YOU SEE AROUND NARRAGANSETT BAY THIS TIME OF YEAR? WE HAVE A FEW TIPS!



BY MACKENSIE DUPONT CROWLEY,  
CONTENT & DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

## 1 Birds of Narragansett Bay

While, from a distance, the bird silhouettes you can spot on the waters of a wintertime Bay may look similar, a closer look will reveal far more species variety than you might expect! Mergansers, brant, loons, eiders, scaup, scoter, goldeneye, and a number of other birds all venture to the Bay this time of year, choosing to find their next meal here, instead of in places like the Arctic, the maritime provinces of Canada, or the British Isles, all of which ice over in winter.

## 2 Dredging Activities

Municipalities and businesses routinely dredge areas of Narragansett Bay to ensure proper depths are maintained for boats and ships in channels and marinas. Regulators commonly limit dredging to a period of time that takes place between mid-October and the end of January in order to minimize impacts to nearby habitats and certain spawning seasons. Don't be surprised to see dredging barges out on the Bay sometime this winter!



*Dredging activities, like the one shown here on the Providence River in 2009, are typically limited to a time period from mid-October to January.*



*Sand dunes act as a buffer between the water and the land. Sand fences preserve the dunes, preventing coastal erosion.*

## 3 Change in Beach Profile

A change in season means changes in wind and wave energy resulting in differences in beach profile, or the slope from the dune to the water. While gentle summer waves deposit sand onto the beach, widening it and increasing its elevation, winter brings stronger waves that pick up that deposited sand and carry it back offshore. This winter action narrows the beach, while also creating a buffer for it by building up something like a sandbar just offshore that minimizes erosion caused by winter storms and nor'easters. (Beaches also tend to be rockier in the winter, as those finer grains of sand are transported away.)



#### 4 Salt Marsh Restoration Activities

This time of year, Save The Bay staff continue assessing and maintaining salt marsh restoration sites. These efforts include: maintaining drainage features; conducting coastal adaptation projects through low-lying pavement removal and bank regrading; and digging runnels both by hand and with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's low ground pressure excavator to restore the tidal flow. Keep an eye out for our restoration team if you happen to travel by a local salt marsh!

#### 5 Return of Harbor Seals

Harbor seals migrate south from Maine and the Atlantic Provinces of Canada in the late fall. The warmer, sheltered waters of Narragansett Bay and an abundant food supply provide a winter haven for these marine mammals. During these cooler months, harbor seals can be spotted from the mouth of the Bay at Brenton Point to as far north as Providence, and can usually be seen when they "haul out" on rocks. (If looking for seals, remember that they are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act and should never be approached or startled. To view seals safely, we recommend hopping on-board one of our Save The Bay Seal Tours! Learn more at [savebay.org/seals](https://savebay.org/seals).)



*Save The Bay interns restore tidal flow to a marsh by digging runnels with shovels.*



*Low tide is the best time to see seals hauled out on rocks, where they rest and warm up in the sun. Photo by Karyn Jimenez-Elliott.*



# Empowering a Climate Response

HOW THE RECENTLY FUNDED OSCAR PROGRAM IS WHAT RHODE ISLAND NEEDS TO WITHSTAND OUR CHANGING CLIMATE



BY TOPHER HAMBLETT,  
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY

## Strategic Plan Pillar: Advocacy

In the waning days of its 2022 legislative session, the Rhode Island General Assembly capped a historically great year of environmental achievement by passing a budget that included \$4 million in seed funding for a climate adaptation program known as OSCAR (Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience fund). The OSCAR



program will fund projects on municipal and state-owned lands that will both help our coastal and riverine environments remain strong in the face of climate change and protect public access to them.

This major victory for Narragansett Bay was the result of an intensive five-year campaign that began in 2018 when Save The Bay's team of advocates—recognizing the urgency of climate change, and drawing from years of experience designing and implementing restoration and adaptation projects—consulted with representatives of environmental and financing agencies, and partner cities and towns to develop a list of potential projects that needed funding. This list laid the framework for what would become known as OSCAR.

In 2021, the General Assembly formally established the program, but without a funding source. In 2022, Assembly leadership and members—notably sponsors Rep. Camille Vella-Wilkinson (Warwick) and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ryan Pearson—persevered and finally secured funding in a victory that represents precisely the action we need to address climate change impacts in the Ocean State.

## A Key Climate Change Response Strategy

There's no question about it: the climate crisis is upon us and the situation demands action. In the Narragansett Bay watershed, increasingly intense storms are causing the rapid erosion of shorelines, riverbanks, and the public parks and access points that have been enjoyed by generations. Salt marshes—the nurseries of coastal life—are drowning under rising seas. Structures like dams and roadways, built over centuries as Rhode Island grew, now run the risk of failing, putting communities at greater risk of flooding.

In order to be truly successful in this fight against climate change, our crisis response must be two-fold: reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help natural systems like Narragansett Bay adapt and flourish. Over the past several years, many steps have been taken to address climate change impacts from each of these strategic approaches. On the state level, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the 2021 Act on Climate law to set and enforce greenhouse gas reduction goals, and passed a 2022 follow-up law requiring Rhode Island to be fully powered by renewable energy sources by 2030. The state's Municipal Resilience Program (MRP) has been funding projects to relocate and rebuild vulnerable infrastructure—natural

and human-made—with matching grants. Meanwhile, at the federal level, a series of laws passed by Congress—including the American Rescue Act, the Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act—are providing billions of dollars for both greenhouse gas reduction and climate adaptation projects nationwide.

Despite all of the progress that has been made, cities, towns and the state need more support in order to meet the demands of

the climate crisis. Specifically, these entities need direct funding for projects that will address the ecological and public access challenges brought by climate change.

And this is why OSCAR is unique. Through the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, the program will provide funds to cities, towns and the state for projects aimed at strengthening the resilience of natural systems—salt marshes, flood plains, dunes—to climate change.

Recognizing that cities and towns lack the resources they need for these projects, OSCAR is a straight up grant program, with no local match required. Plus, OSCAR grants will enable municipalities and the state to qualify for significant additional federal funding through matching dollars.

## A Possibility Maker

Over the past decade, Save The Bay has partnered with cities, towns and government agencies on climate adaptation initiatives. Statewide, these projects have included replacing flood- and erosion-prone roads that lead to coastal waters with stormwater swales and public access paths. They also include “carving back” certain areas, like Warwick's City Park Beach, to reduce erosion. In Warren, the first phase of the Kickemuit River restoration has begun as the Rhode Island Department of Transportation elevates a low-lying road and enlarges a corresponding culvert. Future phases of this project will involve the removal of two dams by Bristol County Water Authority to restore wetlands, tidal flow and water quality, while reducing flood risks of a local evacuation route. While these projects offer significant ecological

*continued on next page >>>*



*FAR LEFT: Evidence of climate change is all around us, as demonstrated by the erosion documented by this Narragansett, R.I. shoreline photo, taken following a March 2022 storm by a MyCoast RI app volunteer. ABOVE: During an end-of-road retrofit project, roads that lead to coastal waters, and that are prone to flooding and erosion, are removed and replaced with stormwater swales and, as shown in this photo taken with volunteers at Grove Ave. in Warwick, enhanced public access points. At this site, the soil control mat you see at the end of the road will keep the newly-seeded area intact while plants take root. TWO PHOTOS AT LEFT: Carving back banks, or regrading eroding shorelines, as shown in these before and after photos of Warwick City Park, can help slow the process of erosion by creating a gentler slope.*



and community benefits, they were difficult to finance. Luckily, in the future, these are exactly the kinds of projects that OSCAR will make possible. Additionally, OSCAR will fund projects that:

- Move public facilities back from eroding shorelines at public beaches and parks.
- Remove pavement at the water's edge in flood prone neighborhoods, replacing it with soils and plants that filter polluted runoff and reduce flooding.
- Replace undersized culverts under roads and bridges with larger culverts that allow river water to flow more freely, even when water volume is greater.
- Secure lands to allow salt marshes to migrate upland and inland.
- Restore dunes that provide habitat to wildlife and protect coastal lands from storm events.
- Remove dams to restore fish passage, reduce the risk of flooding and improve water quality.
- Restore wetlands and floodplains in rivers to improve habitat and control flooding.

And this funding won't come a moment too soon. Elected officials from communities on both sides of the Bay offered their support for the program during the 2022 legislative session.

"[...] all of us are impacted by the adverse effects of climate change," noted Warwick Mayor Frank Picozzi. "The OSCAR fund presents a significant opportunity to combat climate change in Rhode Island municipalities through strategic investments in our infrastructure."

"The OSCAR fund would provide resources to municipalities and state agencies to take action in the face of rising sea levels

and increased precipitation-related flooding," stated Warren Town Manager, Kate Michaud. "Rhode Island is the Ocean State, and for us the future will rely heavily upon our relationship with the ocean. Climate adaptation strategy and execution is paramount to protect our economy, our people and our quality of life."



Save The Bay's habitat team already has a growing list of sites and potential projects in need of OSCAR funding—and our list represents just a few of the growing needs throughout the Narragansett Bay watershed that could qualify for it:


**Pawcatuck River (Southwest R.I.):** A 2016 engineering study identified dozens of road culverts and impoundments (dams) that restrict the flow of water in the river, impede fish passage and threaten local communities with flooding. Many of those culverts are undersized and OSCAR could help replace them with larger culverts that will allow river waters to flow more freely.

**Sapowet Marsh:** This spectacular Tiverton salt marsh is threatened by rising sea levels and needs to migrate inland to survive. OSCAR could help secure lands adjacent to the marsh for this marsh migration.



*LEFT: When culverts, like the ones shown here at the Narrow River's Canonchet Marsh, are too small, water cannot flow through them as designed, leading to flooding and preventing fish from moving up and downstream. Replacing undersized culverts with larger ones is one kind of project that could qualify for OSCAR funding. ABOVE: As climate change yields more severe storms with unprecedented precipitation amounts, flooding, like what's captured here during a September 2022 storm in Newport, will become more common. The OSCAR fund will allow towns to tackle projects that both help habitats and local infrastructure adapt to our changing climate.*





“OSCAR WILL PUT RHODE ISLANDERS TO WORK ... IN A WAY THAT PROTECTS AND IMPROVES NARRAGANSETT BAY, WHILE SETTING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR ITS FUTURE AS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS INTENSIFY.”

**Runnins River:** In East Providence, an abandoned railroad abutment is restricting the flow of the Runnins, harming ecology and exacerbating flooding. OSCAR could fund the removal of the abutment, improving the river’s flow and mitigating flood risk.

**Warwick Coast:** Many of the city’s coastal neighborhoods are experiencing flooding of low-lying roads that end right at the water’s edge. OSCAR could fund both the removal of that pavement, and the installation of plants and soils in its place, slowing erosion and reducing flooding.

### Built for Longevity

OSCAR will put Rhode Islanders to work redesigning infrastructure in a way that protects and improves Narragansett Bay, while setting a strong foundation for its future as climate change impacts intensify. And, Save The Bay is well positioned to support and make the most of the OSCAR program and its progress. Driven by our 2027 Strategic Plan, we will be adding two new staff positions to tackle ecological assessments; expand partnerships with community groups, municipalities and state agencies; and secure state and federal funding

for projects. We also aim to strengthen Rhode Island’s capacity to plan and execute OSCAR-funded adaptation and resilience projects as quickly and effectively as possible.

As climate impacts are on the rise and accelerating, Save The Bay staff have challenged ourselves to meet the urgency of the moment by strengthening our capacity to advocate for and implement climate adaptation projects along the coast and throughout the watershed. After all, while the \$4 million allocated by the R.I. General Assembly marks an important step in our climate change response, plenty of progress remains to be made—including attaining a long-term, sustained funding source for OSCAR, so that this urgent work can continue for generations as will be needed. Save The Bay is prepared to build on the foundation OSCAR has created as we continue protecting and improving Narragansett Bay in the years to come. ■

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*Restoration projects—like the culvert replacement and dam removal effort now underway along the Kickemuit River in Warren, R.I.—improve the health of local ecosystems, allowing plants and wildlife alike to access habitats.*



## ADVOCACY

# Long-term Commitment Leads to Long-awaited Victories

Strategic Plan Pillar: Advocacy



BY TOPHER HAMBLETT,  
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY

The 2022 Rhode Island General Assembly session has been heralded as one of the most productive for Narragansett Bay and the environment in decades...maybe ever. A slew of legislative victories—from funding for the OSCAR program (see page 12) and major investments in state environmental agency capacity to improving the structure of the Coastal Resources Management Council—strengthened the foundation for environmental protection in the Ocean State. And, while several important bills did not cross the finish line, their introduction marked progress that we can build upon in 2023.

Victories and progress on Save The Bay's priorities are rarely achieved in a single legislative session. Instead, more often than not, they are the result of many years of sustained advocacy, in partnership with environmental, business and community organizations, and elected officials, as well as a growing legion of Save The Bay members who strategically contact their senators and representatives through our Action Alert system. This year, we saw progress in many areas that we have been working on for decades:

**Increases to Environmental Agency Capacity:** Through the state budget, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management received six new positions in permitting and enforcement, plus 10 other staff positions. This is the first major investment in staff capacity the department has seen in decades, and one Save The Bay has been calling for since 2016. Additionally, a much-needed policy analyst position was added to the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC).

**Progress on CRMC Reform:** The state budget also led to the addition of a full-time, independent hearing officer to CRMC. This change represents one of the pillars of Save The Bay's CRMC reform agenda and a first, important step in making the agency more transparent and accountable. Save The Bay staff served on a House Study Commission on CRMC and pressed for this reform during the Commission's eight-month deliberations.







OPPOSITE PAGE: Rhode Island State House by Ian Lee. LEFT: Topher Hamblett testifying.

**\$50 Million Green Bond:** This ballot measure, which at the time of this publication was scheduled to go before voters on November 8, includes funding for several important Save The Bay priorities: \$3 million for stormwater management, buffer and floodplain restoration projects; \$3 million for open space acquisition; \$2 million in matching grants for local land acquisition; and \$16 million for the Municipal Resilience Program, which funds ecological resiliency and a broad range of climate adaptation projects.

The Commission's final report includes other Save The Bay reform priorities, which, while not acted on in this session, built a strong foundation for reform efforts in 2023.

**CRMC Appointments:** The Senate approved the nominations of two new members to the Council, both attorneys, one of whom is Katy Robinson-Hall, an experienced environmental attorney (in both state service and private practice) and professor of marine and coastal policy. Her expertise and integrity make her an ideal, and much-needed, Council member.

In 2023, we will build on this hard-won progress to address the unfinished business of 2022 by advocating for: further reform of CRMC; passage of a bill to protect and restore the public's constitutional right to access the shoreline; and the protection of the state's most important forests by making changes to existing large scale solar development incentives. Like the victories of 2022 and our mission to protect and improve Narragansett Bay, winning these issues will require continued perseverance, and only one thing is certain: we once again need the support of the Save The Bay community to continue our progress. ■




## Your Voice Makes a Difference

During the 2022 legislative session, more than 800 Rhode Island residents took action to support many of the victories we describe in this story.

Having subscribed to Save The Bay Action Alerts through our Voter Voice platform, these Narragansett Bay lovers and supporters intermittently receive emails that detail up-to-the-minute information regarding legislative issues and step-by-step instructions on how to take action by contacting their elected officials. To make the process as easy as possible, Action Alerts also provide subscribers with a sample script for an email or phone call, and connect action-takers with the appropriate email address or phone number for their representatives.

Between January and June of 2022, Action Alert subscribers took 1,172 actions in support of Narragansett Bay and its watershed during this most recent, and successful, legislative session. As we all know, there is power in numbers.

Will you join the ranks of vocal Bay activists in 2023? Signing up is easy! Visit [savebay.org/advocacy](https://savebay.org/advocacy) and submit your email address and zip code in the "Sign Up for Alerts" window. You'll be using YOUR voice to support Narragansett Bay before you know it!

 <p><b>Shoreline access needs YOUR voice today!</b> H. 8055 Sub A, a bill to protect and clarify your constitutional right to access and move along the shoreline, has been unanimously approved by the Rhode Island House of Representatives. But, we are still waiting for the Senate to support the bill, and the legislative...</p>	<p><b>Sign Up for Alerts</b> Enter your information below to sign up.</p> <p>Enter Email <input type="text"/></p> <p>ZIP Code <input type="text"/></p>
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 <p><b>Preserve your right to access the R.I. shore!</b> H. 8055 Sub A, a bill to protect and clarify your constitutional right to access and move along the shoreline, has just been approved by the House Judiciary Committee and now heads to the full House for a vote! It's essential that your legislators hear from you so that the...</p>	



## EDUCATION

# A New Way to See the Bay



BY FELICIA GRECO,  
EDUCATION SPECIALIST

## Strategic Plan Pillar: Education

During summer 2022, many of Save The Bay's BayCampers were able to experience Narragansett Bay like never before! Aboard our newest education vessel, the M/V *Rosemary Quinn* (better known among Save The Bay staff as the "Rosie Q"), we traveled to new destinations around Narragansett Bay. The Rosie Q's unique landing craft design allows her to coast right up to the shoreline, making Bay exploration more accessible to staff and campers alike.

During camps that were held at our Wickford, Rhode Island location, we hopped on-board Rosie and traveled to Rome Point in North Kingstown. Here, there is a "tidal float," where campers can casually float on an incoming tide in an estuarine river, like a lazy river! Our BayCampers got to drift along in the Bay's natural currents and explore along this rocky shoreline.

Across the Bay at our Bristol camp location, we took the Rosie Q to different parts of Prudence Island, including Sandy Point, where the Prudence Island Lighthouse is located. (Talk about an awesome backdrop for a day of BayCamp!)



Our Bristol and Wickford campers also had the opportunity to "land" (or "beach") the Rosie Q at different locations along Sheep Pen Cove. This cove, situated on the north side of Prudence Island, offered campers both a rocky shoreline and a salt marsh habitat to explore—all within steps of each other!

With Rosie's maneuverability, so many more locations around the Bay were explored by our campers. They searched for Bay animals with seine nets, participated in beach cleanups, and learned about the water chemistry of Narragansett Bay at



ABOVE: BayCampers hopped onboard the M/V *Rosemary Quinn* during summer 2022 for a new kind of camp experience! LEFT AND RIGHT: Seining allows campers—like the ones shown here at Jamestown's Potter Cove—to catch, observe and release plenty of species from Narragansett Bay, including fish and crabs.



locations on Prudence Island, in Wickford Harbor, and in Jamestown that have previously been difficult to access.

But, what was the most exciting part about a ride on the Rosie Q to a camper? Going fast, of course! With a cruising speed of about 20 knots, campers experienced a thrilling and quick ride to the day's destination. While these rides were fun, they were also practical, leaving us much more time in the day for coastal exploration, swimming, and environmental education.

With the functionality of the M/V Rosemary Quinn, BayCampers were able to immerse



themselves in the Bay ... literally. As the drawbridge off the bow was lowered, they began their days by stepping right off the edge of the landing platform and into the water. Rosie gave us some unforgettable tours of the Bay this summer, and we cannot wait to discover all the new adventures she'll make possible next year! ■

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*LEFT: BayCampers helped protect and improve Narragansett Bay this summer with island cleanups. Many thanks to these campers at Sheep's Pen Cove on Prudence Island who collected pieces of debris that have no place in a natural environment!*





## WHO SAVES THE BAY? VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# An Unparalleled Commitment to Making a Difference



BY KATY DORCHIES NUTINI,  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
AND MARKETING

Jackie Proulx and Elizabeth Paquette are no strangers to serving their community. After their careers in education, the 43-years-strong couple now spends much of their retired time continuing to give back. From serving on land trusts and town committees to contributing time to local organizations, these two loyal Save The Bay volunteers demonstrate a unique commitment to contributing to myriad causes. Why? Because they know that a series of small actions can make a big difference.

Growing up in Tiverton, Jackie recalls the increasing pollution that impacted the Sakonnet River and Narragansett Bay during the 1960s, saying, "You had the sewage going straight into our rivers, then you had all the factories upstream dumping their materials into the water. We eventually reached a point where you'd go down to the water, look at it and think, 'I don't really want to go in there.'"

"You couldn't see the bottom in two feet of water," recalled Elizabeth, who first became involved in environmental causes thanks to her love for animals. "It was really gross."

But then, the two remember hearing about Save The Bay while in college. Jackie specifically noted that, at the time, she thought to herself, "How are they going to save *this*?"

"But just last week, my brother and I went out in his boat," she said, "As we were going along, we were talking about how much cleaner the water is now. You can see it. You can feel it. And that's why organizations like Save The Bay are so important."

While both women know that the Bay and the greater environment continue to face challenges, Elizabeth chooses to be optimistic: "Things are getting better, but it takes time. You've just got to start, keep working at it, and you can't give up."

And Jackie and Elizabeth certainly have plenty of experience lending a hand. With Save The Bay alone, they have spent time monitoring the local seal population, leading shoreline cleanups, marking storm drains, volunteering at our special events, assisting with plantings at habitat restoration sites, representing Save The Bay at community events, and more.

"I really like engaging with the public," said Elizabeth. "I enjoy talking about Save The Bay, and it's so wonderful to see all the people who care about the environment and want to get involved."

"You get to see younger people—teenagers and kids—learning about the environment and getting excited about it," added Jackie. "It dovetails so nicely with Save The Bay's education program, and it's wonderful when you tell them about something that interests them and you see their little eyes light up."

"Save The Bay really is a great, multifaceted organization," said Elizabeth. "They tackle the issues from all the different angles: working with towns, with other organizations. They work in the different habitats, in schools, and on policy."

"And the volunteer program is really unique," added Jackie. "Depending on how much time you have, you can do a one-time thing, like a cleanup, or you can be involved in a long-term thing, like storm drain marking. There are options for families, and options for individuals."

"And," she concluded, "No matter what you choose, you have the chance to see how what you're doing makes a difference." ■



*Elizabeth Paquette (left) and Jackie Proulx (right), shown here on a Save The Bay Seal Tour, have tackled a diverse set of Save The Bay volunteer opportunities on their mission to spend their retirement doing things that are worthwhile.*

Inspired by Jackie and Elizabeth's enthusiasm for volunteering? Learn more about Save The Bay's volunteer program and browse current volunteer opportunities at [savebay.org/volunteer](https://savebay.org/volunteer).



# SPARKING SUPPORT: How One Donor Inspired Her Whole Family to Save the Bay



BY JACKIE CARLSON,  
MEMBERSHIP AND  
INDIVIDUAL GIVING MANAGER

As a lifelong Rhode Islander, Amie Kershaw grew up visiting local beaches and enjoying Narragansett Bay, which she refers to as our most important resource. She currently lives in Edgewood and shares her love of the Bay with her husband and children. The Kershaw family especially love spending time together in the late afternoons at the beach when the crowds thin and the air gets cool.

While Amie had a general familiarity with Save The Bay simply by living in the Ocean State, her current role at Citizens—a longtime supporter and sponsor of Save The Bay—gave her the opportunity to learn more about our work. And what did she discover?

*“Getting the next generation involved, engaged and inspired at a young age is the best way to keep the mission going into the future.”*

“Save The Bay does so much more than just Bay cleanups. The organization’s work runs deep with education, advocacy and planning for future generations.”

Today, Amie credits Save The Bay with the visible positive changes she has seen in Narragansett Bay throughout her lifetime of Bayside living, and has passed her involvement and passion for Save The Bay on to her family in recent years.

In addition to coordinating large teams for the Save The Bay Swim, Amie also recruited her husband, Nick, as a participant! Nick has now completed five Save The Bay swims, and even he and Amie’s three children are familiar with Save The Bay through our education program—which Amie cites as one of our most valuable areas of work.

“Educating our children on the current health of the Bay, what it was like years ago, and how it could be in the future is critically important,” she said. “Getting the next generation involved, engaged and inspired at a young age is the best way to keep the mission going into the future.”

While Amie’s children have attended BayCamp, they are also frequent visitors to the Exploration Center and Aquarium in Newport, where Amie loves teaching them about the local ecosystem and how important it is to help preserve it.



*Amie Kershaw, her husband Nick, and their three children are all involved in Save The Bay’s efforts—as donors, swimmers, and education program participants.*

In addition to playing her part in educating the next generation of Bay stewards, Amie also enjoys seeing the impact of Save The Bay volunteers coming together at our shoreline cleanups.

“Pick up your trash, recycle what you can, try to leave less of a carbon footprint,” she said. “If we all help just a little bit, it will add up to a lot more.”

And Amie knows that if we all pitch in, we can make an impact that will last for years to come, and that will make her greatest hope for the Bay a reality:

“I hope that all of Save The Bay’s efforts continue, and that more people get involved, so that my children and my children’s children will have the same opportunities I have had to enjoy the Bay and our beaches.”

So do we, Amie! ■



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**SAVE THE BAY'S***Wish List*

Save The Bay is in  
need of late-model,  
working vehicles to  
support our education  
programs!



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**Questions?**

Contact Maureen Fogarty at 401-272-3540 x109  
OR send us an email at [savebay@savebay.org](mailto:savebay@savebay.org)

**Connect with Us**

Save The Bay is on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Follow along, share your stories and pictures, plan a visit and spread the word about the importance of a healthy Narragansett Bay.

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**Mission and Vision:** Save The Bay works to protect and improve Narragansett Bay and its watershed through advocacy, education and restoration efforts. We envision a fully swimmable, fishable, healthy Narragansett Bay, accessible to everyone and globally recognized as an environmental treasure.



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