

Rhode Island Flood Mitigation Association 2026 Conference

Thursday, May 14th, 2026 | 8:00 am-5:00 pm

University of Rhode Island



ABSTRACTS

Advancing Coastal Resilience Through Capital Projects | Camerin Bennett, Kelly Phelan, Jedd Andrew

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is advancing a statewide approach to climate resilience through strategic capital investments that protect public access, critical infrastructure, and natural resources. This presentation will highlight how targeted development efforts are shaping outcomes across a range of coastal environments.

DEM's capital development projects enhance public access to safe, inclusive, and well-maintained outdoor spaces that support recreation, health, and community connection. Through thoughtful design and investment, these properties - including parks, fishing and boating areas, forests, and other protected lands - also function as resilient landscapes, incorporating flood mitigation strategies that reduce risk, absorb storm impacts, and protect natural resources while meeting the public's evolving needs.

The majority of the presentation will focus on case studies that illustrate these principles in practice at all stages of development, from vision to implementation.

- ❖ Roger Wheeler State Beach: efforts to enhance coastal resilience are paired with improvements to public access and recreational infrastructure.
- ❖ Galilee: DEM's work includes pier replacement and the development of a coastal campus, addressing the operational needs of a vital public fishing port while planning for long-term economic and environmental sustainability, including the added challenges of increased flooding due to climate change.
- ❖ Quonnie Breachway: resilient design strategies will address sea level rise, erosion, and the importance of safe public access
- ❖ Beavertail State Park: ongoing challenges and emerging complications will demonstrate the complexity of balancing immediate infrastructure needs with durable, forward-looking solutions.

Together, these examples demonstrate how DEM is leveraging capital projects as a tool for resilience, integrating engineering, environmental stewardship, flood mitigation, and public benefit. This presentation will provide practical insights into aligning infrastructure investment with climate adaptation goals, offering replicable strategies and encouraging collaborations for agencies or other public entities working in similar coastal contexts.

Erosional Response to an Engineered Dune: A Rhode Island Case Study | Ryan Brinton, & Emily Hall

The Rhode Island southern shore is an erosional and sediment starved system that loses up to 4.9 lateral feet of beachfront every year. As sea levels rise and storms worsen due to climate change, both the natural ecosystems and developed properties along the coast are more vulnerable to extreme weather events and flooding. In October 2012, Superstorm Sandy crashed into Rhode Island, causing millions of dollars in damage to beachfront properties and highlighting the vulnerability of development on the south shore's barrier system. As a result of this historic event, the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council allowed select coastal homeowners in the most impacted communities to apply for experimental erosion control measures to protect their property from storm damage. Under this program, a Westerly homeowner constructed an engineered dune of sand-filled geotextile bags in 2019, and the beach profile in front of the dune was monitored for 3 years. The profile data was analyzed with linear regression and t-tests to assess any negative impacts the dune could have had on either the fronting beach or the neighboring beaches. Results suggest the dune has not significantly increased erosion rates across the beach profile through scouring. Additionally, the engineered dune mimics almost all of the functions of a natural dune, with the exception of migration. Therefore, this can be considered a successful short-term flood mitigation measure, and a policy to reopen the program for applications could give beachfront businesses and homeowners the ability to better protect their property against the rising tides and the flooding that comes with it.

Mish(kittacuck)Sepe Restored: The Plan for an Accessible, Connected, Resilient Blackstone River | Stefanie Covino, Emily Vogler, Bruce (Star) Curliss, & Jonas Procton, PE

Across the United States, communities are reimagining rivers as ecological and civic commons. “Mish(Kittacuck)sepe Restored” is a watershed-scale visioning initiative funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that seeks to develop a comprehensive restoration and stewardship plan for the river by 2027. The project integrates historic research, field investigations, hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, and community engagement to identify priority actions that improve natural hydrology, restore aquatic connectivity, and expand equitable public access to the river corridor.

The work builds on existing regional and municipal plans to identify shared goals for the watershed while generating new technical and spatial analysis. Hydraulic and hydrologic modeling of the mainstem river explores opportunities to improve river management under both flood and drought conditions as well as opportunities to modify natural flow between the natural river and humanmade canal. The project also includes in-depth study of mainstem dams to assess restoration and removal scenarios, identification of new and improved public access points to strengthen community stewardship, and opportunities to incorporate public art and cultural interpretation along the river corridor.

The resulting vision plan will identify priority restoration and access projects and outline implementation pathways to guide future ecological restoration, community investment, and long-term stewardship of the watershed.

In this discussion, the panelist will explore the methodology, capacity building, collaboration, and community engagement methods to create the next generation of projects to restore and steward the Blackstone River, aka Kittacuck.

Ready, Set, Rhody: An Initiative to Identify Flood Risks and Establish Strategies for Addressing Flood Vulnerabilities in Main Street Districts Across RI | Silvana Mercado, Alex Maxwell, PhD, CCP, & Caitlin Greeley.

Ready, Set, Rhody is a statewide initiative led by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation in partnership with the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning, with support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The program helps Rhode Island communities and small businesses prepare for flooding and extreme weather by identifying risks and strengthening resilience. Through targeted infrastructure vulnerability assessments, Ready, Set, Rhody focuses on twelve municipalities and their small business commercial districts that are most vulnerable to coastal and inland flooding.

These “main street” districts are home to many of Rhode Island’s small businesses and play a vital role in local economies. The initiative identifies key areas of risk—often referred to as vulnerability “hot spots”—and pairs this analysis with direct outreach to businesses located in at-risk areas. Participating businesses receive guidance, tools, and strategies to improve disaster preparedness, reduce disruptions, and recover more quickly when extreme weather events occur.

Ready, Set, Rhody is designed to support stronger, more resilient communities while helping small businesses continue to thrive in the face of a changing climate.

A Tale of Two Communities: Flood Resilience Planning Considerations in an Evolving Funding Landscape | Katie Cretella, E.I.T, & Rebecca Madsen, E.I.T, CFM

This presentation will discuss how two communities, one in Rhode Island and the other in Connecticut, navigated changes in assessing future climate hazards while implementing separate flood resiliency planning projects. Changes to the NOAA sea level rise projections as well as updates to the FEMA Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) Toolkit required both communities to reconsider their flood mitigation approach as well as develop an adaptable implementation strategy that could account for an evolving funding landscape.

The Foddering Farm Road causeway in Narragansett, Rhode Island, is the only access to Harbour Island in Point Judith Pond. Maintaining access to the causeway is essential for residents to evacuate during coastal storms and ensure emergency access to the island. The low points of the causeway are often flooded during present-day coastal storms and will be vulnerable to more frequent and intense coastal hazards in the future. Over the course of the project, the NOAA sea level rise projections, as well as the BCA Toolkit were updated. The resulting changes made the community reconsider how to best balance flood damage reduction and frequency, while maintaining reasonable costs, and an acceptable BCA.

The Resilient Jewett City Project evaluated opportunities to reduce fluvial flood damage to a densely populated, environmental justice neighborhood in Jewett City, Connecticut. This community is located at the confluence of two rivers

and the neighborhood experienced severe flooding in March 2010. In 2023, the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) were updated to include an additional 14 residential buildings. Several flood mitigation alternatives including floodproofing, infrastructure elevations, acquisitions, and floodwalls were considered. During the project, the BCA calculator had two major updates which caused the BCR to fluctuate significantly. Future funding recommendations were adjusted to account for these updates, along with next steps for project implementation.

Won't You Be A Good Neighbor?: Advancing Floodplain Management Resources for Coastal Communities | Allie Pouliot

Even if communities fully implement current federal minimum floodplain standards, damages will increase because the current standards deal primarily with how to build in the floodplain rather than how to minimize future damages on dynamic coastal shorelines. Managing development in coastal communities is complicated by the need to balance community values and economic growth as storms become more intense and tides rise ever higher. How can coastal communities mitigate risk in the ever-changing coastal zone while still being good neighbors?

The Association for State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) has developed numerous resources to encourage floodplain and coastal managers to take a more holistic, watershed-wide approach called No Adverse Impact (NAI). In 2007, ASFPM and the Coastal States Organization (CSO) produced recommendations for floodplain stewardship tailored to the unique challenges of the Great Lakes and oceanic coasts. NAI floodplain stewardship is based on a "good neighbor" ideology whereby actions taken to mitigate flooding do not cause harm to the larger community. NAI recommendations are tiered, presenting a pathway for coastal communities to reach higher standards from any starting point.

I am leading a collaboration between ASFPM and CSO to update and expand the Coastal No Adverse Impact guidance from 2007. The update will incorporate innovations in - and considerations for - coastal stewardship that have arisen over the last nineteen years, such as stormwater management, community relocation, and climate change. In addition, foundational, modular training is being created based on the updated guidance. This guidance and training incorporates the latest standards in planning and mitigation in order to empower communities to utilize best practices in coastal science in their policy-making. Coastal communities that utilize the NAI principle will be safer in the face of the changing climate and sea level, while also being a good neighbor.

Architects and our Role in The Big Circle of Disaster Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery | Kenneth J. Filarski FAIA, LEED FELLOW, LEED AP BD+C, SITES AP, AICP, CFM, SAP+AEER, NCARB

As multiple natural disasters demonstrate, we are witnessing more extreme climate conditions compared to a few decades ago. Our buildings and communities are more susceptible to a diverse array of short- and long-term risks. Examples include flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, air pollution from wildfire smoke and smog, extremes of temperature, sea level rise, earthquakes, power outages, among other events.

Mr. Filarski will explain how shifts in climate patterns necessitate a reevaluation of architectural design affects the architect's role in pre- and post-disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. This advanced session will provide a high-level overview of the key factors that need to be considered when designing for mitigation of, preparedness for, and recovery from future disasters. Mr. Filarski will discuss the distinctions and connections between ecology and the environment; how resilience, sustainability, and disaster preparedness and response differ; and what economic return on investment (ROI) considerations clients and architects need to consider. He will also introduce techniques for discussing risks, design considerations, and operational implications with clients.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of the program participants will:

1. Have an overview understanding of building scale risks caused by disaster events and be able to name at least two strategies to reduce risk.
2. Have an overview level of understanding of financial risks faced by building owners and have seen examples of how architects address these concerns with clients.
3. Be able to differentiate between FEMA and non-FEMA scopes of work, identify at least two risks associated with each, and name design strategies to mitigate these risks.
4. Be able to differentiate between pre- and post-disaster assistance preparedness roles, define disaster mitigation, response, recovery, resilience, and sustainability, and highlight at least one distinct feature of each.

Learning Outcomes:

To address disaster responsiveness, protect the public, and protect the investments of clients, Architects must be urgent and competent in disaster assistance and recovery to ensure design aspects of climate responsive, sustainable operational energy and zero carbon design are optimal and economically feasible, sound, and sustainable.

This program introduces key aspects of design for new buildings or retrofits of existing buildings and ways to reduce vulnerability to a variety of possible disaster events and their associated recovery.

From Risk to Resilience: Flood Mitigation, Ecological Restoration, and Leveraging Funding for Long-Term Implementation at India Point Park | Wendy Nilsson, M.Ed, CPSI, Anja Ryan Duffy, PLA, & Scott Comings

As climate change accelerates coastal flooding across Rhode Island, India Point Park offers a timely case study in what proactive, strategically funded resilience planning can accomplish. The City of Providence Parks Department, in collaboration with GZA and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), is carrying out a multiphase shoreline resilience initiative that shows how existing funding, careful planning, and phased design and construction can be used purposefully to build long-term coastal resilience.

Building off the successes and momentum from the highly visible Promenade improvements Parks launched an effort to restore and safeguard recreational and ecological resources for future generations. With funding from the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program (OSCAR) and through partnering with TNC for support and technical assistance, Parks developed a foundation to further protect this vulnerable coastal asset from the increasing effects of tidal flooding, storm surge and projected sea level rise. Parks recognized this investment as an opportunity, strategically sequencing multiple funding sources to advance each successive phase, generating community support and demonstrating to future funders what well-planned, sustained investment in public waterfront infrastructure can produce.

The pivotal step was a commitment to feasibility before design. Parks commissioned GZA to complete a Resiliency and Feasibility Study, ensuring that construction decisions would be grounded in site-specific evidence. The study documented significant threats and identified nature-based and hybrid solutions including adaptive shorelines, vegetated buffers, tidal marsh enhancement, and habitat-supportive shoreline stabilization. That study now directly drives phased engineering, permitting, and construction, with each completed phase strengthening the case for continued investment. Guided by the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG) and the pursuit of WEDG certification, this project offers a replicable model: strategic use of available funding, rigorous planning, and phased implementation can together achieve resilience outcomes that no single grant cycle could accomplish alone.

Intersection at the Intersection: The Promenade Kinsley Greenway | Mark Pereira, PE, Alicia Lehrer, & Jarrod Holgate

The Kinsley and Promenade Greenway incorporates a much needed separated multi-use trail connecting the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence with downtown. But there is so much more to the Greenway than the trail. It is home to new park spaces, river access with a fully accessible canoe and kayak launch, and loaded with nature based stormwater infrastructure including silva cells and Providence's first floodable park space where it is needed most, in the heart of flood central along the Woonasquatucket. This multi-benefit project is the blueprint for many more projects along the Woonasquatucket River creating places for active transportation, economic development, environmental learning, art, and climate resilience. This \$12 million+ project leverages federal funds against state, and local funds and incorporated dozens of partners along the way. This is the future of river greenways and multi-use trails.

Elevating Resilience along Providence's Riverwalks | Derek Anderson, PE, WEDG, Chris Martin, & Honora Montano

With regular high tides overtopping Providence's riverwalks today and predicted flood pathways threatening the Downtown core in the near future, the City of Providence is taking action to protect its community from flooding in its plan to revitalize Waterplace Park and the adjacent riverwalks. This presentation will summarize local flood hazards and describe how the Providence Riverwalk Resilience Project pairs flood-risk reduction with riverbank restoration along the Woonasquatucket River and improved public access to the waterfront. Participants will leave with an understanding of the resilience and environmental design strategies utilized by the project, including nature-based shoreline measures (riverbank revegetation and living seawalls), adaptable floodproofing and access improvements (elevated walkways and deployable flood barriers), stormwater quality improvement (bioretention areas), and urban heat island reduction (heat modeling, pavement removal, and tree planting).

Critical Asset Management Within Regulated Floodplains | Derek Saari, & Kyle Grendell

The Westborough Department of Public Works (DPW) developed Pre-Flood Mitigation procedures to minimize the impacts of flooding events in their community. The DPW divided the community into 10 sectors based on the sub-watersheds of Westborough. All stormwater related assets and vulnerable flooding locations were then mapped for each sector. Teams were assigned to each sector and deployed ahead of a known flood event and through other triggers as defined within our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's). The teams will correct any imminent deficiencies during their deployment that include: removing any natural/unnatural obstruction within 100' upstream/downstream of a culvert with the inclusion of inspecting inside the culvert asset, identifying and if time permits or is immediately warranted, correcting headwall deficiencies, clearing debris from all catch basin outfalls/grates, reporting beaver activity, and ensuring that all Town-owned detention basins are functioning.

The Westborough DPW's primary mission is to provide reliable services through deliberate asset management. Many of these assets are located within vulnerable environments such as but not limited to flood plains. The adoption of the Pre-flood Mitigation SOP, Critical Waterway Restoration SOP, Well-Head Flood Barrier Deployment SOP, and the Public Infrastructure Resiliency SOP are all pre-emptive mitigation procedures that when implemented can protect high value & critical assets, i.e. (drinking water/sewer infrastructure).

Learn how to develop these mitigating SOP's to reduce catastrophic damage to your communities defined critical public infrastructure.

Stormwater Quality & Flood Mitigation Improvements in an Urban Environment: Henry Law Avenue & Payne Street in Dover, NH | Greg Avenia CFM

The City of Dover, NH is proceeding with construction for reconfiguration of Henry Law Avenue and Payne Street, recently designed by Kleinfelder. The project, located along the bank of the tidally influenced Cochecho River, consists of multi-modal improvements to approximately 1,800 linear feet of existing roadways, including a new roundabout to improve traffic flow, a new pedestrian experience, riverbank stabilization and flood protection, and two new large subsurface infiltration systems, sized to treat approximately 4.5+/- acres of impervious area from the City.

The scale of stormwater improvements resulting from the project are the direct result of advance planning, collaboration between organizations, and a maintained focus for water quality improvements throughout the City of Dover. Initiated in 2021 as primarily transportation-focused improvements, the City has leveraged the project as an opportunity to achieve significant nitrogen reduction toward its MS4 goals. Early in the project, Dover engaged with the University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center (UNH) and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to develop BMP schemes that could be employed within the adjacent Henry Law Park. Through that process, an innovative large-scale subsurface gravel wetland was conceptualized to maintain the pedestrian experience within the park while providing a dramatic reduction in nitrogen loading to the Cochecho River. Using the gravel wetland concept, Dover worked with the NHDES to obtain grant funding for full design and construction of the BMP.

Kleinfelder, already engaged to design multimodal improvements for Henry Law Avenue and Payne Street, advanced the concept developed by UNH to full design. Based on shallow groundwater levels and utility conflicts, the BMP was split into two systems (one for Henry Law Avenue and one for Payne Street), and converted the BMPs to subsurface infiltration systems, which provides greater nitrogen removal than a gravel wetland. Stormwater pipe networks in the vicinity of the project area were also upgraded to maximize the impact of the proposed BMPs.

This presentation will focus on how aiming high, long-term planning, maintaining focus, and collaborating across organizations can result in significant stormwater quality improvements where it might be least expected; an urban area within a former mill city.

DAMS 101: Understanding the Role of Dams in Flood Risk and Community Resilience | J. Matthew Bellisle, P.E.

Dams are among the most influential—yet often overlooked—structures affecting flooding within watersheds. Across New England, waterways have been shaped for centuries by dams constructed for various reasons. While many of these structures continue to provide benefits, others no longer serve their original purpose and may introduce safety, regulatory, and flood management challenges. Understanding how dams function within a watershed is essential for effective flood mitigation planning, resilient community development, and responsible resource management.

“DAMS 101: Understanding the Role of Dams in Flood Risk and Community Resilience,” provides an overview of how dams influence flood dynamics, infrastructure risk, and community decision-making. The session begins with a clear explanation of what defines a dam, its components, and how these elements function together to impound, store, and release water. Participants will explore how design, condition, and operational strategies can either attenuate floods or exacerbate downstream flooding dependent upon operation and maintenance.

The presentation will connect dam management to broader floodplain management strategies and stormwater planning efforts. Examples will illustrate how dam operations and rehabilitation projects can complement floodplain ordinances, community resilience planning, and watershed-based flood mitigation strategies. The discussion will highlight regulatory frameworks governing dam safety, including state oversight, inspection requirements, and policy considerations that influence ownership and maintenance responsibilities.

Recognizing that dams exist within communities—not just watersheds—the presentation will address communication challenges, community perceptions, and the importance of outreach. The decision to repair or remove can intersect with upstream and downstream considerations, emergency preparedness planning, and post-flood recovery efforts.

During this session, attendees will gain a foundational understanding of dams as both tools and potential risk factors. The presentation will provide practical insights for engineers, planners, municipal officials, and community leaders seeking to better integrate dam infrastructure into comprehensive flood risk reduction and watershed resilience strategies.

Closing the Gap Between Flood Monitoring and Disaster Financing | William J. Hunt Jr. CPCU, ARM, AIDA, AINS, CPIA

Multiple state and federal organizations have developed increasingly sophisticated systems for monitoring and modeling flood risk. Tide gauges, rainfall measurements, storm surge projections, and other environmental indicators provide valuable insight into the timing and severity of flood events. However, the financial systems designed to support recovery from these events often lag behind the quality and availability of the underlying data. Traditional insurance and disaster assistance programs typically rely on post-event damage assessments, administrative processes, and delayed funding mechanisms that can leave communities waiting months for financial relief.

Parametric risk financing offers a complementary approach. Instead of requiring physical damage verification, parametric systems can leverage established environmental metrics and release funds automatically when predefined thresholds - such as rainfall accumulation, storm surge height, or river gauge levels - are exceeded. These mechanisms have been used internationally to support rapid disaster recovery and stabilize vulnerable industries, yet they remain underexplored as tools for local and regional resilience planning.

This presentation explores how environmental monitoring data already collected in Rhode Island could potentially support trigger-based financial response systems designed to deliver rapid liquidity following flood events. Potential applications include municipal flood response funding, coastal business interruption protection, and other resilience-oriented risk pools that respond automatically when measurable environmental conditions occur.

The concept raises an important interdisciplinary question: how can environmental scientists, planners, and risk management professionals work together to define appropriate triggers and thresholds that reflect real-world impacts? This session introduces the concept of parametric flood-response mechanisms and invites collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in connecting environmental monitoring with innovative approaches to disaster financing.

National Weather Service Flood Inundation Mapping Services | Robert Megnia

Flood Inundation Mapping (FIM) is transforming the way the National Weather Service communicates river flood impacts to partners and the public. Traditional river forecasts provide stage and flow information at discrete forecast points, but translating these values into actionable impact information can be challenging for emergency managers and decision makers. FIM addresses this gap by translating hydrologic forecasts into spatial representations of potential flood extent, improving situational awareness and supporting more effective preparedness and response.

This presentation provides an overview of the operational FIM capabilities available through the National Weather Service since 2023. These include Partner FIM libraries derived from hydraulic models, Categorical Flood Inundation Mapping (CatFIM) produced at official forecast points, and dynamic inundation products generated from River Forecast Center

(RFC) forecasts and the National Water Model (NWM). Together, these products allow users to visualize potential flooding across millions of river miles and thousands of forecast locations nationwide.

The training also highlights the strengths and limitations of these tools, including differences between static and dynamic mapping approaches, data and modeling constraints, and considerations related to terrain resolution and reservoir operations. Finally, the presentation demonstrates how FIM supports Impact-Based Decision Support Services (IDSS) by helping partners visualize flood impacts before, during, and after flood events, enabling improved planning, resource allocation, and public communication.

By placing forecast information directly onto maps, FIM provides a clearer understanding of potential flood impacts and enhances collaboration between the NWS and its emergency management partners.

Advancing Hydrologic Risk Assessment in Massachusetts under Climate Change | James LeNoir

Communities across the Northeast may face potential consequences of climate change, ranging from more extreme rainfall to more pronounced and frequent droughts. Climate change could alter the hydrology in potentially complex and unanticipated ways. Typical approaches for projecting hydrologic risk under climate change can misrepresent and underestimate the variability of climate and hydrology in the future. This limitation can severely impede risk-based decision-making for watershed and infrastructure management.

As an alternative, this project will apply emerging stochastic modeling tools that minimize future variability, including the development of a Stochastic Watershed Model. This model uses input from a Stochastic Weather Generator that estimates climate variables for future warming scenarios over the State of Massachusetts.

This investigation starts with a Stochastic Weather Generator developed at Cornell University. This tool will simulate precipitation and temperature for selected warming scenarios throughout Massachusetts. Output from the Stochastic Weather Generator will be used to characterize future climate in Massachusetts. Additionally, output from the Stochastic Weather Generator will be used to drive a deterministic rainfall-runoff model, which defines how much runoff is created from a specific amount of rainfall. Finally, a Stochastic Watershed Model, developed at Tufts University, will be applied to correct the biases of the deterministic models at high- and low-flow extremes, which are common with deterministic watershed models.

This project began with a pilot study of the Squannacook Basin. This has been documented in a series of journal articles and USGS publications. The second phase of this project; applying stochastic climate data to the PRMS and stochastic watershed models to all of Massachusetts.

Growing Resilience: Urban Tree Canopy as Stormwater Infrastructure in Pawtucket | Kyle McElroy, P.E, PhD

The City of Pawtucket, situated between the Moshassuck, Blackstone, and Ten Mile Rivers, is a fully built-out urban environment with limited natural capacity to absorb water. Runoff from rainfall across impervious surfaces, particularly high-intensity, short-duration storms, contributes to street and basement flooding in multiple neighborhoods, including areas with vulnerable populations.

Rather than relying solely on costly gray infrastructure upgrades, Pawtucket has pursued more economically feasible flood management strategies, including the use of green infrastructure to intercept stormwater before it becomes runoff. In particular, the City is advancing urban tree planting as a form of distributed stormwater infrastructure. Through canopy interception, improved soil infiltration, and evapotranspiration, street trees function as scalable, cost-effective infrastructure to complement gray systems.

With support from a USDA Inflation Reduction Act grant, Pawtucket is actively identifying opportunities to remove impervious pavement, install appropriately sized tree wells, and create green strips along streets and in neighborhoods with limited tree canopy and open space.

This presentation will highlight Pawtucket's urban tree planting efforts to date, discuss implementation challenges and lessons learned, and outline how the City plans to maintain this approach as part of a broader flood management strategy.

Washing out Status Quo Engagement: Flooding the Conversation with Activities that Cultivate Community | Jamie-Lynn Ward, Jamie Matthews, Paige Myatt, Glennie LeBaron, Emma Polinsky

Watershed trading cards, stormwater trivia, and visual demonstrations of shared values are just a few examples of hands-on activities that offer accessible entry points for communities to explore complex stormwater and flooding issues. By offering fun and inviting engagement activities that divert from stereotypical methods, such as surveys and public forums, data can be gathered to move stormwater and flooding projects forward while building community awareness and support, ensuring solutions reflect community priorities and needs.

Stormwater management projects are most successful when they are shaped not only by data and engineering, but by the communities they serve. Come learn how Aquidneck Resilience has tackled local stormwater challenges by building strong partnerships and creating out-of-the-box engagement activities. In this workshop, attendees will be able to apply these learnings and develop fun activities for their own communities!

On Aquidneck Island, like many places around Rhode Island, there is a great need for increased education and awareness on stormwater management and general watershed health. Realizing these aren't always the most accessible or "fun" topics for the public, the team has been able to develop and employ innovative engagement tactics through both on-the-ground infrastructure projects, and broader climate resilience planning efforts.

Aquidneck Resilience's Project Team will share how to build and foster strong partnerships through examples of two green infrastructure efforts: the restoration of a wetland near Almy Pond, the state's most impaired water body, and addressing neighborhood flooding on West Shore Road in Portsmouth. The Engagement Team will showcase how they are building greater awareness and understanding of watershed challenges, flooding impacts, and potential stormwater solutions through island-wide climate resilience planning efforts. The workshop will include a design lab where participants will work with peers to develop their own creative engagement activities to bring back to their communities.