

Regional Service Provider & Staff Updates April-June 2026

Regional Service Provider Updates

Upper North Shore – Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

Contact: [Hanna Mogensen](#)

Gather data on conditions and trends

- Collected monthly water samples in the Merrimack River in association with Merrimack River Watershed Council to assist with their regional water quality monitoring program and expanded CSO program.
- Mapped chronic marsh wrack locations across the Great Marsh
- Completed pilot flight of ~50 acres of saltmarsh for conditions analysis in Salisbury

Local Action for Habitat & Water Quality

- Finalized permitting for RAE project for eelgrass seeding on the UNS and begin fieldwork through site selection and HOBOT deployment at two locations in Gloucester
- Continued to advance the Merrimack River Clean-up Initiative, supporting 5 communities in the Merrimack to deploy booms for regular servicing, coordinate community river shoreline cleanups, and make improvements to the Early Alert Tool for CSO predictive modeling and public notification. The project website can be viewed here: [Merrimack River Cleanup Initiative | MVPC](#)

Inform state policy and local action.

- Worked with Tufts Urban and Environmental Policy Program to finalize their semester-long project, resulting in a comprehensive report on sustainable market pathways for future management. Report was shared with Green Crab Task Force and will be posted on MVPC's website.
- Awarded funding from DEP to advance Stormwater Planning and Management in the region! MVPC is working with communities to refine and update the Low Impact Development (LID) Viewer and identify stormwater Best Management Practices to advance.
- Supported City of Haverhill with submitting ECO-ONE Stop application for Water Conservation Planning

Provide Education, training, and technical support.

- Presented on Healthy Estuary Grant Project: Using UAV Technology to Enhance Long-term Coastal Monitoring Projects at the Spring Hampton-Seabrook Estuary Collaborative Meeting and the June MassBays STAC meeting
- Assisted the communities of Salisbury, Newbury, and Newburyport in planning for, promoting, and holding two community forums to share results from the regional beach sediment management study and gather feedback from community members. Forums were held on June 4th and 5th. Study will be posted on the project website (MAMRBA.gov) in July.
- Hosted the 5th annual Merrimack River Water Quality Roundtable on Wednesday, April 29th with over 70 registrants and 13 speakers who provided diverse and informative updates of their work along the river.
- Continued to host Peer Learning Network virtual meetings as part of the Municipal Energy and Sustainability Managers Program. Worked to develop Mentorship program to kick off in Fall 2026.
- Provided technical support to communities with roll out of DOER's new Small Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Regulations and collaborated with DOER to hold regional informational session on 6/8.

- Convened regional planners, Stormwater Collaborative, and 8TGM Committee.

Metro Boston – Northeastern University Marine Science Center

[Diana Chin](#), Regional Coordinator

Address Data Gaps

- MassBays BIL Funding: We are wrapping up work on an award from MassBays to NU and Emerald Tutu for a 2025-2026 research project to build and test a simple nursery system in East Boston for propagating salt marsh cordgrass from seed within biomass-based mats, which could be deployed as urban living shoreline prototypes.
- Restore America’s Estuaries NEP Watersheds: We coordinated pilot site monitoring, additional permitting, collection site phenology, restoration site scoping, and sensor deployments for sites in the Metro Boston (Nahant) and Lower North Shore (Beverly, Marblehead) regions as part of a MassBays-led 2025-2027 project to conduct seed-based eelgrass restoration and outreach.
- MIT Sea Grant: We are starting up a 2026-2027 research project in collaboration with MassBays and MIT Sea Grant staff regarding interactions of shellfish aquaculture and seagrass, aimed at informing aquaculture siting and management.

Gather Data on Conditions and Trends

- Sea Grant American Lobster Initiative: We are finishing a project investigating the impacts of the range expansion of black sea bass and blue crabs on lobsters and the lobster fishery in the Gulf of Maine. This research uses experiments, field monitoring, and surveys of the lobster industry to assess their ecological knowledge.

Technical Support and Communication

- Invasive Species Research: As part of the *Ruditapes* (Manila clam) working group, we are anticipating publication of a peer-reviewed paper (accepted to *Biological Invasions*) and are facilitating a new research priorities and tracking document.
- Conferences, meetings, and workshops: We 1) Represented MassBays and the Metro Boston region at a MasseCAN Salt Marsh Working Group meeting and Zosterapalooza conference; 2) Discussed potential future collaborations with regional partners, including Emerald Tutu, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, Saugus River Watershed Council, AECOM, UMass Boston, and Stone Living Lab.

Education and Outreach

- Boston Harbor Ecosystem Network (BHEN): We 1) Held a BHEN Steering Committee meeting and solicited nominations for new Steering Committee members; 2) Held the spring BHEN meeting (April 28, 19 participants) to discuss emerging AI use in coastal scientific research and public engagement; 3) Held a BHEN field trip (June 9, 13 participants) about monitoring non-native Manila clams in Boston Harbor; 4) Continued output of monthly newsletters compiling resources, events, funding, and job opportunities from across BHEN and related networks.

Other

- We continued hosting regular discussion meetings for the MassBays RCs.

South Shore – North and South Rivers Watershed Association

Contact [Alex Mansfield](#)

1.1 Make new data available, especially to address specific gaps in knowledge

1.1.1 Monitor Diadromous Fish Runs

- Communications with over 100 volunteers across five runs.

- Presentation at Duxbury Bay Management Committee meeting about stream clearing for herring runs.
 - Temperature logger deployment and management at all runs.
 - Environmental DNA sampling at four runs.
 - Participate in DMF electroshocking surveys for Shad.
 - Drone Surveys to identify potential stream obstructions in remote portions of Third Herring Brook.
 - Worked with a new group (Island Creek, Duxbury) to facilitate volunteer recruitment, scheduling, and data analysis at this new fish counting site.
- 1.1.2 Water Quality Monitoring**
- Duxbury/Kingston/Plymouth Bay water quality sampling
 - RiverWatch water quality sampling throughout the North and South rivers.
 - Southeastern MA WQ coalition grant management.
- 1.1.3 Salt Marsh Vulnerability and Assessment**
- Pursuing funding for pilot-scale salt marsh restoration in Scituate and Marshfield.
 - Participate in MassMarsh field SOP training
 - Conduct salt marsh surveys
- 1.1.4 Horseshoe Crab Surveys**
- Managed over 60 volunteers for the conduct of 30 daytime and nighttime horseshoe crab surveys in Duxbury Bay.
 - Presented talk on horseshoe crabs at Duxbury Free Library 5/8/2026
- 1.1.5 Marine invasive species**
- 2026 MIMIC training and kick-off.
 - Developed volunteer sampling schedule for MIMIC south shore.
- 1.2 Support valid (QA/QC) data collection and use**
- 1.2.6 AquaQAPP/WQX**
- Technical support for Duxbury Bay Maritime School water quality monitoring QAPP preparation
- 2.1 Research to Inform Policy & Actions**
- 2.1.7 Dam Removal Monitoring and Implementation**
- Monitoring at Temple Street Dam removal on the South River in Duxbury.
 - Advanced Chandler Pond Dam removal plans on the South River through meetings with property owners and DER.
 - Monitoring of Veteran's Park Dam removal.
- 2.1.8 Eelgrass**
- Deployed and managed in situ loggers in Duxbury and Plymouth as part of the RAE funded "Seeding the future: Restoring eelgrass and building community engagement across the MassBays NEP".
- 2.1.9 Blue Mussels**
- Conducted surveys of intertidal blue mussel beds at 4th Cliff Scituate. This is ongoing work with Mass Audubon to support assessment of habitat conditions for the federally listed Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*) who stopover on this federally owned property.
- 2.2 Technical Support & Communications**
- 2.2.11 Represent Mass Bay in Networks**
- Participated in Salt marsh science symposium and Salt Marsh Working Group joint meeting.
 - Participated in the quarterly Seagrass Working Group meetings
 - Participated in the NOAA BWET Community of Practice

- Participated in monthly “Mass Rivers Science Connects” meetings
- Participated in MassBays Science and Technical Advisory Committee meetings.

3.2 Local Action for Habitat & Water Quality

3.2.15 Resilient Coastal Habitats And Communities

- Mid-South Shore Resilient Coasts Project.
- Coastal Relocation meeting.
- Gulf River Restoration program
- Supported Town of Duxbury’s grant proposal to MA CZM for nutrient loading modeling to Duxbury Bay.

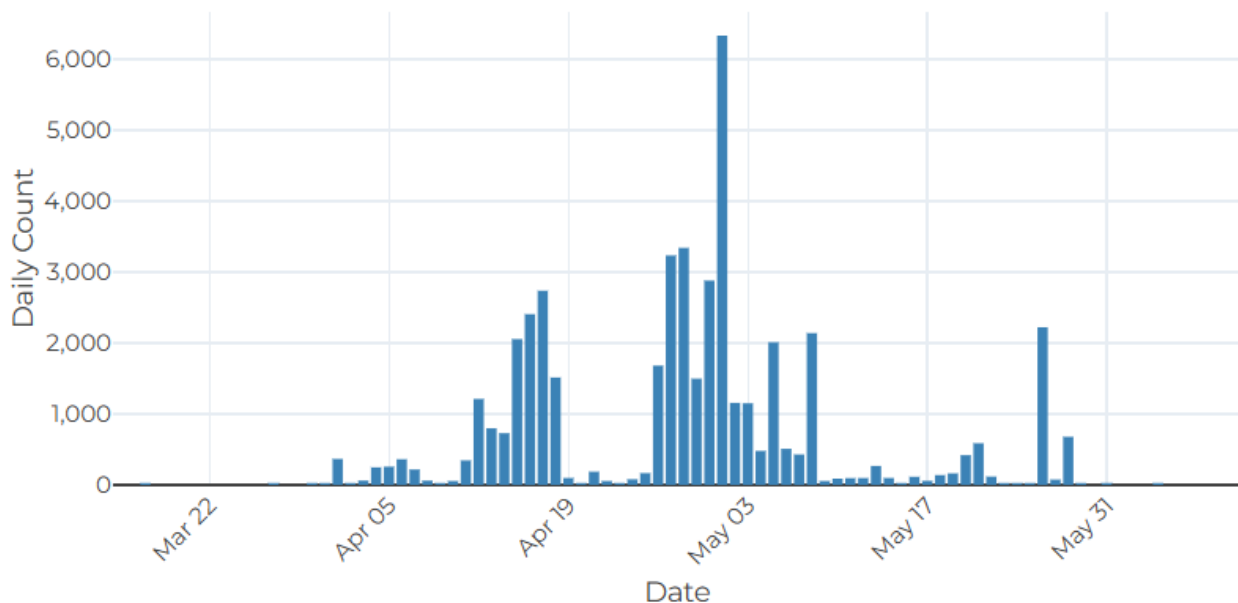
Cape Cod – Association to Preserve Cape Cod

Contact: [April Wobst](#) and [Dee Marsh](#)

Make new data available

- **River herring monitoring:**
 - The 2026 river herring monitoring wrapped up second week of June.
 - Over 46,000 river herring counted across 14 runs below is compiled daily herring counts across these runs.
 - Final data being collected and will complete QA/QC before sending to DMF for run size estimates for 2026.
 - https://apccorg.shinyapps.io/herring_monitoring/

Daily Herring Counts



- **State of the Waters Cape Cod**
 - APCC has begun gathering data from 2025 to include in the 2026 annual State of the Waters Report.

Habitat and Water Quality Improvement Restoration

- **Sesuit Creek Salt Marsh:** APCC is leading a large-scale planting project at Sesuit Creek in Dennis, MA. This marsh was tidally restored in 2008 but has been slow to revegetate

in bare areas formerly dominated by freshwater vegetation and *Phragmites*. The proposed design developed by Woods Hole Group in tandem with APCC and partners includes planting of over 90,000 plugs over 1.8 acres in four prioritized bare areas in the marsh. APCC contracted SumCo for completion of planting of *Spartina alterniflora* this spring. This builds upon a 2018 pilot planting completed by APCC with DER and Cape Cod Conservation District funding.

The planting began first week of May and was completed first week of June for total of 4-week planting period plus 1.5 weeks to install goose exclusion fencing. This is the largest planting of salt marsh grasses on the Cape and in the state of Massachusetts. Total project budget of half million dollars for design, permitting, implementation and monitoring. Final implementation cost ~\$380K. Project funded by MassBay National Estuary Partnership BIL grant, MA Division of Ecological Restoration and private foundation funds.

APCC is working on final monitoring plan to complete a minimum of three years monitoring (2026-2028) to measure the impact of this planting including survival, percent cover, area of revegetation, changes in marsh elevation, and sediment accretion. The results of this will help inform adaptive management measures for similar large-scale restoration projects like the Herring River Restoration in Wellfleet.

- **Blue Mussel Survey:** The survey created by Salem Sound Coast Watch and shared in MassBays spring newsletter was distributed to over 40 contacts across the 15 Cape Cod towns including municipal staff, the fishermen's alliance, recreational fishing/shellfishing groups, land trusts, watershed groups and other non-profit partners. Initial survey responses were reviewed in June and are displayed here for initial review of responses and geographic distribution of responses over the first few weeks:
https://apccorg.shinyapps.io/blue_mussel_survey/
- **Chase Garden Creek:** APCC is revising RFP to re-release to hire consultant(s) to complete design and permitting for priority areas of the marsh to be hydrologically restored through "trio" techniques including ditch remediation, runneling, and microtopography islands.

Outreach and Education, Collaboration and Technical Support

- APCC staff attended the Salt Marsh Working Group in-person meeting April 2 and Jordan Mora, Lead Ecologist and Science Advisor who leads our salt marsh restoration work joined a panel discussion.
- APCC participated in the NEIWPCC Non Point Source Conference on April 7-9 and co-presented posters on our Yarmouth and Public Boat Ramp Stormwater Projects including Scargo Lake site supported with MassBays funding.
- APCC supported planning and attended the Biannual Cape Coastal Conference held April 13-14 including day one focus on restoration and restoration site tours on day two. April served on panel discussing lessons learned and challenges with restoration and APCC presented on bog restoration and had poster on salt marsh restoration.

- APCC staff attended the NEERS conference April 22-25 and presented poster on salt marsh restoration.
- APCC staff attended the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's Honor the Earth Faire on April 18th to talk about our work and restoration projects.
- WBUR visited the Sesuit Creek salt marsh project and conducted interviews with APCC and project partners on May 20th. Final story to run mid-June.
- The spring MassBays newsletter went out in April and content is being gathered in June for next newsletter for the summer.

MassBays Staff Updates

Director

Prassede Vella (Prassede.Vella@umb.edu)

Administration and Program Support

- Oversaw the finalization and approval of the Communications Plan by the Management Committee. Submitted the plan to EPA. Plan has been approved as part of our CCMP and is available on massbays.org.
- Developed job description for Environmental Scientist position and submitted to HR for review, approval, and posting. The Communications and Development Specialist position is expected to be posted in the next few days as it is in its final stages with HR. Some other staffing changes are also in progress and awaiting final approval.
- Currently working on development of the next S.320 and IIJA work plans which include work plans from the five RSPs as well as other subawardees. Working closely with EPA and ORSP to provide all documents needed for submitting to grants.gov (S.320) and to EPA (IIJA).
- Conducted the March quarterly Management Committee meeting.
- Met several times with Dean and Assistant Dean and participated in meetings on the pending office moves within SFE. Stressed the importance of MassBays having office space near other SFE faculty as well as the other Centers and Institutes, for continued interdepartmental cooperation and opportunities for partnerships. MassBays will be moving to the room next door and continue to share office space with the Urban Harbors Institute. The move will be happening before the end of June.
- Developed the Annual Program Review report, including "self-evaluation". As SFE Dean, Carol Thornber also conducted a "self-evaluation" on behalf of UMB. The report includes success in growing partnerships, how initial challenges were addressed, and thoughts about steps for the coming year. A meeting was held with the Committee on 4/9/2026 to discuss outcomes and next steps. The report was shared with the Management Committee.
- Met with Cape Cod (virtually) and Metro Boston (in person) RSPs (Director, RC, staff) for one-on-one discussions on how things are going as RSPs, their roles with MassBays and how they see mutual growth, and what they may like to see improved; program priorities and the upcoming workplans; and working together into the future to keep making MassBays stronger and increase support to communities.
- Met with the new Executive Director for Salem Sound Coastwatch, Gitte Venix. We plan to meet in person soon as Gitte is currently also serving as interim RC while Alison Frye is out on family leave.
- Contributed to and edited MassBays' spring newsletter

- Participate in monthly NEP Directors' meetings as well as bi-monthly GOM Directors' meetings where we are mainly discussing the possibility of establishing a GOM geographic program.
- Participated in regular School for the Environment Faculty and Directors meetings. Participated in and provided feedback on candidates for faculty positions as well as ESS Chair within SFE.
- Have weekly check-ins with staff and with communications staff.

Communications

- Working with communications staff on the MassBays website to bring in all the work that MassBays does in the coming months.
- Supervised the development and publication of the Spring newsletter.

Science (in brief)

Address data gaps

- Diadromous Fish Habitat BCG and target: The 2050 targets (migratory habitat miles and spawning habitat acres) are now available on the EcoHealth Tracking Tool.
- SECWQALS – The three continuous monitoring systems have been deployed and are live for the second full year in the Lower Merrimack River, Danvers River, and Duxbury Bay. USGS will be managing the systems. This year we will have grab samples from the Lower Merrimack River as well. The three teams have started or will start next week to conduct nutrient sampling in each embayment.
- Data analysis – MassBays hired two SFE PhD students for the summer to help with data analysis including: analysis of the SECWQALS 2025 data (Anant Misra) as well as the 7-8 years of community scientists volunteer eelgrass monitoring in DKP (Vishal Verna). We look forward to the outcomes of these two efforts.
- EPA 3.0: This project is moving forward, and we hope to have EDA 3.0 by the end of September. In addition, EPA HQ wants to build on our work to include an Ecosystem Services component. TBD.

Applied research for decision-making

- TIDEGateway will be finalized in September 2026, and we are looking for opportunities to fund the implementation of the recommendations for the top 5 priority tide gates. Unfortunately, we did not get NFWF funding, and I will be meeting with them to obtain feedback on the proposal. With remaining funds, we are working with the contractor (CEI) on additional steps we can take to bring this work to the next step (final design and permitting with support from communities).

Convene and partner with others to support and improve monitoring outputs.

- Supported STAC Chair in the spring meeting on 6/9. Next STAC is scheduled for October 2026.
- Contributed to the NERACOOS Board as Secretary; participated in monthly Ex Com meetings as well as Finance Committee meetings as needed,

Program Manager, Habitat Restoration and Data Quality

Jill Carr (Jillian.Carr@umb.edu)

Support valid (QA/QC) data collection and use

1. Continue progress on EPA Exchange Network project to expand [MassWaterR](#) tool with new functions and improved accessibility. In this quarter, beta versions of the new MassWaterR and AquaSensR shiny apps were developed with testing to begin soon.

AquaSensR is the companion package of functions that helps users review, QA/QC, analyze and share continuous water quality data.

2. Continued supervision and coordination of subcontractors Center for Coastal Studies and Ethan Mick to update AquaQAPP to meet new EPA QAPP Standards. A new “master QAPP” has been developed to reflect changes, which will now undergo programming to integrate into the tool’s user experience.
3. Provided one-on-one support to groups on QAPP development, data upload to WQX, and use of MassWaterR.

Address data gaps

1. Restore America’s Estuaries eelgrass restoration grant: conducted monitoring of the test plots planted last summer and laid out full-scale sites for planting seeds in summer 2026. Sites in Gloucester, Beverly, Marblehead, Nahant, Duxbury and Plymouth are being planted in partnership with the Regional Coordinators. Monitoring of seed maturity at the collection/donor meadows began in June, and collections are expected to take place in July.
2. Finalized report for a study of eelgrass loss and barriers to recovery across eastern Cape Cod Bay. Supervise grad student Aaron Shavitz’s work on project data analysis.
3. Continue data analysis, modeling, and report writing for WHOI Sea Grant study looking at seed-based approach to large-scale eelgrass restoration. Supervise grad student Aaron Shavitz’s work.
4. Continued and expanded IJJA-funded project titled *Building infrastructure to support seed-based eelgrass restoration* which created dedicated tank infrastructure to support an eelgrass seed bank at DMF’s Cat Cove Marine Lab. Subaward issued for IJJA-funded outdoor tank space “the seed barn”, with design currently underway.
5. Kicked off MIT SG award led by D.Chin, Northeastern to look at aquaculture and eelgrass interactions. Field investigations to begin July 2026.
6. Identify and pursue gaps in Submerged Aquatic Vegetation mapping, monitoring, and conservation status. Conduct outreach with watershed organizations and agencies and begin to catalog SAV observations and priorities

Convene and partner with others to support and improve monitoring outputs.

1. As a new component of the MassDEP-MassBays Eelgrass Mapping Interagency Service Agreement (ISA), MassBays (Carr and Shavitz) provided a QA/QC review of MassDEP’s 2025 eelgrass polygons. MassBays developed and implemented a protocol for conducting the QA/QC. Final polygons will be delivered to MassDEP in June 2026. Summer 2026 work will include mapping in Cape Cod Bay. This year, a subcontract is in place for Salem State University to provide a field technician while A. Frye (SSCW) is on family leave.
2. Oversee MassBays’ Community of Practice forums for MassWaterR and the Massachusetts Seagrass Working Group.
3. Represent MassBays on the steering committees for: NROC Coastal Vegetation Workgroup, East Coast Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Collaborative, DKP Cit Sci eelgrass monitoring project, Merrimack River living shoreline project, STAC
4. Hired and began training a new SSU biology undergraduate work-study student to assist with lab work at the Cat Cove Marine Lab.
5. Participate in Salt Marsh Symposium, salt marsh monitoring SOP trainings, and MassMarsh meetings to find collaboration opportunities with MassBays

Presentations and publications

1. Co-hosted and presented at UMB Earth Day webinar titled: *Dive into Seagrass: Science, Careers, and Coastal Change* 4/23/26

2. Presented two lightning talks at a workshop between MassBays, UHI, Stone Living Lab, and Northeastern on 5/3/26, titles: *MassBays' Tools for the Data Life Cycle* and *MassBays' Seagrass Initiatives*.

Other Updates

1. Received *Visionary Award* from the Gulf of Maine Council on the Environment, accepted at annual meeting on 5/27/26 in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada
<https://gulfofmaine.org/awards/>
2. Initiated process of purchasing the SSU 19' Northcoast vessel.
3. Manage setup and spending on 4 grants, oversee subawards, and track budgets.
4. Train and supervise UMB graduate research assistant A. Shavitz and eelgrass volunteer Ed Sheldon who is assisting with field work app development.
5. Assist with social media planning & content.
6. Work with contractors (CEI, Mick) on EDA 3.0 layers and assessment methods.
7. Manage and track annual retainer contracts for software developer Ethan Mick.
8. Participate in UMass cross-campus committee that is establishing a Scientific Boating Policy and safety program.