Island Waters: The Aquidneck Island Water Quality Initiative

FINAL APPLICATION NARRATIVE AS AWARDED

1 August 2016

Background & Contact Information

i. Project Title: Island Waters: The Aquidneck Island Water Quality Initiative

ii. Applicant: Aquidneck Island Planning Commission

iii. Partners:
- City of Newport, RI
- Town of Middletown, RI
- Town of Portsmouth, RI
- Aquidneck Land Trust
- Clean Ocean Access

iv. Key Personnel:
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Full Proposal Narrative: Section I, Project Description

I. Background & Need for Project:

The Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC) and partners are seeking support from EPA’s Southeast New England Program to establish **Island Waters: The Aquidneck Island Water Quality Initiative**. This is a three-year proposal; if awarded, the funding period will run from Sept. 1, 2016 – Aug. 31, 2019.

**Island Waters** brings together three municipalities and three non-profit organizations to pioneer a new, more cost-effective approach for achieving Clean Water Act (CWA) goals, transferable throughout the Southeast New England Watershed Region. With support from EPA, our partnership will reduce nutrient pollution from storm water and agricultural runoff; restore coastal, surface, ground and drinking water quality; restore habitat and ecosystem functions; and enhance economic opportunity and jobs related to clean water. Equally important, we will undertake rigorous program evaluation to assess results and implement program improvements, and will communicate program methods for application throughout Southeast New England and elsewhere in the U.S.

Aquidneck Island is the ideal location to pilot this new approach. The Island is 39 square miles in area, and its water resources are exceptionally interconnected, tremendously valuable and extremely vulnerable. The Island’s drinking water reservoirs, surface streams, aquifers and coastal waters are all hydrologically connected, and all are affected by nutrient or bacterial pollution from storm water and agricultural runoff. Virtually every surface water body on the Island is impaired for nutrients and/or bacteria, including five reservoirs that supply drinking water to most of the Island’s 66,000 residents; groundwater wells also exhibit high levels of nitrates. Coastal waters are locally impaired and subject to periodic beach closures due to elevated fecal coliform, causing significant economic harm to this tourism-dependent community.

Our partnership engages the key organizations responsible for managing Aquidneck Island’s water resources. The municipalities of Newport, Portsmouth and Middletown, RI, share responsibility for Island watersheds, while AIPC, the Aquidneck Land Trust (ALT) and Clean Ocean Access (COA) are the three non-profit organizations with Island-wide environmental missions. In addition, we will engage state agencies such as the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), which has expressed strong support for Island Waters, and the Departments of Transportation (RIDOT) and Health. Through this grant, we hope to take advantage of EPA Region I’s technical expertise, as well.

All three of our municipal partners contribute storm water to surface and coastal waters, and all are affected by beach closures and impairments. All three communities have made major strides in managing water quality, yet all recognize that an integrated, collaborative approach is needed to more effectively and efficiently restore clean water, meet state and federal requirements, and achieve Clean Water Act goals.

The current drinking-water crisis in Flint, MI, has spotlighted the criticality of protecting local drinking water systems, and the need to communicate management and financing needs to policymakers and water users. The City of Newport operates Aquidneck Island’s public water supply with surface reservoirs and watershed areas in all three Island communities. In 2014 the City completed a $67 million upgrade to its water treatment plant. However, with largely developed watersheds, improved storm water management is needed to reduce pollution risks to
the drinking water supply, including harmful algal blooms (HABs) in the reservoirs caused by elevated levels of phosphorus. By reducing nutrient and bacterial pollution to drinking-water reservoirs and high-priority coastal areas, Island Waters will provide major benefits to public health and environmental justice, in addition to its benefits to local economies and ecosystems.

Funding from the grant will be used to 1) establish a sustainable inter-municipal partnership; 2) demonstrate the use of the partnership to reduce nutrients, improve water quality, and restore ecosystem services; 3) assess the effectiveness of this approach through tracking, evaluation, cost-benefit analysis and reporting of results; 4) fully engage stakeholders and the public; and 5) provide transferable information to resource managers throughout Southeast New England and beyond.

With the support of EPA Region I, Island Waters will position Aquidneck Island’s communities to more effectively and efficiently restore water quality, while providing a model for inter-jurisdictional water resources management for use throughout the region and elsewhere in the U.S. – wherever vital water resources are shared across political boundaries.

**Relationship to SNEP Priorities:** Island Waters principally addresses SNEP Priority 2, “Strategic Collaboration and Regional Impact,” by establishing a partnership and building capacity among municipalities, community resource managers, technical experts and key stakeholders to comprehensively improve the management of water resources and associated ecosystem services on Aquidneck Island. The project will have a regional impact on Aquidneck Island and a regional impact throughout the SNEP region through transferability of the approach.

This will be the first organization of its kind in Rhode Island and will build upon the experience of other regional water quality partnerships such as the Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition and the Upper Narragansett Bay Regional Stormwater Utility District Feasibility Study. However, Island Waters goes considerably beyond the scope of these initiatives by establishing a regional framework for implementation. Nutrient reduction to restore impaired waters will be a principal focus of the program; bacterial impairments and sources will also be addressed.

Island Waters also addresses SNEP Priority 1 by establishing a new, cost-effective and innovative policy framework for water quality restoration; Priority 3 by addressing nutrient loads at a regional scale; and Priority 4 by focusing on—and measuring—the importance of clean water to a sustainable economy on Aquidneck Island. In addition, Island Waters will position our communities to better adapt to climate change and its expected impacts on stormwater flows and regional ecosystems.

**Project Planning, Scope of Work and Schedule (Calendar):**

**Planning:** Island Waters builds upon a foundation of prior water quality planning on Aquidneck Island, including TMDL studies, integrated assessments, and municipal comprehensive plan elements. Of particular importance are recent watershed assessments, an innovative watershed treatment model (WTM) and best management practice (BMP) plans for drinking water watersheds (Maidford/Paradise, Bailey Brook, and St. Mary’s Pond) completed by Middletown and Newport, in part with funding from EPA Region I through the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP). Collectively, these studies represent millions of dollars of investment by federal, state and local governments; Island Waters will establish an effective framework for implementation of all of these plans. Through the prioritization and financing elements of this
project, we will for the first time establish a comprehensive, long-term, achievable roadmap for utilizing these plans and studies to restore Aquidneck Island’s water resources. Further, Island Waters includes a planning element and gap analysis in its program development phase, as described below, to develop a more detailed workplan and schedule once the grant is awarded.

Scope of Work (Work Schedule)

Task 1: Program Development: Review existing plans and policies; develop governance procedures and program workplan; communications plan; detailed budget; etc.

Task 1 Deliverables:
1. Program overview document;
2. Governance procedures approved by consensus;
3. Quarterly meetings (8 total) including kick-off, mid-course and closeout;
4. Presentations to municipal leaders and the public (3 total -- at beginning, mid-course and conclusion of project);
5. Review of existing plans & policies, including gap analysis;
6. Detailed program workplan, schedule & budget, outcomes quantification;
7. Program communications plan;
8. Dedicated accounting procedures for funds tracking; cloud-based partner reporting system for partner resources, costs and outcomes;
9. Quality Assurance and Performance Plan (QAPP) for EPA approval.

Task 2: Implement Water Quality Restoration Measures: Prioritize and install BMPs and other structural and non-structural measures to reduce pollution to impaired waters on Aquidneck Island. Focus on nutrient reduction in impaired drinking and coastal waters. Include agricultural BMPs such as nutrient reduction strategies through partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Southern RI Conservation District. Demonstrate innovative approaches and resource sharing.

Task 2 Deliverables:
1. Development of BMP prioritization model that maximizes results and cost-effectiveness;
2. List of prioritized BMPs including cost and load reduction estimates;
3. Design, permit and install 5-20 high-priority BMPs in some or all of the following drinking watersheds: Maidford River, Bailey Brook/Easton Ponds, Lawton Reservoir, St. Mary’s Pond;
4. Develop, demonstrate and assess innovative approaches to illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDDE), initially to address impaired waters and shellfish bed closures in the Island Park (Portsmouth) area; ultimately for use throughout Aquidneck Island and SNE region;
5. Training for departments of public works (DPW) staff (at least one training for each municipality). Includes assessing existing practices and developing a training program that includes general practices and that better addresses specific Aquidneck Island water quality impairments.

Task 3: Public Engagement and Outreach: Inform and engage elected officials, stakeholders, homeowners, and volunteers in action to improve watershed stewardship on Aquidneck Island.
Task 3 Deliverables (see also related deliverables under Tasks 4, 5 and 6):
1. 20 volunteer watershed cleanups, engaging approx. 600 volunteers (COA lead);
2. Comprehensive program website, updated monthly;
3. Integration with “ConnectAquidneck” communications platform (social media, etc.);
4. Two public forums about water quality on Aquidneck Island;
5. At least 4 neighborhood events in critical watershed areas, to educate homeowners regarding pollution reduction and best practices;
6. At least 10 significant news articles (with Newport Daily News and R.I. Public Radio);
7. Approx. 25,000 informational flyers for distribution through Newport Water mailings, public events, cleanups, etc.
8. Public versions of program overview, interim and final report documents;
10. Web videos and other outreach materials aimed at students and the general public.

Task 4: Program Evaluation and Reporting: Evaluate and communicate program results with respect to achieving goals and objectives, including water quality improvements, ecosystem improvements, economic benefits and cost-effectiveness for municipalities.

Task 4 Deliverables:
1. Interim report with recommendations for mid-course corrections;
2. Final report, including estimated pollution load reductions from implementation actions, quantification of final outcomes, lessons learned, and recommendations for implementation elsewhere in the Southeast New England watershed region;
3. Benefit-cost analysis documenting program results, economic and environmental benefits to communities; and cost-savings to municipalities.

Task 5: Planning for Program Sustainability & Future Improvements: Develop plans and programs to ensure continued and improved implementation of water quality restoration actions.

Task 5 Deliverables:
1. Finance and implementation plan for funding future water quality needs and improvements on 5 and 10-year horizons, including characterization of high priority projects, estimated load reductions and other quantitative outcomes, cost estimates, review of potential revenue streams, potential grant sources, etc.
2. Demonstrate use of conservation planning for water quality improvement through implementation of ALT Maidford/Bailey watershed plan, through buffer restoration and/or other BMP priorities for conservation lands.

Task 6: Communicate Results (Technology Transfer): Communicate program results and lessons learned to stakeholders, public officials and others on Aquidneck Island, throughout the Southeast New England region, and elsewhere in the U.S., in order to foster the use of similar collaborative approaches and cost-effectiveness models for water quality restoration elsewhere.

Task 6 Deliverables:
1. Technical presentations for public officials and resource managers;
2. Presentations at two regional conferences and two national conferences;
3. Website module for transfer and application of Island Waters model throughout the Southeast New England watershed region and elsewhere in the U.S.
**Project Calendar** *(Detailed workplan and schedule will be developed following award)*

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**Sustainability of Results:** We will ensure the sustainability of the Island Waters by 1) developing robust, collaborative governance procedures for the Island Waters organization; 2) completing a benefit-cost analysis to demonstrate the value of the partnership; and 3) developing a financing and implementation plan to provide a “road map” for future action. Island Waters also includes a robust evaluation component to track results, assess effectiveness, enable mid-course corrections, and inform decision-makers throughout the SNEP region who may be considering adoption or adaptation of the program.

**II. Environmental Results:** The principal long-term outcome of Island Waters is the restoration and protection of water quality on Aquidneck Island to achieve CWA goals. Specifically, Island Waters will lead to more effective action by state and local governments to:

- Reduce nutrients, bacteria and other pollutants to the Island’s fresh and salt waters;
- Protect public health by reducing HABs, nutrients and other risks and impacts to drinking water, and by reducing pathogens in coastal waters;
- Improve local economies by reducing beach and shellfish bed closures, and by reducing flooding impacts on roads and other public infrastructure;
- Restore coastal, fresh water and terrestrial habitats and ecosystems through pollution reduction, improved stormwater management, buffer restoration and other best practices.

Island Waters will achieve these outcomes by establishing a sustainable public-private partnership that increases municipal effectiveness in water quality restoration and preservation. Island Waters will improve the municipalities’ ability to work with each other, with state and federal agencies, and with key stakeholders such as farmers and homeowners’ associations. Island Waters will enable ongoing resource-sharing, collaboration and financing among the three Aquidneck Island municipalities and non-profit partners, resulting in reduced nutrient and bacteria pollution to surface, ground, coastal and drinking waters. Through transfer of the program to other areas in Southeast New England, Island Waters will produce the outcome of improved water quality and restored ecosystem services throughout the region.

Under Tasks 1 and 2, we will quantify all expected outcomes during the period of the grant, including nutrient reduction, public participation, etc.; and under Task 4, we will evaluate outcomes actually achieved during this period. Under Task 5, we will estimate future load reductions and other quantitative outcomes over 5 and 10-year planning horizons, integrated with finance planning to establish ambitious and achievable goals for Aquidneck Island. Both in the near term (2-year grant period) and long term (5 and 10-year horizons), Island Waters will represent the first time that several communities in the Southeast New England watershed region have joined together to establish shared, comprehensive goals for water quality restoration, and collaborate to implement achievable measures on a prioritized basis.
For example, in the Maidford River watershed, stormwater runoff is estimated to convey an average of 2,300 pounds per year of phosphorous. Non-agricultural land uses in the watershed that are mostly comprised of residential land uses and public roads deliver 60% to 70% of these loadings, according to the Maidford River WTM developed by Middletown. Island Waters will utilize this innovative approach to prioritize actions across all the target sub-watersheds, in order to produce the greatest benefit in the most cost-effective manner.

Increased environmental stewardship, public engagement and understanding is an important aspect of this project’s outcomes. Island Waters will engage thousands of Aquidneck Island citizens in water quality restoration through watershed cleanups and other forms of volunteer engagement. Public forums, news articles, and other forms of outreach will elevate public understanding, with long-term benefits to water quality. The Newport/NBEP nutrient management study, for example, identified homeowner education as one of the most important and cost-effective means of reducing pollution to St. Mary’s Pond, a drinking-water reservoir.

A detailed list of near-term outputs is provided as deliverables under each of the tasks in the preceding section. These include establishment of the Island Waters organization; installation of BMPs and other on-the-ground measures to reduce nutrients and restore water quality; and training for municipal employees. The stormwater financing and implementation plan included as a deliverable under Task 5 is a particularly important output toward building capacity for accomplishment of long-term outcomes.

During the period of the grant, program evaluation will be through rigorous results tracking of both outputs and outcomes, using metrics such as number of BMPs designed or installed; pounds of phosphorus and nitrogen removed; and numbers of volunteers engaged. We will use the benefit-cost analysis to compare the results of Island Waters with more traditional municipal approaches. Over the long term, Island Waters will continue to track water quality actions and improvements on Aquidneck Island, taking a comprehensive, regional approach to understanding water quality trends on the Island, and reporting those trends to resource managers and the public in a transparent, accessible and timely manner.

III. Transferability of Results & Collaboration Across the SNEP Area:

Overview of Transferability: Island Waters will be highly transferable throughout the Southeast New England watershed region and other areas of the U.S. where multiple political jurisdictions share responsibility for managing shared water resources. Building on the work accomplished by the Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition, Upper Narragansett Bay Regional Stormwater Utility District and other regional partnerships, Island Waters will pioneer and demonstrate a model for inter-jurisdictional water quality restoration throughout Southeast New England and the U.S.

Sharing of Results: As described under the Scope of Work and Deliverables, we will share the results of Island Waters on Aquidneck Island, throughout the Southeast New England Region, and throughout the U.S., through digital, print and personal communications, including municipal meetings, volunteer engagement, public forums (in partnership with the Pell Center at Salve Regina University), printed materials, news media (in partnership with the Newport Daily News), digital and printed reports, professional conferences and other venues. Key outreach materials and program reports will be customized toward several different audiences: municipal decision-makers, regional resource managers, and the general public. All communications and outreach for Island Waters will be integrated with a new, comprehensive digital platform under development by AIPC, ConnectAquidneck, including dedicated web pages and social media. We
will use and expand ConnectAquidneck for continuous and ongoing reporting of water quality measures on Aquidneck Island after completion of this 2-year grant.

Gathering Information and Lessons Learned: We have designed Island Waters as an iterative program to incorporate continuous improvement and adaptive management. As described in the Scope of Work, we will conduct an initial program evaluation after one year, and a final evaluation on completion of this SNEP grant. However we will seek and incorporate program improvements on an ongoing basis – during the grant period, based on quarterly feedback from municipal, state and federal partners, as well as resource managers region-wide. During the results sharing phase of the work, we will seek and incorporate regional and national input. Following completion of this SNEP grant, we will continue to grow and improve Island Waters on the basis of both the experience of the program, and ideas from other programs and areas; such post-grant program improvements will be incorporated annually.

IV. Partnerships

Overview of Partnerships: Island Waters’ core partners are the municipalities, non-profit organizations and state agencies that will be engaged directly through the Island Waters framework. We will engage non-profits through the R.I. Green Infrastructure Coalition, representing 37 member organizations, and the public through the outreach and volunteer components of this project, led by COA, ALT and AIPC.

Community Involvement and Unique Relationships for Results: Island Waters will include intensive community involvement, including elected officials, professional municipal staff, members of non-profit organizations, volunteers, residents and visitors to Aquidneck Island. We will utilize the extensive networks of all three Island municipalities, the three Island-wide environmental non-profit organizations, and will amplify these connections through our ongoing partnership with the Newport Daily News and our ConnectAquidneck digital platform. Working together, the six core partners in Island Waters are uniquely poised to engage all stakeholders in this critically important initiative, and to lay the foundation for improved stewardship and expanded civic engagement in the future.

Roles of Partners:

- **Newport, Middletown, and Portsmouth:** Under the Clean Water Act and RI MS4 permits, municipalities are responsible for managing water quality impacts from municipal storm water discharges. Municipal staff will engage in Island Waters and will be responsible for overseeing much of the work, such as BMP engineering and installation. Municipal staff and elected officials have embraced this project and will maintain the partnership and implementation of Island Waters once this SNEP grant is complete. Municipal resources include staff time, cash and in-kind match, as described in the budget.
- **Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC)** will develop and lead the partnership on behalf of the municipalities, including program leadership and coordination, technical assistance, grant administration and reporting, fiscal management, contracting, program evaluation, communications, outreach and tech transfer. AIPC resources include staff time, expertise and in-kind match.
- **Aquidneck Land Trust (ALT)** will coordinate with private landowners, undertake conservation planning for water quality, and will implement specific demonstration projects such as riparian buffers. ALT resources include staff time and in-kind match, including GIS capacity.
• **Clean Ocean Access (COA)** will provide outreach and public engagement through its nationally recognized, volunteer-based programs. In 2014 COA engaged more than 1300 volunteers in actions to improve Aquidneck Island’s water quality, including coastal cleanups and water quality sampling. COA resources include staff time and in-kind.

V. Programmatic Capability & Past Performance

AIPC has successfully completed many projects comparable to Island Waters with the support of federal, state and private funding. We are currently managing more than $267,000 in state, municipal and private grants, funding several Island-wide planning and policy initiatives. Grant reporting and administration are overseen by the Executive Director and the Finance Committee of the Board of Directors, including a licensed CPA. In March, 2016, alone we successfully completed and closed out a $75,000 grant from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation for bikeway engineering and a $60,000 grant from the Rhode Island Foundation for broadband network development; in each case, all required documentation was completed and the funder approved and accepted all grant reporting including final reports and assessment of outcomes.

AIPC and ALT are supporting the Town of Middletown in completing the Sachuest Bay Coastal Resiliency Project, a $2.9 million project funded by the Dept. of Interior through the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to restore habitat, water quality and ecosystem services through an innovative, integrated, prioritized approach. All reporting for this large and complex project has been completed on-time and on-task, and accepted by NFWF. For this project, the partners are using a data matrix approach to track 16 quantitative outcomes covering habitat, water quality, stream continuity, economic benefits, jobs produced, etc.

The City of Newport is completing an innovative feasibility study to reduce phosphorus in drinking water reservoirs, funded by SNEP through the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP). COA is currently managing a $45,900 grant funded by EPA through NEIWPCC/NBEP for “Stormwater Pathogens--Find It and Fix It,” and is on track for reporting and implementation. Much of the work completed under these grants will inform Island Waters, including the Newport and Maidford River watershed studies, and land conservation planning for water quality restoration by ALT.

Institutional infrastructure for the project includes municipal engineering, planning and public works departments; technical and administrative expertise and experience of all partners; AIPC fiscal and grants management systems; ALT and municipal GIS capacity; COA established volunteer network; and all organizations’ extensive stakeholder networks.

**Key Personnel:**

• Thomas Ardito, Executive Director, Aquidneck Island Planning Commission: Extensive experience in environmental restoration, stormwater management and the administration of large federal grants, including development and successful completion of $1 million EPA-funded stormwater project at Roger Williams Park, Providence.

• Charles Allott, Executive Director, Aquidneck Land Trust: An attorney with experience leading the largest and most successful land trust in Rhode Island, as well as experience in conservation planning for water quality restoration.

• David McLaughlin, Executive Director, Clean Ocean Access: Extensive experience in water quality restoration, volunteer engagement, technology.
• Ronald M. Wolanski, AICP, Director of Planning & Economic Development, Town of Middletown: Extensive experience in community planning and economic development.
• Julia Forgue, PE, Director of Utilities, City of Newport: PE responsible for managing Island-wide drinking water system, stormwater and wastewater management.
• Gary Crosby, Town Planner, Portsmouth: Responsible for municipal stormwater compliance and oversight of Portsmouth’s On-Site Wastewater Management Plan.

In addition to these key personnel, many other municipal staff (primarily engineering and DPW staff) and non-profit staff will be supporting Island Waters. In addition, following award of the grant, AIPC will hire a half-time engineer or environmental scientist to oversee day-to-day management of Island Waters.

VI. Budget Narrative (Cost-Effectiveness): We have provided full budget information and justification of costs under the “Budget Detail” section below; therefore, this section focuses on the cost-effectiveness of Island Waters and the need for EPA funding for this project.

Municipal cooperation as envisioned by Island Waters presents a far more cost-effective approach to stormwater management and water quality restoration than the current approach, whereby each Rhode Island municipality is separately permitted and each separately complies with state, federal and local requirements. At present, there is little sharing of resources across municipal boundaries and significant inefficiencies at the state and federal levels in administering 39 separate stormwater programs for Rhode Island’s 39 municipalities. In the near term, Island Waters will present substantial cost savings through resource-sharing and collaboration; in the long term, it will lead to more efficient oversight for state and federal agencies, for example through a combined MS4 permit for Aquidneck Island rather than three separate municipal permits as is now the case. Through prioritization of projects and finance planning, Island Waters will drive much more efficient and beneficial use of municipal and state funding for water quality restoration; and through benefit-cost analysis, we will assess and demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of this approach.

The requested SNEP funding is critically important to establishing the Island Waters model, because the municipalities do not have the resources to fund the establishment costs; moreover, it is essential to demonstrate the effectiveness of this collaborative approach through real, on-the-ground improvements. Under this proposal, EPA dollars will establish a program which we believe will be sustainable long after completion of this SNEP grant, and will help us to demonstrate the value and benefit of this approach to Aquidneck Island municipalities and to municipalities throughout the Southeast New England Watershed Region.

VII. Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds: We will ensure timely and efficient completion of this project through development of a detailed workplan, as outlined in Task 1; quarterly partners’ meetings to track progress and make corrections; and an interim evaluation and report at the end of the first year of the project. Following the successful model that Middletown used for its $2.2 million DOI/NFWF Sachuest Bay Coastal Resiliency grant, we will establish a cloud-based reporting system for all grant partners and will require quarterly reports under the oversight of AIPC. Measures tracked will include staff time, contractual costs, outputs and outcomes. We have requested funding within this grant for contractual support to establish dedicated accounting procedures to track this grant separately from all other AIPC funding. Through all these measures we will monitor progress continually and institute corrections quarterly in order to ensure that progress remains on track among all partners.
**Cost-Effectiveness:** Island Waters is a comprehensive project that will have a tremendous positive impact – both on Aquidneck Island and, we believe, throughout the Southeast New England Watershed Region. In designing the program, we have endeavored to include all elements necessary to develop, demonstrate, evaluate and communicate our innovative approach, while excluding unnecessary elements and trimming costs where possible. While this is a large request, Island Waters will result in very significant cost-savings for municipalities on Aquidneck Island and throughout the Southeast New England Watershed Region—and ultimately, for state and federal oversight agencies. Most important, it will greatly improve municipalities’ ability to effectively restore impaired waters and achieve Clean Water Act goals. We therefore believe that Island Waters represents a highly cost-effective investment for EPA Region I under its Southeast New England Watershed Restoration Grants Program.

The partners engaged in Island Waters share many years of experience in successfully managing complex, multi-million dollar projects to achieve environmental outcomes. Recent examples of our accomplishments include $67 million in upgrades to the Aquidneck Island water treatment plant by the Newport Water Department and successful management of the $2.9 million Sachuest Bay Coastal Resiliency Project by the Town of Middletown. Thomas Ardito, the project leader, developed and successfully completed more than $1 million in stormwater improvements at Roger Williams Park in Providence, funded by grants from EPA Region I, and led the $600,000 removal of Pawtuxet Falls Dam in Cranston, RI. The design of Island Waters incorporates our extensive experience in water quality restoration and environmental project management. With the support of EPA Region I, Island Waters will greatly benefit communities throughout the Southeast New England watershed region.

Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal. Our partnership sincerely looks forward to working with EPA Region I to develop, demonstrate, evaluate and communicate Island Waters: the Aquidneck Island Water Quality Partnership.