



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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DEM RECOGNIZES RHODE ISLAND WINNERS OF EPA ENVIRONMENTAL MERIT AWARDS

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) today is glad to recognize the six Rhode Island recipients of the [United States Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Merit Awards](#), given to those who have made outstanding contributions to protect New England's environment. Awardees include four individuals and two organizations:

- Judith Swift, retiring director of the URI Coastal Institute, a leader and interdisciplinary collaborator whose work over decades helped power the cleanup of Narragansett Bay
- George Loomis, with the URI Cooperative Extension, who leveraged the latest scientific knowledge to advance the field of onsite wastewater treatment systems
- Meg Kerr, a fierce environmental advocate who served for many leading organizations including the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and is particularly passionate about pollinators
- Brian Byrnes, Providence Parks and Recreation's deputy director, who has helped improve water quality in watersheds statewide by showcasing green infrastructure at the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center
- The Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, a key DEM partner in meeting the carbon-reduction mandates of the landmark Act on Climate law and, in 2021, loaned more than \$54 million to finance clean water and drinking water projects, supporting thousands of jobs; and
- WaterFire Providence, the visionary arts organization led by Barnaby Evans and Peter Mello whose displays on the Providence River draw hundreds of thousands of visitors to the capital city every year and has been an exemplar in using public art to unite people to try to solve difficult urban problems.

"EPA is proud to recognize and congratulate Rhode Island awardees, for their great accomplishments and their continued efforts towards combatting climate change, bringing cleaner air and water to neighborhoods, and ensuring our underserved communities' voices are being heard," said EPA New England Regional Administrator David W. Cash. "Their ingenuity and commitment truly make a difference in our New England communities."

"DEM's almost 400 employees join me in offering our enthusiastic congratulations and thanks to everyone that's being recognized by EPA Region I this year," said DEM Director Terry Gray. By making excellence their habit, the individual and institutional honorees have made a difference – and made Rhode Island a cleaner, greener, fairer, better place to be."

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