DEM ISSUES DRAFT TMDL AND OPENS PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

October 7th Workshop to Present Draft Total Maximum Daily Load Addressing Total Phosphorus Impairments in Upper and Lower Melville Pond and Melville Pond Tributary

PROVIDENCE – The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) will hold a public meeting on October 7th from 5 – 6:30pm at the Portsmouth Town Hall to present results of the study. The meeting will be a combination of in-person and virtual and will also include an overview of the draft 'Aquidneck Island Watershed Plan'. The meeting will provide an opportunity for DEM to present these studies and to obtain input from stakeholders.

WHAT: In-person and Virtual Public Meeting to discuss findings of the draft TMDL Study and provide an overview of RIDEM's Aquidneck Island Watershed Plan
WHEN: Tuesday, October 7th at 5pm
WHERE: Portsmouth Town Hall 2200 East Main Road Portsmouth, RI 02871 and virtual:

Register for the Zoom Meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/uQ54xwLFQjOZsfrv0mBLeA

To join the public meeting using your phone for audio, click on "Join by Phone" and follow the information on the screen to dial in. All participants will be muted upon joining the meeting. Following the presentation, DEM will take questions via voice or chat. To be unmuted during the hearing, participants should click the "Raise Hand" button on the screen or type into the chat, which will be monitored.

Both Upper and Lower Melville Ponds and the Melville Ponds Tributary, located in Portsmouth, RI, are on the state's 303(d) Impaired Waters List for total phosphorus (TP). Dissolved oxygen impairments, associated with elevated levels of total phosphorus, were documented in 2021 and were added to the 2024 List of Impaired Waters.

The federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop a watershed cleanup study (also called a total maximum daily load or TMDL) for waters that are on the 303(d) List. TMDLs establish the maximum amounts of specific pollutants that can be discharged to a water body and still meet water quality standards.

Both Upper and Lower Melville Pond are over enriched with nutrients, particularly phosphorus, and exhibit the following negative impacts: frequent and long-lasting algal and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms, extensive growth of rooted aquatic plants, low levels of dissolved

oxygen, elevated levels of chlorophyll-a, low water clarity, and reduced aesthetics – all of which impact both aquatic life and recreational uses. The primary source of phosphorus comes from urban and residential stormwater runoff. Other sources include internal cycling of phosphorus from reservoir sediments and macrophyte decay.

TMDLs identify the maximum amount of pollutant a waterbody can receive while still meeting water quality standards. The TMDL analysis for each of the water supply reservoirs included 1) development of a phosphorus budget including identification and quantification of various sources, 2) development of target concentrations of phosphorus such that applicable water quality standards would be met, 3) estimates of the phosphorus load reductions needed to achieve the target concentrations, 4) and the allocation of load reductions among the various sources of phosphorus.

The results of these studies will provide important information for the Town of Portsmouth, RIDOT, Naval Station Newport, and individual property owners to make meaningful water quality improvements in these waterbodies. Public and stakeholder input are important to the success of water quality improvements.

The draft Aquidneck Island Watershed Plan provides a framework for managing efforts to both restore water quality in degraded areas and to protect overall watershed health. Watershed plans assist states and municipalities in addressing nonpoint source pollution by providing a comprehensive assessment of nonpoint source pollution and a set of management measures to address them. More information about watershed plans are available here: http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/water/quality/non-point/

All interested parties are invited to submit written comments on the draft TMDL by November 7th, 2025 to Brian Zalewsky at brian.zalewsky@dem.ri.gov or via mail to Brian Zalewsky, DEM, Office of Water Resources, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908. The public comment period opens on October 7th, 2025.

The draft TMDL will be available online on DEM's website on October 7th at: https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/water-resources/research-monitoring/restoration-studies-tmdl-documents