

SAVE THE BAY[®]

NARRAGANSETT BAY

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Director of Advocacy



Save The Bay: Who we are and what we do...

Mission: Protect and Improve Narragansett Bay

Vision: A fully swimmable, fishable and healthy Bay that is accessible to all

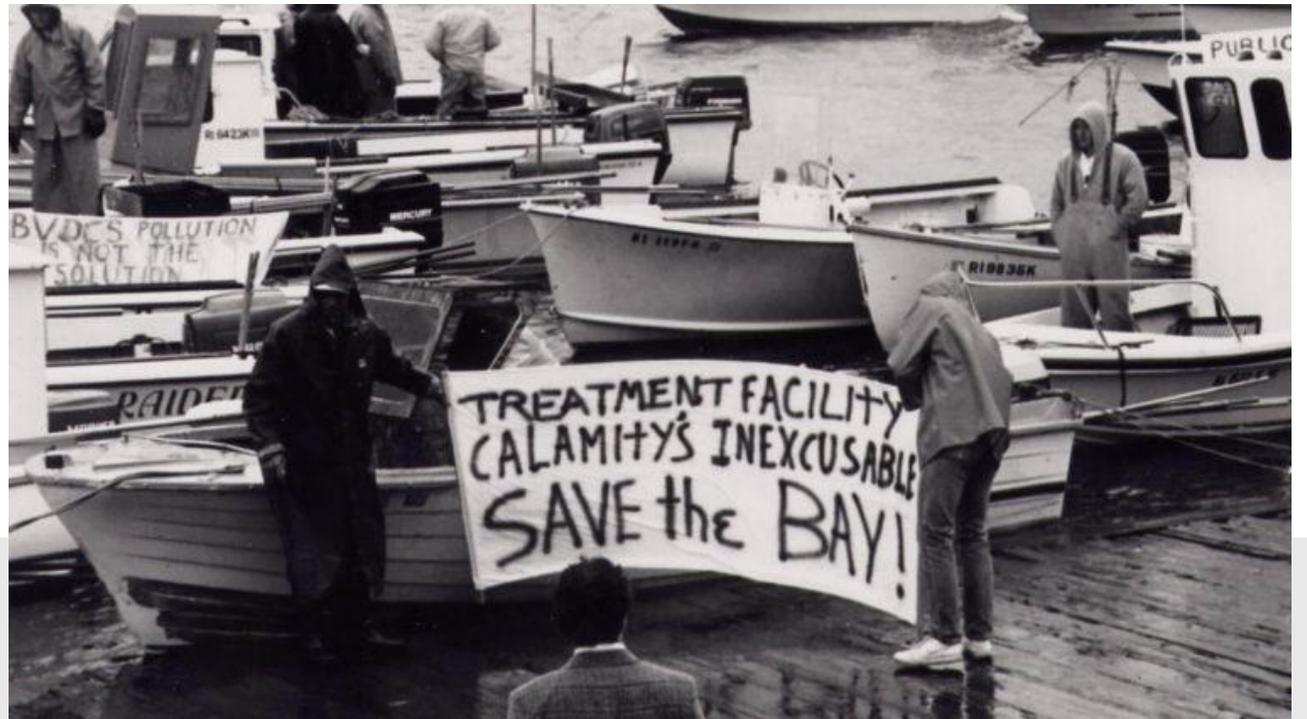
- Advocacy and Policy
- Habitat Restoration
- Education
- Community Engagement



“Have you Saved the Bay?”

Threats and challenges facing Narragansett Bay different than in 1970:

- Untreated sewage; industrial pollutants; hypoxia
- Power plant and refinery proposals



Climate Change

- Single biggest challenge facing Narragansett Bay
- Sea level rise (*10" since 1930; 18" by 2050*)
 - Loss of beach and salt marsh habitats
 - Coastal erosion / hard-walling / public access
- Warming waters (*2.9°F since 1960*)
 - Species migration
- Increased rainfall & flooding
 - Stormwater runoff & management

Save The Bay – working to help communities adapt to these changes

Erosion & “hardwalling”



Roger Wheeler Beach Jan. 2024 (Providence Journal image)



Hardwalling is increasing...

- Based on recent GIS analysis by Save The Bay...
 - 152 miles of beach habitat (bay-facing)
 - 16% (25 miles) has been “hardened” (4% / 6 miles in “type 1” waters)
 - 96 miles of salt marsh habitat (bay-facing)
 - 7% (6.7 miles) has been hardened (1.6% / 1.5 miles in type 1)



Quidnessett Country Club...871 days and counting

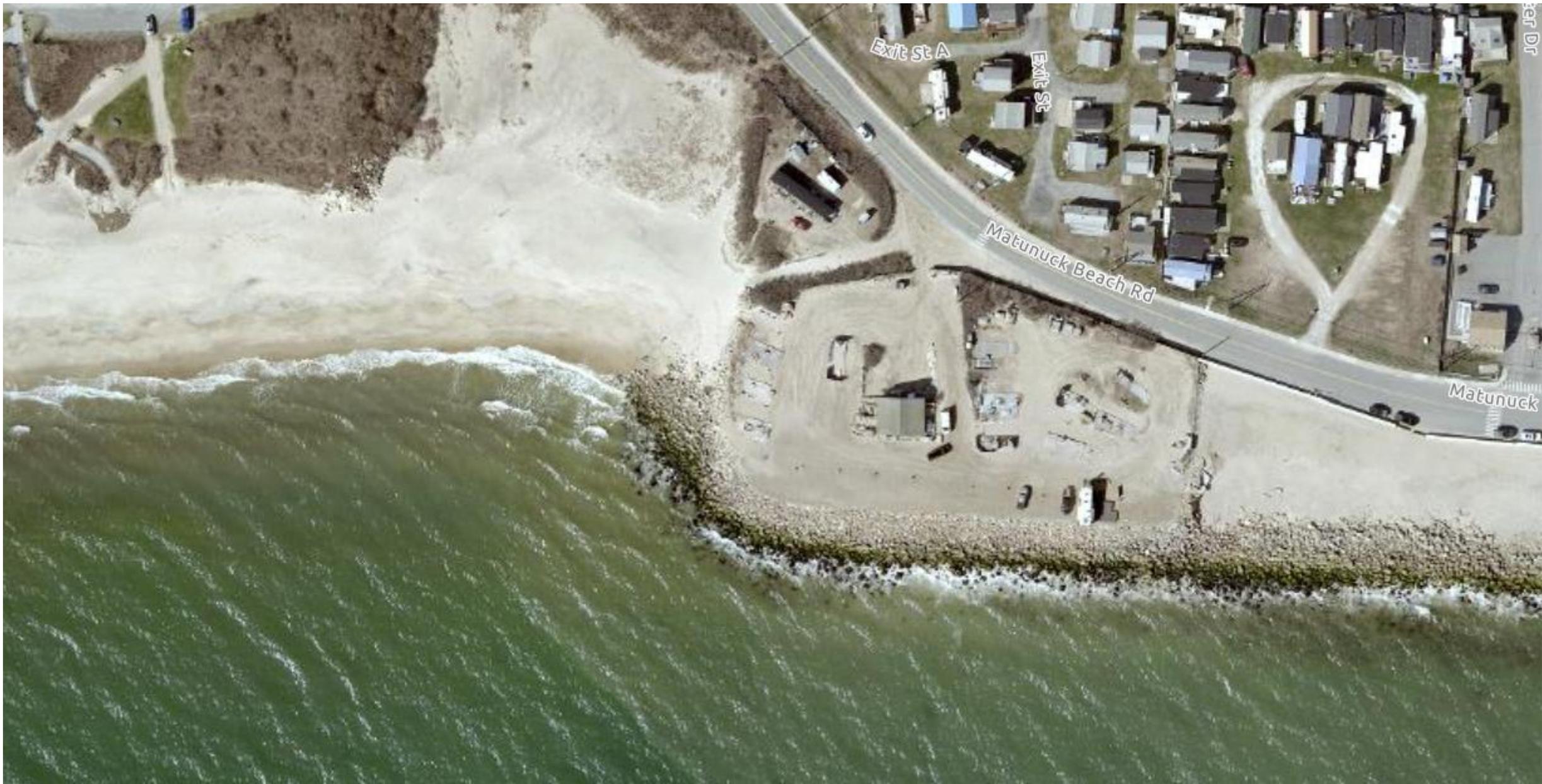


Hardwalling of the shoreline...

- Destroys habitats
- Cuts off lateral public access
- Impounds sediment/sand
- Exacerbates erosion on either side of the wall







“Managed retreat” ???



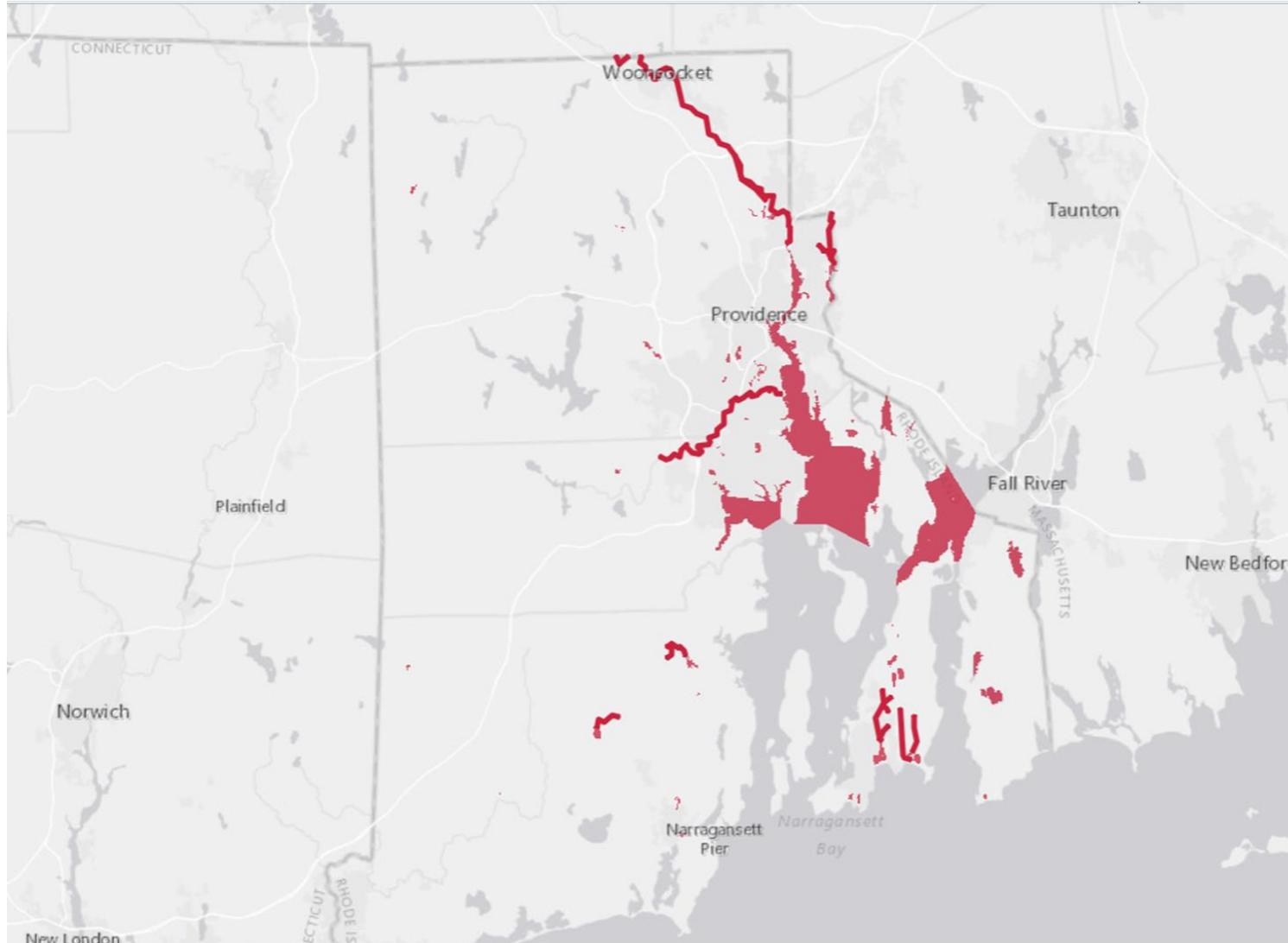
Barrington Town Beach



Funding for Climate Resilience & Adaptation

- RI DEM Climate Resilience Fund
 - **\$5M**, 2018 green bond, 25% match
- Ocean State Climate Adaptation & Resilience Fund
 - Established by Assembly 2021; **\$2M** allocation in 2022
- Municipal Resilience Program (MRP)
 - Action grants, 2022 (**\$16M**) and 2024 (**\$10M**) green bonds
- Resilient Rhody Infrastructure Fund
 - *New* – established in 2025; Funding TBD (2026 green bond?)
 - Mix of low-interest (revolving) loans, (80%) and grants (20%)

Nutrient Pollution (Nitrogen & Phosphorus)



Nutrient Pollution

Can create hypoxic conditions, fish kills

Harmful algal blooms (HABs)

- 23 “no contact” advisories in 2025



Caused by...

- Agricultural runoff
- Fertilizer runoff
- Failing septic systems

Stormwater Pollution



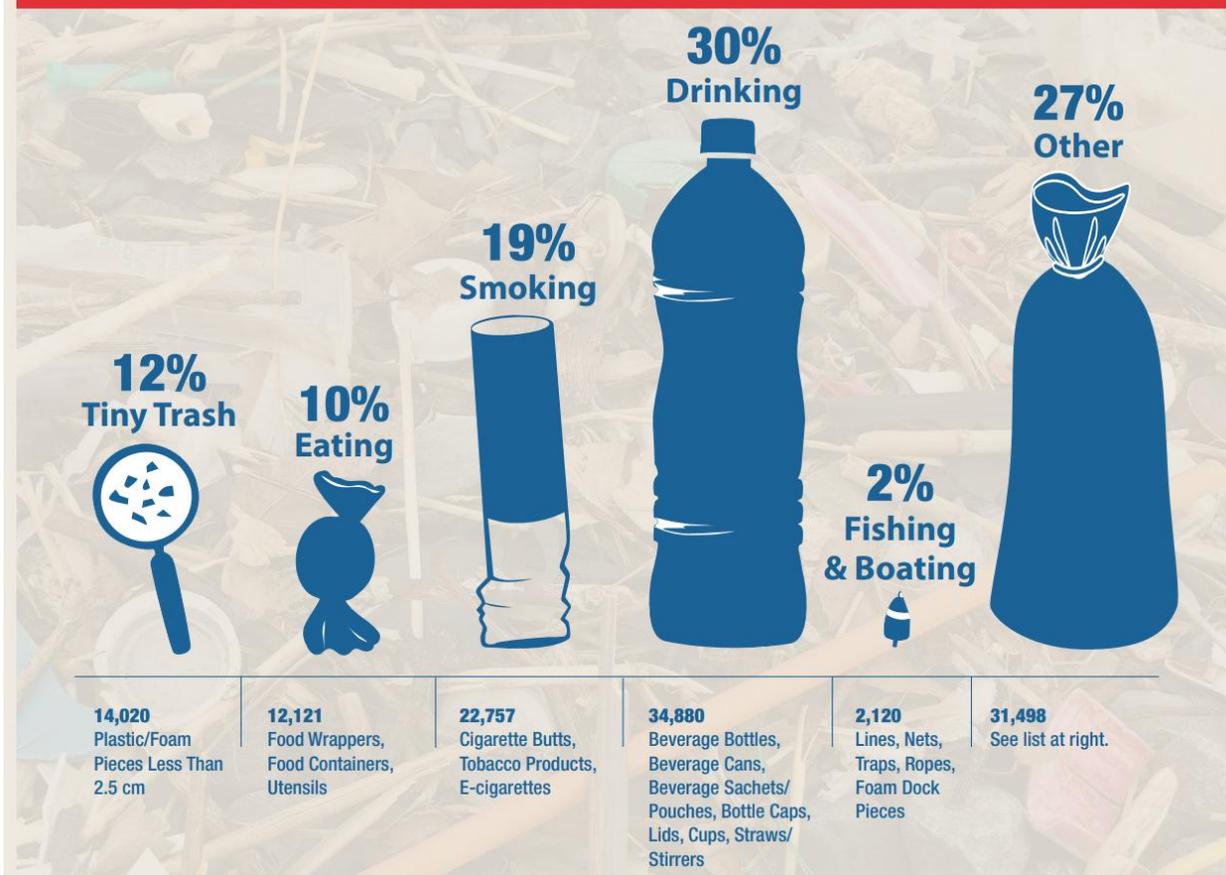
Bacteria & Beach Closures

- 20 different beaches
 - 9 freshwater
 - 11 saltwater
- 123 “closure days” in 2025
 - Up from 71 in 2024
 - Highly weather dependent



Litter, Marine Debris & Plastics

TOP TRASH COLLECTED



ALL TRASH ITEMS COLLECTED

Cigarette butts	20908	17.81%
Plastic/foam pieces	14020	11.94%
Other plastic waste	10970	9.34%
Food wrappers (candy, chips, etc.)	9155	7.80%
Other waste (metal, paper, etc.)	7961	6.78%
Bottle caps (plastic)	7732	6.59%
Beverage bottles (plastic)	6964	5.93%
Beverage cans	4229	3.60%
Beverage bottles (glass)	3731	3.18%
Straws/stirrers (plastic)	3553	3.03%
Other bags (plastic)	2952	2.51%
Bottle caps (metal)	2264	1.93%
Lids (plastic)	1922	1.64%
Foam packaging	1905	1.62%
Cups, Plates (plastic)	1835	1.56%

URI study on microplastics in Narragansett Bay

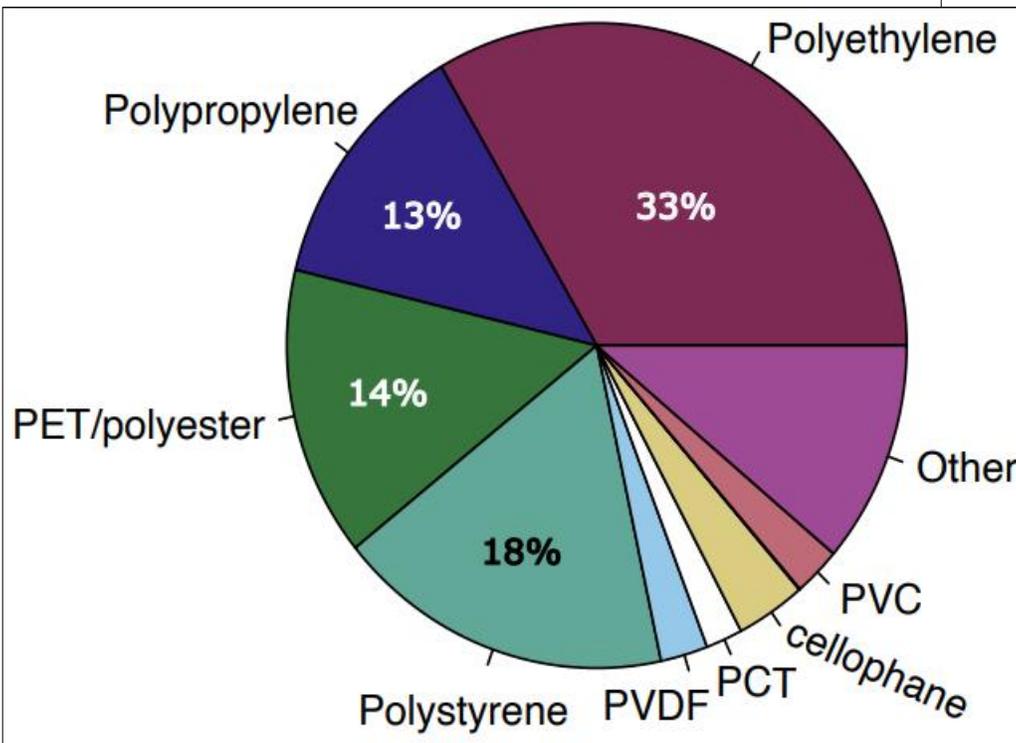
scientific reports

Check for updates

OPEN Extensive estuarine sedimentary storage of plastics from city to sea: Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, USA

Victoria M. Fulfer^{1,2,✉} & J. P. Walsh^{1,2}

Plastics are an important new component of the global sedimentary system, and much concern exists about their transport, fate and impact. This study presents the first system-scale assessment of sedimentary storage of microplastic for an estuary, Narragansett Bay, RI (USA), and the measurements of shoreline and seabed sediments add to the growing body of literature demonstrating high coastal concentrations. Microplastic concentrations in sediments ranged from 396 to over 13,000 MP particles kg⁻¹ dry sediment (DW), comparable to other shoreline and seafloor sites located near urban centers. As previously reported for fine sediment and other pollutants, estuarine plastic storage is extensive in Narragansett Bay, especially within the upper urbanized reaches. Over 16 trillion pieces of plastic weighing near 1000 tonnes is calculated to be stored in surface sediments



“Over 16 trillion pieces of plastic weighing nearly 1,000 tonnes is calculated to be stored in surface sediments of the Bay...”

Shoreline Access (Lateral & Perpendicular)



CRMC Reform

- Legislation passed in 2025 to change composition and qualifications to serve on the politically-appointed council
 - Implementation, TBD?
- Further reform is needed
- Assembly should consider merging CRMC into DEM



Resources for DEM & CRMC

RIDEM



Federal Issues...



- Confusing times; lots of uncertainty
- Next three years – unpredictable
- RI's environmental laws and rules go above and beyond federal standards in many areas
- Funding & staffing cuts at U.S. EPA, NOAA, etc. concerning
- Funding for key federal grant programs uncertain
- Withdrawal from global climate agreements

Thank you

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