Oil Spill Prevention, Administration & Response (OSPAR) Fund

Annual Report
FY2024

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Office of Emergency Response

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1: INTRODUCTION

The Oil Spill Prevention Administration and Response (OSPAR) Fund (RIGL Chapter 46-12.7) was created in 1996 following the environmentally devastating North Cape oil spill. The OSPAR Fund is continuously supported through a fee of $0.05 per barrel of petroleum products received at marine terminals in Rhode Island. The purpose of OSPAR is multi-faceted. It provides funding for the prompt response, containment, and remediation of oil spills; emergency response readiness via trainings and equipment acquisition; emergency loans for affected workers in the case of significant releases; and damage compensation of legitimate claims that cannot otherwise be compensated by responsible parties or the federal government. The funds and the operations conducted in accordance with the statute are managed by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

DEM's Office of Emergency Response (OER) is funded, in part, by the OSPAR Fund as Rhode Island's first line of defense in protecting public health, safety, and welfare in an environmental emergency. Like police officers and firefighters, DEM's emergency responders are prepared to handle a great variety of incidents. These incidents may range from a spill of a few gallons to a petroleum tanker rollover, an abandoned drum to bioterror weaponry, and many other possible threats to environmental and public wellbeing. Highly trained first responders are on-call 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. They are tasked with responding to and remediating incidents posing imminent dangers.

Despite an abundance of effective preventative measures, hundreds of incidents possess the potential to threaten the environment daily. Emergency responders are prepared to limit risks from oil and chemical spills, failed tanks or pipes, fires and fumes, overturned trucks, sunken vessels, litter, weapons of mass destruction and abandoned drums amongst many other possibilities. OER responds to several hundred incidents each year. The office is also responsible for the registration and oversight of facilities with Aboveground Storage Tanks (AST) exceeding a combined capacity of 500 gallons, and regulates over 600 such facilities located throughout Rhode Island. Many of these activities are supported by the OSPAR Fund.

Since the enactment of OSPAR, Rhode Island has experienced an increase in environmental impacts from climate change including intensified storms, warming air and waters, increased annual rainfall and rising sea levels. The consequences of these changes further strain our coastal and riverine habitats and infrastructure. During instances where rainfall or storm surges lead to flooding, releases of oil and hazardous materials into the environment increase and necessitate emergency actions and remediation. With our changing climate, there is a growing urgency for strong preparedness and training for responding to weather related issues.

Section 46-12.7-7 of the statute requires the DEM Director to submit an annual report to the legislature on the OSPAR Fund. This report summarizes the status and use of the fund for FY2024.

2: REVENUES & EXPENDITURES

The OSPAR account started FY2024 with a balance forward of $3,104,508 and ended FY2024 with a balance of $3,075,354. During FY2024, the $0.05 per barrel fee resulted in the collection of $2,082,375 after the 10% cost recovery fees per RIGL 46-12.7-4.19(g). As a result of a revenue transfer to the Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration for $250,000 per RIGL 46-12.7-4.1, DEM received a total revenue of $1,832,375. The personnel, operating and project expenditures for FY2024 totaled $1,861,529. Overall, the OSPAR Fund remained relatively stable during FY2024, ending with a closing balance $29,154 less than the balance forward from FY2023. The total revenue went up from last year and the total expenditures went up from last year, resulting in a $29,154 decrease of the fund balance from the previous year. The expenditures specifically listed in sections 3(a) through 3(e) represent the larger costs associated with OSPAR funding for FY2024.

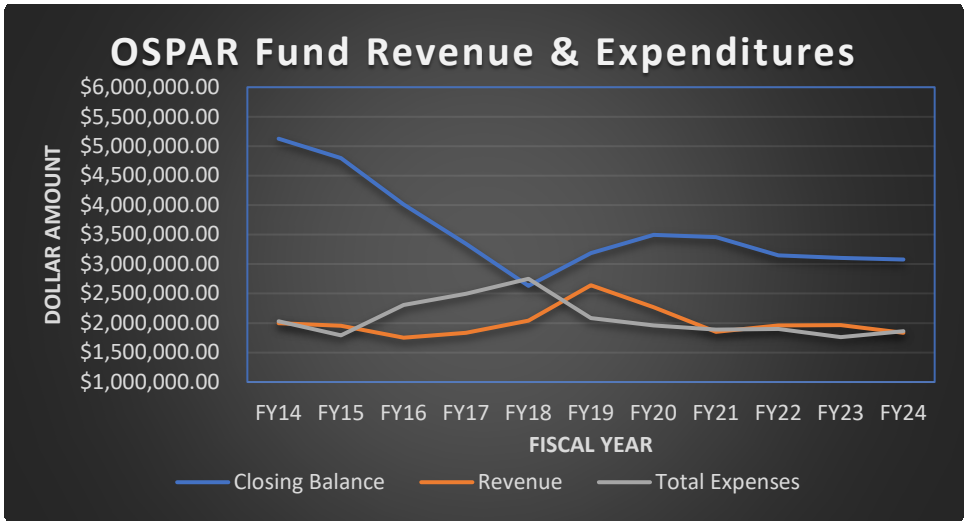

Figure 1. OSPAR Fund revenues & expenditures over the past 10 fiscal years.

3: PERSONNEL COSTS

- Partial salary and benefits for the members of the DEM Emergency Response team. All four personnel serve as first responders and are also responsible for administering the OSPAR Program both in terms of pre-spill readiness and post-spill response.
- Partial salary and benefits for the DEM Emergency Response Administrator.
- An Administrative Officer who supports the Emergency Response Office and the OSPAR program.

- A State Meteorologist to provide weather information before, during, and after spill response activities, as well as trending climatological information for pre-spill preparedness.
- A Tier II Specialist to provide information on petroleum and chemical storage facilities regarding amounts, storage locations, site plans and emergency contact information.
- Partial support of salary and benefits of DEM geographic information system (GIS) Supervisor. This individual is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive internet mapping application for planning, assessment and response to oil spills or other environmental emergencies in Rhode Island marine waters. This individual is also responsible for developing and maintaining a complete data inventory on an internal network capable of supporting responders during an oil spill or other environmental emergency. In the event of a spill, the GIS Supervisor coordinates the collection and dissemination of spatial data, documenting the extent of spills, fish kills, etcetera. In the aftermath of a spill, support is also provided for natural resource damage assessments to aid in the collection of damages from responsible parties.
- Partial salaries and benefits for personnel from the DEM Office of Land Revitalization & Sustainable Materials Management, who oversee the investigation and cleanup of properties contaminated from the release of oil.

a. Personnel Costs	$1,183,635
b. Major Operating Expenses	$264,663
Vehicle Purchases, Maintenance & Readiness	$148,313
Cell Phones & IT Support	$19,013
Hazardous Waste and Petroleum Emergency Response	$42,820
Supplies: Office, Scientific, Miscellaneous Expenses	$54,517
c. Capital Projects	
d. Other Projects Supported by OSPAR	$413,231
Audubon Society – Narragansett Bay Estuarine Program	$63,122
Water Quality Monitoring Team	$187,500
EMA Marine Strike Team	$162,609
e. Total Expenditures	$1,861,529

4: EMERGENCY RESPONSE CLEANUP COST

a. Response Cost Reimbursement Procedures

The OER utilizes OSPAR funding for the prompt response, containment, and remediation of releases. These activities can require responders to hire contractors for responses to incidents without a responsible party (RP) available on-site, incidents on state properties (highways, parks, or land), or incidents posing third party consequences to public health and the environment. When incidents require cleanup, the RP is financially responsible for covering any subsequent costs. Cleanup costs recovered by OER are then funneled back into the OSPAR fund. Therefore, in instances devoid of a viable RP, the OER cannot recover OSPAR funds. However, in many cases, after thorough research, investigation, and review of available information, the OER seeks reimbursement of expenditures from identified RPs. The OER provides two opportunities for the RP to pay for the incident caused by their actions. OER notifies the RP with a first letter and request for reimbursement. If that goes unpaid, a second letter from OER requiring cost reimbursement for expenditures goes out a month later. When the RP fails to pay for the cleanup cost, a package of our expenditures is sent to the Central Collections Unit (CCU) within the Department of Revenue (DOR). When the debt is referred to CCU, collection actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Interception of Rhode Island tax refunds,
2. A civil suit brought against the RP in state court by the CCU,
3. Attachment of wages or other compensation being paid to the RP,
4. Garnishment, seizure, or levy against bank accounts.

We continue to work with CCU and supply information upon request for the recovery of expenditures from delinquent RPs. All recovered funds go back into the OSPAR account.

b. Response Cost Reimbursement Via National Pollution Fund Center (NPFC)

When possible, the OER also utilizes the United States Coast Guard (USCG) National Pollution Funds Center (NPFC) as an alternative reimbursement mechanism to OSPAR funding. General claims requirements under the NPFC rely upon guidelines set by the Oil Pollution Act (OPA). Any claims submitted through this fund must have occurred after 1990 and include the discharge of oil or substantial threat of an oil discharge to navigable waters in the United States. The OER works frequently with the USCG on incidents involving our state's coastal waters, including the Narragansett Bay. This funding solution offers an alternative to the OSPAR funds and allows money to be allocated elsewhere.

c. Cost Recovered

Since OER started working with CCU in FY2019, the office had 179 cost recovery cases totaling $383,216.23. Of those cases, 86 have been resolved by OER for a total requested

amount of $272,981.54. As part of settlement agreements with these 86 responsible parties (RPs), OER has accepted $260,814.35 as payment in full. Some RPs have agreed to established payment plans with DEM but have since stopped paying. In FY2020, $93,908.20 was recovered, in FY2021 $18,651.04, in FY2022 $16,806.27, in FY2023 $487.57, in FY2024 $130,961.27 was recovered. To date, since the inception of the program 16 cases have been referred to CCU for a total amount of $34,278.77. However, a portion of these funds were collected by OER prior to CCU beginning collection activities. CCU has resolved 5 of the 16 cases for $9,945.29 with a remaining outstanding balance of $24,333.48.

5: EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

a. Response Activities

The Office of Emergency Response (OER) operates as an all-hazard response program, incorporating the oil spill prevention and response functions carried out by DEM in Rhode Island. In FY2024, there were 591 emergency response cases handled by the OER responders. While some annual variation persists, yearly trends largely remain constant for OER response activities. This fiscal year the total response activities were noticeably higher than the previous year, increasing by 44 incidents. All incidents are broken down into two primary categories: oil spills and hazardous material responses. Below is a graph showing the number of incidents across the past decade.

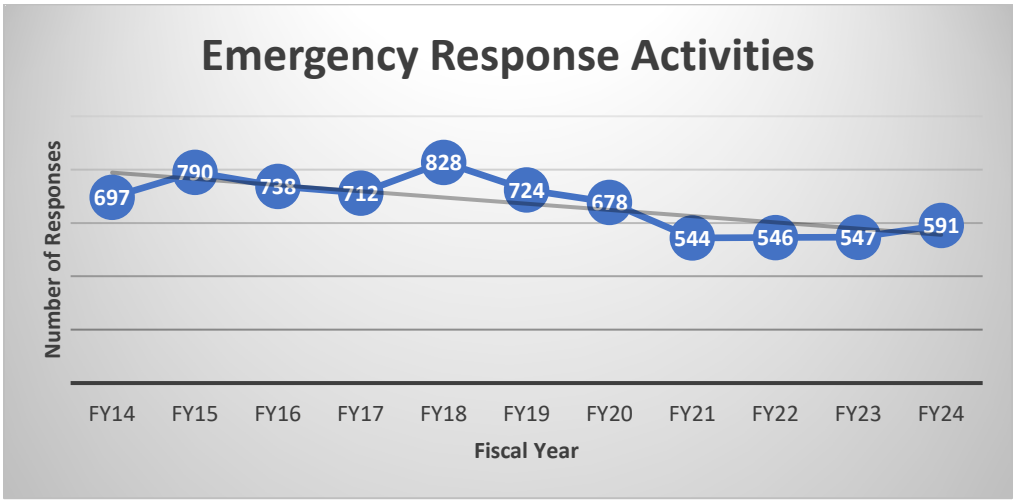

Figure 2. The number of emergency response activities for the previous 10 fiscal years.

b. Oil Spill Response

The OER response team responded to 445 oil spills in FY2024. Oil spills amassed 75.30% of the total number of incidents responded to by OER responders. The amount of oil product and debris remediated during these incidents is estimated to be 2379 gallons of free product, 21,570 gallons of product and water mixture, 207.5 tons of oil spill debris,

and around 350 cubic yards worth of oil spill debris. Remediation work was completed by the OER, responsible parties, or contractors hired by either the OER or responsible parties. To ensure compliance with State and Federal regulations, all remediation work was overseen by the OER staff.

Circumstances causing oil spills and their consequential environmental impacts vary. The primary categories of oil spills and their relative percentages for FY2024 are charted below:

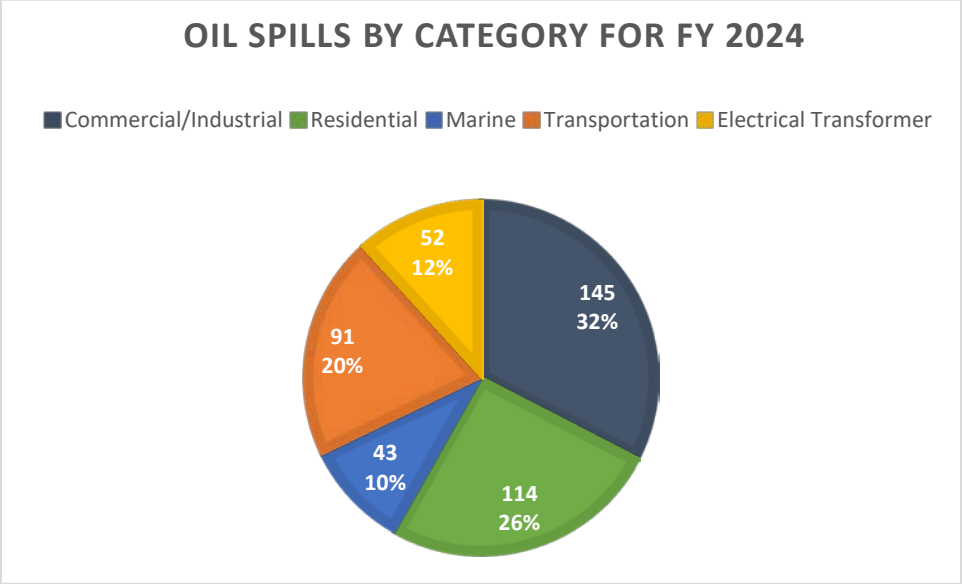

Figure 3. The breakdown of oil spill incidents responded to by the OER in FY2024.

The greatest percentage of oil spills during FY2024 was caused by commercial/industrial incidents at 32%. This is a continuation of the norm seen throughout the previous decade, the sole exception being FY2021, which was likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down many business operations. The second largest percentage of oil spills were residential, which totaled 114 incidents and comprised 26% of oil spills. The rise in home heating oil spills seen in previous years is a concerning trend. Oil spills in residential areas can be quite problematic as drinking water wells, groundwater, and soil can be contaminated, therefore compromising water quality for affected individuals. Additionally, septic systems can become fouled and require replacement, odor and health problems can infiltrate homes, and nearby storm water drains, sewers, ditches, and surface water tributaries are at risk for contamination. The OER webpage provides residential oil tank information to help homeowners minimize their risk of oil spills. DEM continues to conduct public outreach through press releases, television special reports, and presentations to oil companies via insurance seminars.

Transportation incidents comprised 20% of oil spills, totaling 91 incidents. This percentage is a fairly consistent with previous fiscal years. These incidents primarily include motor vehicle accidents where fuel tanks are compromised and impact the surrounding area.

Electrical transformer oil spills totaled 52 incidents. Electrical transformer spills comprised around 12% of total oil spills, which is consistent with last fiscal year. The primary causes of electrical transformer releases are damage inflicted by motor vehicle accidents or high wind weather events, the latter being far more prevalent. Electrical transformer spills will likely continue to increase in the future as climate change spurs increasingly severe weather events. OER personnel meets with electric companies to discuss electrical transformer issues and ensure proper cleanup of mineral oil dielectric fluid (MODF) releases and PCB contaminated transformer oil.

Marine incidents were responsible for 10% of all oil spills, the continuation of a decade long trend. DEM and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) conduct workshops at the Port of Galilee to reduce oil spills in the Narragansett Bay. In these workshops commercial fishermen are educated on State and Federal requirements for proper containment and disposal of any generated oily waste.

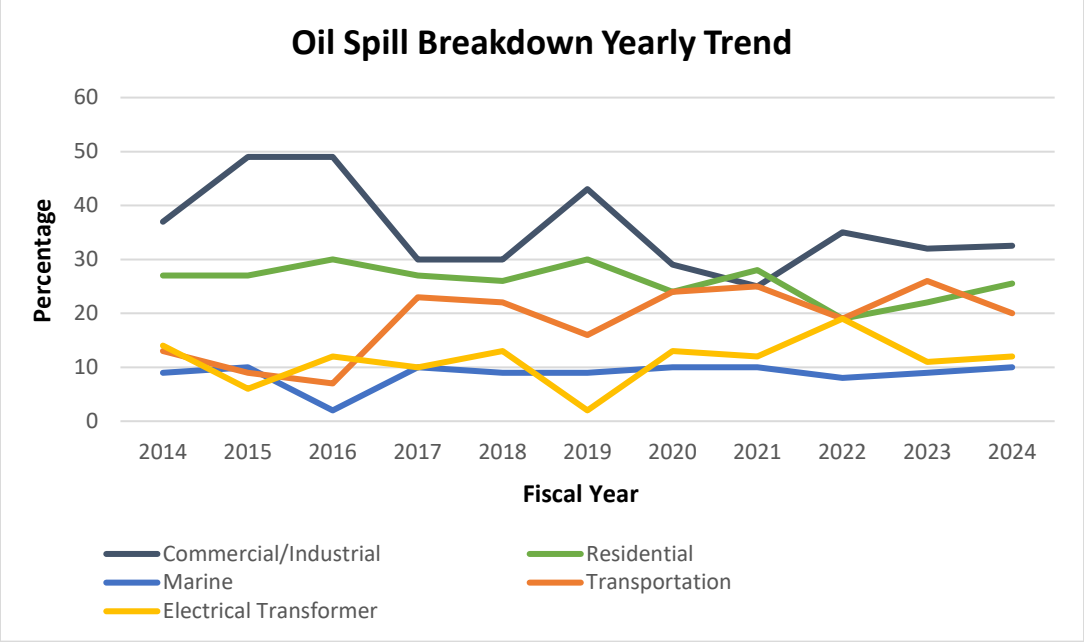

Figure 4. The trend of oil spill categories across the previous 10 fiscal years.

c. Hazardous Material Response

The OER response team responded to 45 hazardous material incidents during FY2024, which is up 10 from the previous year. These incidents amassed 7.6% of all OER response activities. It is estimated that 145 gallons and 2305 pounds of hazardous waste was remediated from the environment. Remediation work was completed by the OER, responsible parties, or contractors hired by either the OER or responsible parties. To ensure compliance with State and Federal regulations, all remediation work was overseen by the OER staff.

6: EMERGENCY RESPONSE INCIDENTS AND EXERCISES

a. Waste Oil Release during Blackstone River Flood Event (2023-546)

During the winter of 2023, Rhode Island experienced multiple instances of severe flooding on the Blackstone River due to periods of intense rainfall. Floods pose a great risk for environmental contamination due to oil tanks and various hazardous materials that float away with forceful flood waters. One such instance was in Cumberland on the early morning of December 20, 2023. A 500-gallon waste oil tank in a facility's maintenance building was whisked away with flood waters and released its contents, which substantially impacted the inside of the building and caused a sheen atop flood water in the parking lot. The company hired an environmental contractor to remediate the spill under the guidance of DEM Emergency Response. In total, 21,420 gallons of oily water and 40.38 tons of oily debris were removed from the site for disposal.

b. Boat Explosion at North Kingstown Boat Ramp (2023-322)

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management was notified by the North Kingstown Fire Department on August 4, 2023 at 10:00PM for a boat explosion in the dirt parking lot at the Long Point Boat Ramp in Wilson Park. A gasoline leak in the boat's bilge resulted in a flammable concentration of vapors. This buildup of vapors eventually ignited and caused an explosion. The Fire Department used environmentally friendly foam and water to extinguish the blaze that ensued. Following extinguishment efforts, an unknown amount of gasoline floating atop firewater traveled across the parking lot towards Mill Cove. The Fire Department quickly deployed absorbent boom to contain and absorb the gasoline.

RI DEM responded and met with the Fire Department and other local authorities. The runoff stretched across 50-60 yards of the parking lot. Fortunately, it fell 20 yards short of the cove. Unfortunately, no contractors were available to respond that night, so additional DEM personnel responded, and over 300

absorbent pads were distributed along the runoff to absorb as much gasoline as possible. The pads were then containerized in 55-gallon drums on site to be picked up the following day by a contractor.

The following morning, a cleanup contractor and North Kingstown DPW met on-site to conduct the necessary cleanup of the parking lot. DPW personnel were able to excavate the parking lots with their equipment, digging 3-inches to 18-inches deep depending on the extent of contamination in different areas. The oily debris was stored in roll-off containers and taken for disposal by the contractor. In total, over 30-tons was removed from the site and backfilled.

c. Box Truck MVA on Route 146 (2024-150)

On the morning of April 8, 2024, a box truck traveling down Route 146 in North Smithfield lost control and drove across the median from the southbound lane into the northbound lane. When the truck crashed through the metal guard rails, its saddle tanks were ripped open. The accident resulted in the release of approximately 100-gallons of diesel fuel. As a result of the accident, the entire northbound lane was closed off as emergency personnel arrived at the scene. The diesel fuel traveled along the roadway and absorbed into the dirt median. The extent of the contamination was large, and the DEM Office of Emergency Response was requested. The responder at the scene coordinated with the trucking company to hire an environmental cleanup contractor to excavate the impacted soil and clean the roadway.

During remediation work, it was discovered a concrete pad existed a foot beneath the soil. Consequently, the diesel fuel traveled quite a distance along the median, but remediation efforts were simplified and able to be completed much quicker than anticipated. In total, two 55-gallon drums were generated containing the absorbent material used to remediate the impacted roadway. Additionally, approximately 21 tons of impacted soil were excavated and removed from the site for disposal, and the area was subsequently backfilled.

7: PORTS PROGRAM

The OSPAR Fund continues to support the Narragansett Bay Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS) that began operation in June 2000. PORTS, which is operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is comprised of monitoring stations located in Narragansett Bay that monitor the tide, currents, and weather. The data is reported every six minutes to a central receiving computer which processes the information. This real-time information can be accessed at PORTS: Narragansett Bay PORTS - NOAA Tides & Currents. NOAA continuously monitors the in-water sensors and conducts data validation. This 24/7 quality control allows NOAA to guarantee the accuracy of the data. As a result, the state-licensed pilots who guide the largest vessels into port in Narragansett Bay can make decisions on vessel movements with real-time information.

State-licensed pilots can directly access real-time data from PORTS while traversing Narragansett Bay using the new Navicom Dynamics GyroPilot purchased with OSPAR funds. It can also obtain real-time weather information from the National Weather Service. The new GyroPilot system is one of the most accurate systems at much less the cost. The Navicom system is a situational awareness tool for Pilots, who require an independent mGNSS position for more precise operations or manoeuvres and to augment the information coming from the Pilot Plug. Pilot Plug devices enable pilots and other mariners to connect their own laptop PC or other portable devices to a vessel's Automatic Identification System (AIS). With the Gyro Pilot's ability to wirelessly link to the Pilot's software and charts, the system is an accessible option to upgrade to higher performance, accuracy, and safety for determining the position of a vessel being piloted through the bay, providing sub-meter accuracy necessary for precise navigation in Rhode Island waters. The goal of the program is to provide the greatest degree of safety possible for commercial ship traffic in Narragansett Bay, and the Ports of Providence, and Quonset.

8: TRAINING ACTIVITIES

2-hour: Radiation Portal Monitor Training
36-hour: Newport Folk Festival
36-hour: Newport Jazz Festival
2-hour: RI State Police Academy HazMat Awareness Training*
40-hour: US DOE Radiation Specialist Course
2-hour: SCBA and Level-1 PPE Training
4-hour: CERES Plume Modeling Training
32-hour: NOAA Science of Oil Spills Course
3-hour: HazMat Identification Training
2-hour: Tier II Reporting Requirements for NH and RI
2-hour: RI State Police Academy HazMat Awareness Training*
4-hour: Radiation Safety Lecture & RINSC Reactor Tour
3-hour: URI HazWoper Course SCBA Training Assistance
24-hour: MAHMT HazMat Conference
14-hour: NEEP Environmental Compliance Inspection & Enforcement
3-hour: URI HazWoper Course Demonstration*
8-hour: FEMA Post-Plume Awareness Training
8-hour: EPA HazWoper Refresher Training
3-hour: HazMat Tech Refresher Training
8-hour: TRANSCAER Ammonia Presentation and Exercise
2-hour: Paradigm Pipeline Safety Training
4-hour: Geographic Response Strategy Booming Exercise on the Blackstone River*
12-hour: Galilee Coastal Spill (GRS) Response Training*
8-hour: Silent Thunder Radiological TTX
5-hour: Lithium-Ion & Energy Storage Systems Training
16-hour: ICS-300 Course
16-hour: ICS-400 Course
80-hour: HazMat Technician Training
100-hour: HazMat Team Trainings (sessions every other Tuesday)

* Training conducted by our office for outside agencies.

9: HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM

In June 2002, the Rhode Island General Assembly enacted legislation (RIGL 46-23.1) that established a coastal and estuarine habitat restoration program administered by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). Funding from OSPAR continues to be transferred to CRMC in accordance with RIGL § 46-23.1-3. The financial support is funded through the Rhode Island Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund (CEHRTF). Habitat restoration projects are selected from recommendations by the Technical Advisory Committee and approved by the CRMC. Each year, with approval from the CRMC, the CEHRTF advisory committee allocates up to $225,000 from the OSPAR Fund to habitat restoration projects throughout Rhode Island.

In general, proposals are evaluated based on the following: the type of habitat; the extent of the project's restoration efforts, whether the project has been identified as a priority through any

statewide or regional planning efforts; the potential community benefits, and the capacity of the lead entity to carry out, maintain and monitor the project. These projects should seek to restore or enhance ecological conditions that have been degraded by human impacts in coastal or estuarine habitats such as coastal wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation beds, shellfish beds, vegetated coastal upland and anadromous fish runs. Priority will be placed on those projects that seek to enhance coastal habitats' resiliency to climate change and sea level rise; for example, projects that remove barriers to future wetland migration with sea level rise or that enhance shoreline vegetation where habitat is threatened by increased coastal erosion. Additionally, priority will be placed on projects located within Environmental Justice communities and/or that address Environmental Justice Concerns.

Since the inception of the CEHRTF, CRMC awarded $4.05 million for 147 projects which have leveraged more than $28.78 million in matching funds. In its 22 years, the CEHRTF has helped to restore over 300 acres of Rhode Island habitat. The following short project descriptions are taken from the CRMC website for FY2023/2024 projects. Additional information can be found on the CRMC website at RI CRMC Habitat Restoration.

a. Little Mussachuck Creek Salt Marsh Restoration Project - $18,750 (Barrington)

This project is located at the Little Mussachuck Creek marsh in Barrington, RI. The project received matching funds totaling $7,179 from project partners including the Barrington Land Conservation Trust, RI DEM Mosquito Abatement Coordinator, and Save the Bay. Little Mussachuck Creek marsh is a highly dynamic tidal creek, salt marsh and brackish marsh on the east side of the Providence River. Previous projects were conducted in 1998 and 2004 to restore hydrology, but since then the creek became filled with common reeds which outcompetes native salt marsh vegetation. These reeds also block freshwater flow. Overtime, the area has seen reduced drainage and increased sedimentation. This funded project will restore ecosystem functions by cutting and mulching the reeds, and also developing a maintenance plan to ensure the stabilization and upkeep of the creek. Economic and public benefits from this project include improved recreational opportunities for the public such as fishing and birdwatching. The project will also reduce mosquito breeding habitats and help combat climate change by allowing the marsh to better endure rising sea levels.

b. Removal of the Rodman Mill Dam on the Annaquatucket River - $49,000 (North Kingstown)

This project is located west of the Lafayette Mill Complex off Ten Rod Road in North Kingstown, RI. The project received matching funds totaling $11,075 from project partners including Save the Bay, EA Engineering, the Town of North Kingstown and Bakeford Properties LLC. The removal of the Rodman Mill Dam would restore an acre millpond to a riverine system and open up approximately 2.7 miles of stream habitat for fish passage. It would result in increased river connectivity for aquatic organisms including river herring, improved water quality, and revegetation of forested wetland along the riverbanks. This phase of the project is purely information gathering in nature. Activities planned include a topographic and bathymetric survey, the delineation of the wetland's edge, a dye test of a nearby stormwater pipe to identify

discharge locations, completion of modeling, and the preparation of design plans which would include an artistic rendering. The Rodman Mill Dam is over 150 years old and is a hazardous piece of infrastructure. Its removal would reduce costs of maintenance and greatly improve reproduction of blueback herring and alewives, species that are vital to the health of Narragansett Bay.

c. Supporting Fish Passage at the Pontiac Dam on the Pawtuxet River - $50,000 (Warwick)

This project is located at the lowest downstream barrier to anadromous fish and aquatic organisms on the Pawtuxet River in Warwick, RI. The project received matching funds totaling $5,000 from project partners including the Pawtuxet River Authority and RI DEM Marine Fisheries. Removal of this dam, or restoring fish passage at the site, will provide access to an additional 2.5 river miles and approximately 35 acres of habitat area upstream. There have been two primary studies conducted to assess dam removal, but they still possess data gaps that need to be closed to refine analysis of alternative options. Therefore, this project is threefold: it will (1) confirm the presence of anadromous fish downstream and at the base, or closely downstream, of Pontiac Dam with fisheries surveys and eDNA sampling and prove presence of anadromous fish and their utilization of the Pawtuxet River beyond lower portions near the former Pawtuxet Falls Dam site; (2) ~~)~~ investigate the current bathymetry of the Pontiac Dam Pond, including the depths, quality, and physical characteristics of impounded sediment; and (3) continue coordination efforts with landowners and project partners. This proposed project would

ultimately result in the removal of a deteriorating dam structure and improve water quality in the Pawtuxet River.

d. Breakheart Pond Dam Removal Feasibility Study - $38,798 (Exeter)

This project is located within the Arcadia Management Area in Exeter, RI. The project received matching funds totaling $39,000 from project partners including RI DEM Forestry, RI DEM Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Rhode Island Trout Unlimited (RITU). RITU is conducting preliminary data collection and developing a restoration approach for the eventual removal of the Breakheart Pond Dam. After the dam's removal, RI DEM is planning on developing an educational trail within the drained impoundment that will connect to the existing trail network on site. After this project, the next phase will include collaboration with RI DEM and project partners. The dam has been a barrier to aquatic organisms for over 90 years and its removal would reconnect approximately 4.52 river miles, create over 45 acres of high value wetlands and riparian habitat, and significantly reduce water temperatures. RI DEM has been collecting data for over 20 years documenting the dam's negative effects on water quality and aquatic habitats. The proposed project will address resilience to climate change by removing a deteriorating dam structure and improving water quality.

e. Woonasquatucket River Streambank Stabilization - $50,000 (Providence)

This project is located along San Souci Drive in Providence, RI. The project received matching funds totaling $215,545 from project partners including Providence DPW, PEMA, RI Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Fund, WRWC, United Way of RI, and other funding sources. The project aims to improve streambank stabilization, habitat restoration and revegetation of the Woonasquatucket River. The slumping and erosion of this bank is a concern to the city of Providence. The priority of this project is creating a flood and climate resistant stable streambank that improves habitat for pollinators, aquatic species, and mammals along the river. The river in this area of Providence is channelized due to dense industrial, commercial, and residential development along its banks. As climate change brings higher intensity and more frequent storms, erosion along this bend in the river has become worse over the last ten years. It must be stabilized before it degrades completely. The project will also help assure the success of fish runs which can lead to an increase in breeding populations of birds on the Woonasquatucket. Lastly, this project takes place in and will benefit an environmental justice community. The proposed project takes place in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence in an area identified by the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program as their highest environmental justice priority area.

f. Underwater Video Collection in Support of Eelgrass Restoration - $18,452 (Coastal Waters)

This project is located along south shore coastal ponds and in Narragansett Bay. The project received no matching funds, but RI DEM partnered with the University of Rhode Island. The goal of the underwater video collection is to ultimately aid in the revegetation of seagrass beds and therefore increase the acreage of their habitats in Rhode Island. Eelgrass is a critical marine habitat that provides a multitude of ecosystem services in estuaries and along coastlines throughout Rhode Island, yet it has been in steady decline throughout the State. Seed-based eelgrass restoration offers an alternative that has the potential to significantly increase the spatial and temporal scale of individual eelgrass restoration efforts. This project will support this type of eelgrass restoration efforts by collection of underwater videos several times during times during the growing season (June-September) in order to quantify how much of the eelgrass bed is in-flower and producing seeds.

10: FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS TASK FORCE & PORT OF PROVIDENCE MARINE STRIKE TEAM

For the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2024, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was established between the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA). This MOA was written for the purpose of the Port of Providence Marine Strike Team (PPMST) and the Rhode Island Flammable Liquids Task Force (FLTF). As the administrator of the OSPAR Fund, DEM agrees to provide an annual grant of no more than $172,000 to RIEMA for the purchasing of supplies and maintenance, personnel and training expenses associated with the PPMST and FLTF. In FY2024, the DEM contribution was $162,609.

The PPMST is a waterside asset created for the mitigation of chemical, incendiary, environmental and life safety incidents that occur in the Port of Providence. In the event of an oil spill, the PPMST is capable of deploying boom, serving as a platform for water sampling, and conducting air monitoring. The team consists of one boat each from the Providence, Warwick, East Providence, and Cranston Fire Departments. The OSPAR Fund investment provides for the funding of two trainings per calendar year and the maintenance of the vessels. The ultimate goal of this team is

to better protect the Port of Providence and surrounding waters from environmental and human health impacts.

The FLTF mission is to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure by using available assets to contain, control and extinguish fires or releases and spills involving flammable or combustible liquids or gases, including oil and petroleum products. The FLTF consists of one Williams foam trailer each from the Providence, East Providence, Woonsocket, Johnston, Warwick, and Valley Falls Fire Departments. The OSPAR Fund investment provides funding for two trainings per calendar year and the maintenance of equipment. This funding allows the task force to train members on how to properly operate equipment and ensure that equipment is functioning properly and maintained in a state of readiness for emergency incidents.

11: WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Effective July 1, 2015, amendments to Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 46-12.7-13 authorized DEM to direct the use of up to $250,000 in OSPAR funding annually for environmental monitoring purposes. The Water Quality Management Plan Advisory Committee (WQMPAC) selects the strategic investments.

a. Cooperative Agreement with the United States Geological Survey

As authorized by the WQMPAC, DEM continued its cooperative agreement with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to maintain long-term monitoring programs that collect data on streamflow, groundwater levels, and water quality in Rhode Island's largest rivers. The 2024 OSPAR contribution was $187,500, and the other funding came from the USGS match. Funding from the Rhode Island Water Resources Board also contributed to the jointly negotiated program of activities. During FY2024, pursuant to the combined joint funding agreement, the OSPAR Fund supported the following three monitoring programs:

Streamflow Measurements: USGS operated and maintained 21 streamflow gage stations that provided continuous measurements of streamflow elevations. The streamflow data is made available on a real-time basis via the USGS website. The data are used by multiple agencies for several programs including flood forecasting, drought management, water quality restoration, water management, and permitting.

Groundwater Elevation Measurements: USGS collected monthly groundwater elevation readings from nine observation wells located throughout Rhode Island. Five wells are equipped for continuous measurement. The data can have applicability to drought management, permitting, and water management programs.

Large River Water Quality: USGS continued its monthly water quality sampling program for Rhode Island's three largest rivers. Three stations are located near the mouths of the Blackstone, Pawtuxet, and Pawcatuck Rivers since they are representative of the pollutant loadings from these tributaries into coastal waters. With one exception, five stations were sampled monthly on

the Blackstone River and its tributaries, the Branch River, the Pawtuxet River, and the Pawcatuck River for a range of water quality parameters including nutrients and pathogens. Samples are additionally analyzed quarterly for metals. Due to rising costs, monthly sampling at the Pawcatuck Station was eliminated from the agreement for the months of November, January, and February. The data undergoes federal quality assurance procedures and is made available through the USGS information system – NWIS. It is important for evaluating long-term trends and tracking pollutant loadings into the upper bay from the rivers and is used in various state water programs.

12: OUTLOOK & PROJECTIONS

FY2024 reflected trends consistent with previous fiscal year, most notably a continued decline in the OSPAR Fund closing balance. This year, the Fund decreased by $29,154, a concerning development given the uptick in reported incidents. The Office of Emergency Response remains committed to maintaining a high level of response capability, which necessitates ongoing investment in costly, modern equipment to replace aging or obsolete assets.

As climate change continues to drive environmental challenges—such as more frequent and severe storms—the demand for emergency preparedness and response will only grow. Unfortunately, while expenditures are expected to rise, OSPAR Fund revenues are not projected to increase. Without targeted intervention, this imbalance will likely result in a continued erosion of the Fund's balance in coming fiscal years.

13: CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information regarding this report, activities conducted by the Office of Emergency Response, or the OSPAR Fund, please contact the DEM Emergency Response Administrator, James Ball, at james.ball@dem.ri.gov or (401) 537-4298.