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Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP)
December 5, 2023

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Sound Stories

December 2023



It is hard to believe that 2023 is coming to a close. We have many reasons to celebrate accomplishments and milestones from this past year as APNEP strives to accomplish more *together* as a partnership than any individual organization could achieve alone.

Early this fall, we received news that for the first time in over 20 years, APNEP was included in the North Carolina State budget as a match to federal grant funding for the coming year. This is a significant accomplishment, and we thank our partners for their support! In addition to Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation funding, this will allow our program to increase funding opportunities for supporting impactful projects that improve the health of our estuaries,

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partners to identify issues to address. Needless to say, it is an exciting time for us!

In October and November, we have been thrilled to be engaging with partners and community members in person once again! We joined a large group in Harkers Island for a reconvening of the [Down East Resilience Network](#) to come together 5-years after Hurricane Florence struck. We also joined the Albemarle Commission, N.C. Division of Coastal Management, North Carolina Sea Grant, The Nature Conservancy and local stakeholders to hold a community event for the Scuppernong Water Study at the Eastern 4H Center in Columbia, NC, and over 70+ partners gathered at the College of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City, NC for the Albemarle Algal Bloom Summit led by NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency to discuss harmful algal blooms in the Albemarle Sound, and Chowan and Pasquotank watersheds. We are excited to see all three of these partnerships move forward as we work together to build resiliency through community in order to mitigate the impacts of weather events, flooding and algal blooms on our coastal communities and ecosystems.

As always, we are incredibly thankful for your continued support and engagement in this partnership as we strive to identify, protect, and restore the significant natural resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system we so dearly love.

Sincerely,

Bill Crowell

Executive Director



2023 National Estuary Program Watersheds Grant

Restore America's Estuaries announces the availability of the *2024 National Estuary Program Watersheds Grant Request for Proposals!*

The NEP Watersheds Grant Program is a nationally competitive grants program, funded through the EPA Water and administered by RAE. The program is designed to support projects that address urgent and challenging issues threatening the well-being of coastal and estuarine areas within our estuaries of national significance.

As the local National Estuary Program, applicants will need a letter of acknowledgement from Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP).

Please reach out to Steve Anderson.

An informational webinar is scheduled **December 5, 2023**. Letters of Intent are due by **January 26, 2024**. Learn more by clicking here.

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APNEP in the N.C. State Budget

We are thrilled to announce that for the first time in APNEP's history, we have been included in North Carolina's state budget for 2024! We will be receiving funding from the state as match to our annual National Estuary Program grant funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This is incredible news and will allow for us to offer additional funding opportunities for [engagement and stewardship grants](#) as we release the 2024 requests for proposals, and give the partnership additional funds to join partners in funding actions that fulfill our 5 year Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan which will be updated in 2024.

Stay tuned!

Scuppernong Water Management Study



Click to [explore the Scuppernong River!](#)

The Scuppernong River Basin in the heart of the Albemarle-Pamlico region in eastern North Carolina faces significant water management challenges due to factors such as changing precipitation patterns, manipulated land-use, and increasing water demand. There has been an increasing need to assess how water moves throughout the landscape to develop data driven strategies for alleviating the negative impacts of flooding for residents and businesses in Columbia, Creswell, Cherry, and surrounding communities.

In response to these challenges and the request of the NC Division of Parks and Recreation and other conservation land managers and local governments, APNEP has been leading development of the [the Scuppernong Water Management Study](#) (SWMS) since 2018, serving as a neutral, science-based convenor of a diverse group of stakeholders. The Study is design to address flooding and water management issues in the Scuppernong River Basin which

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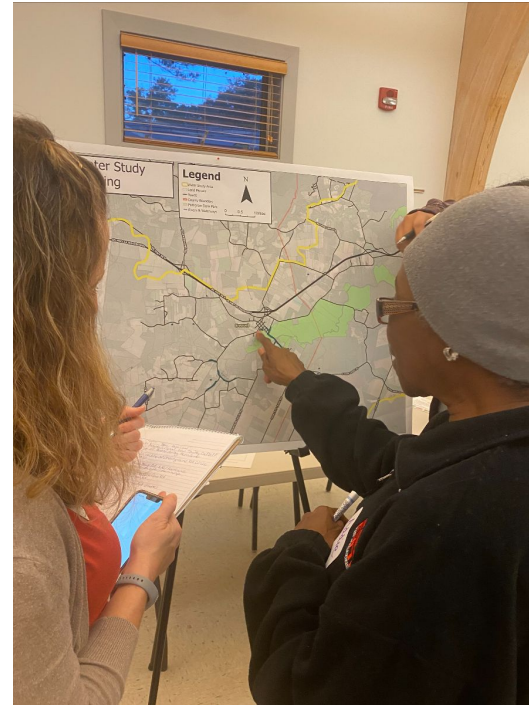
development of a comprehensive plan to address water management issues on both private and public lands inter-connected by an extensive drainage network on the northern portion of the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula.

It is exciting to know that the Albemarle Commission, in collaboration with Washington and Tyrrell Counties, has joined forces with APNEP and various other partners to conduct a comprehensive study on flooding patterns led by [Kris Bass Engineering](#). A grant from [NOAA Digital Coasts](#) has enhanced the project by adding a unique community engagement component to ensure local knowledge shapes the study and produces useful products and results. A steering committee made up of the grant partners, local decision-makers, and other partners who share a common goal of reducing flood risk for residents and surrounding ecosystems advise Study development and community engagement.

This committee and an engagement team make the SWMS a unique approach to hydrology studies because it was started in response to community concerns and has been driven by stakeholder consultations and input throughout the process. Certainly, as required for understanding how water moves through a low elevation landscape, extensive data collection for hydrological modeling is necessary for accurately predicting where water management will be most needed and cost effective.

The Scuppernong Study was also identified in the [Albemarle Region project portfolio](#) produced for the RISE program *discussed further at the bottom of the newsletter*. Our hope is that this study will provide valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers, water resource managers, landowners, and communities who are most impacted by flooding in the northern portion of

communities. We also hope this study will act as a model for how to intertwine thoughtful engagement throughout technical studies from beginning to end, and even inform similar studies elsewhere in the the APNEP region and beyond.



residents' personal experiences with flooding in the Scuppernong River watershed. Over 100 community members participated in a workshop hosted October 23 at the Columbia 4-H Center, rotating through stations with information about the Study and mapping exercises where team members recorded locations and details about areas that flood (and those that remain dry even during significant rain events and storms). The information is currently being summarized and will be utilized to inform the modeling being conducted by Kris Bass Engineering.

A study timeline, [fact sheet](#) and summary can be found on the [project website](#). You can still provide input - the team is collecting information for Phase I through January 2024! A survey is available for those unable to attend the workshop. If you or anyone you know lives in the Scuppernong region, please do share the opportunity to [participate in our mapping exercise and an online survey here](#). You can also print a physical copy from the [project webpage](#) and mail to the SWMS team.

Funding for the Water Management Study is provided by a NCDEQ Water Resources Development Grant. Community engagement is funded through a grant from NOAA Digital Coasts Connects and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association.





In October, the Sierra Club hosted a special outing to highlight the work of the [Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, Inc. \(Official\)](#) to protect and restore the Nottoway River watershed in Virginia. The Nottoway River is in the Chowan watershed which flows into the Albemarle Sound in northeastern North Carolina. The event was led by Beth Roach, Tribal Councilwoman, [Sierra Club](#) National Water Conservation Campaign Manager, and partner who has been leading APNEP's Tribal coastal resilience work. Stacey Feken joined the group, which had the honor of meeting Chief Lynette Allston at the tribal center in Capron, paddled the Nottoway River, and learned about efforts to steward and co-

[ha? à:wę? - Water is Alive #WaterStory](#)

Partner Spotlight

N.C. Office of Recovery and Resiliency

APNEP has been actively planning with our incredible partners like the staff of the NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) [Regions Innovating for Strong Economics](#) and Environmental Services (RISE) program.

RISE is a state-wide resilience program that strives to strengthen N.C. communities, economies, and ecosystems so they are more resilience, or adaptable, to increasing pressures of climate change like the magnitude and frequency of flooding, and increasing and shifting temperature. In 2022, RISE partners including the NC Rural Center and Councils of Government (COGs), did extensive community engagement work to develop COG specific [project portfolios](#) that highlights regionally specific needs identified by community stakeholders as most important for strengthening the resilience in North Carolina.

As APNEP moves from the planning phase to the support and implementation phase of funding projects that meet the specified actions outlined in the APNEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, we are thrilled to be working alongside RISE and the [Resilient Coastal Communities Program](#) (RCCP) to strategically partner with local governments, organization, and

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Stay tuned for more news related to our partnership with NCORR's RISE program! In the meantime, we encourage you to dive into the [Regional Resilience Portfolio Program](#) where RISE highlights needs for each of the NC Council of Governments in their focus areas. For example, you can read the [Climate Resilient Projects for the Albemarle Region](#).



Current Grant Opportunities

[Restore America's Estuaries](#)

[2023 National Estuary Program Watershed Grants](#)

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[205\(j\) Watershed Planning Grant Request for Proposal](#)

[NOAA Marine Debris Removal & Prevention](#)

[NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration
and Coastal Resilience Grants](#)

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