National Estuary Program 2023 Accomplishments: At A Glance

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- **Established in 1987,** the National Estuary Program is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency place-based program that monitors, assesses, restores and protects the health of estuaries of national significance.
- **As directed by Section 320 of the *Clean Water Act,*** the EPA provides 28 local NEPs along the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific coasts and in Puerto Rico with guidance, grant funding and technical assistance to implement their programs.

Photo credit: Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

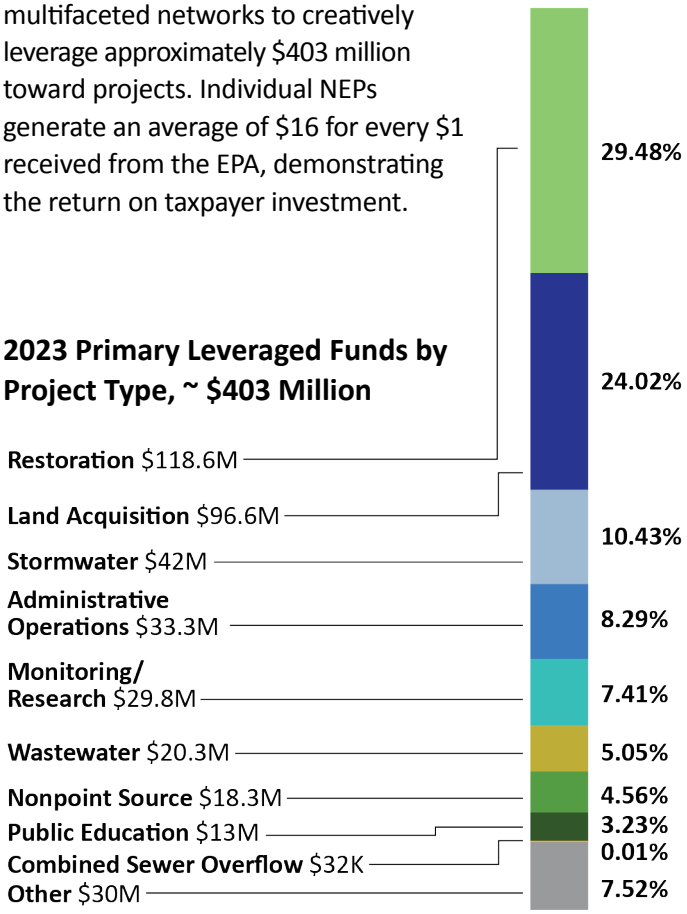
- **Local NEPs work with diverse stakeholders** to develop and implement long-term Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans based on local priorities.

The ***Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*** provides $132 million to the NEP for Fiscal Years 2022-2026. The funding accelerates implementation of CCMPs and builds the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and communities. The EPA awarded nearly **$22 million** in *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* funding in FY 2023 to local NEPs to begin project implementation. **Learn more at: bit.ly/NEP-BIL**

FUNDS LEVERAGED

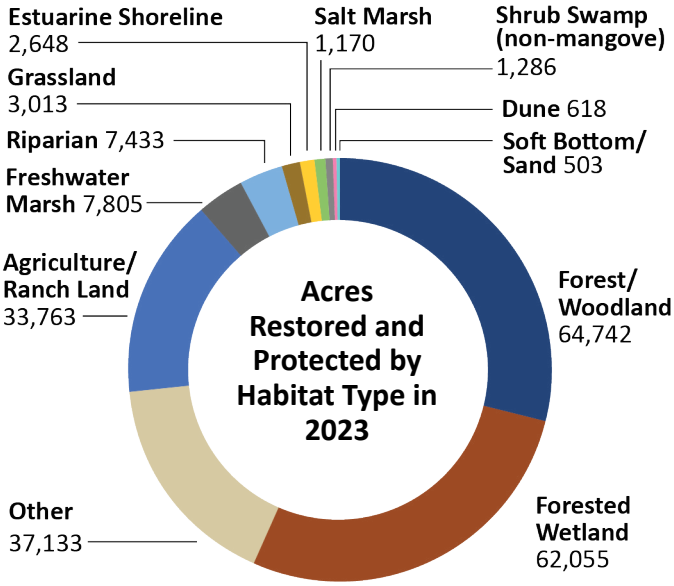
In 2023, the 28 local NEPs used their multifaceted networks to creatively leverage approximately $403 million toward projects. Individual NEPs generate an average of $16 for every $1 received from the EPA, demonstrating the return on taxpayer investment.

2023 Primary Leveraged Funds by Project Type, ~ $403 Million



HABITAT PROTECTION & RESTORATION

In 2023, local NEPs completed 615 habitat projects and protected and restored more than 224,000 acres of habitat — the most acreage reported in a single year since the reporting system was created in 2006!



Habitat-related efforts captured the biggest share of primary leveraged investments in 2023, accounting for over 50% of all investments reported.

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PRIORITY AREAS AND LOCAL NEP EXAMPLES

HABITAT RESTORATION

Local NEPs restore and protect habitats by implementing revegetation and restoration projects and applying nature-based solutions to address water quality problems.

Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program: Through regular monitoring and restoration efforts, 62 acres of kelp forest were restored in the Santa Monica Bay from 2013 - 2023, to enhance habitat for aquatic species and help mitigate the impacts of sea level rise.

AQUATIC CONNECTIVITY

Local NEPs improve or restore flow pathways to increase aquatic connectivity and support healthy ecosystems.

Long Island Sound Study: The study contributed over $2 million to the final demolition of the Strong Pond Dam, completed in September 2023. This opened an additional 10 miles of river habitat for migratory fish such as herring and sea lamprey.

EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Local NEPs assess vulnerabilities, implement adaptive actions and address extreme weather impacts. **Learn more:** bit.ly/NEP-climatereport

HUMAN HEALTH

Local NEPs play an important role in protecting the health and function of estuaries and the humans who depend on them for work, leisure and food.

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program: A new On-Site Sewage Facility Assistance Program is addressing excess nutrients and bacteria caused by failing onsite systems, focusing on inspecting, repairing and replacing 37 OSSFs in underserved communities.

NUTRIENT REDUCTION

Local NEPs implement activities to reduce excess nutrient loads from point and nonpoint sources. **Learn more:** bit.ly/NEP-nutrientreport

RECREATION

Local NEPs help increase the economic value and recreational use of estuaries.

Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program: The program awarded scholarship funding to the New Bedford Sea Lab Marine Science Education Center for 40 financially disadvantaged students to gain coastal recreation and experiential learning opportunities that encourage interest in marine science.

OVERBURDENED AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Local NEPs address estuary and coastal ecosystem access gaps by engaging diverse communities.

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary: In association with the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Delaware River location, a cohort of 16 community leaders were selected to attend the biennial Delaware Estuary Science and Environmental Summit in 2023 to discuss projects to improve environmental public health in their communities and identify collaborative opportunities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Local NEPs use cross-organizational collaborations to strengthen public awareness of estuarine management and health conditions.

San Juan Bay Estuary Partnership: The Partnership is working with the University of Puerto Rico to advance the pre-planning phase of the restoration of the Juan Méndez Creek through a graduate level course focusing on reversing the channelization of tributaries in the estuary.

CAPACITY, FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Key public and private partnerships allow local NEPs to leverage resources.

Puget Sound Partnership: The Partnership's Strategic Funding Team developed the Puget Sound Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool to provide grant-seekers with a centralized source for information about funding opportunities for the region.

For more information about the National Estuary Program, visit www.epa.gov/nep