



Watershed Management Plan for Rhode Island Salt Ponds

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM)

Ninigret Pond and Green Hill Pond, located on the southern coast of Rhode Island, are shallow, coastal micro-tidal lagoons that receive restricted tidal flushing through one narrow man-made breachway between Ninigret Pond and the ocean. Over the years, the quality of these ponds has diminished due to quantified excessive nitrogen loading and bacterial contamination. Bacteria loads come from a variety of sources, including human wastes, stormwater runoff, pet wastes, and wildlife. Nitrogen loading is primarily coming from onsite septic systems and stormwater runoff from residential lawns, agricultural fields, and atmospheric deposition.

Recognizing the need to reverse the trend in declining water quality, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) in association with U.S. Environmental Protections Agency (EPA), Region 1 contracted the Horsley Witten Group, Inc. (HW) to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan to:

- Assess the relative contribution of nitrogen and bacteria sources and quantify the level of loading from current management alternative;
- Define specific implementation activities and best management practices (BMPs) to reduce sources of bacteria and nitrogen to both ponds;
- Work with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and local watershed volunteers to develop consensus on assessment methods, prioritization of pollutant sources, and best approaches for implementation of the watershed management plan;
- Review local and state codes and ordinances to assess the level of current and future effectiveness and make recommendations for targeted code revisions to address the impacts of concern;
- Develop or refine local programs and policies within the watersheds to reduce potential future increases in bacteria and nitrogen loads, including stormwater BMP retrofits and wastewater management alternatives; and
- Develop and apply outreach strategies to build public support for the recommended actions.

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