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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Southern Rhode Island Conservation District Receives \$300,000 Award for Westerly's Main Street Renewal Project**

WESTERLY, Rhode Island, April 15, 2024: The Southern Rhode Island Conservation District (SRICD) was awarded \$300,000 towards the Resilient Riverfront Renewal project in Westerly as part of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Opportunity to Advance Resilience (SOAR) grant program. The SRICD was among five grantees selected across Rhode Island and Southeast Massachusetts, representing \$1.275M in direct investment in disadvantaged communities designed to improve climate resiliency.

According to Gina Fuller, District Manager for SRICD, the award monies will be used to complete design for the streetscape envisioned in the Resilient Riverfront Renewal master plan for Main Street. The project integrates a variety of green infrastructure features along the street and on both town and private properties which will green downtown, reduce street flooding, filter pollutants from stormwater, provide pollinator and wildlife habitat and improve walkability on Main Street.

"This award will allow us to complete the final design of a more resilient and people-friendly Main Street" Fuller stated.

The project will also provide opportunities for community organizations and community members to participate in workforce training and employment for the maintenance of green infrastructure. SRICD will work with the Town, Westerly High School and community groups to develop a "Green Streets" Team to train and work with SRICD in Westerly and across the southern district.

"The state has made a commitment to nature-based solutions to managing stormwater and is working with many municipalities to develop these types of projects, the long-term maintenance is every property owner's concern including the public property owners." Fuller stated. "We will use SOAR funds to develop a team and the tools needed to support the future upkeep of this public investment."

"We are really excited that federal and state funders continue to recognize Westerly's commitment to this project and making Westerly more resilient," said Fuller. "The town of Westerly is gaining regional recognition as a leader in municipal resiliency with this project and their other efforts around Low Impact Development."



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"This project would not be possible without the support of the businesses on Main Street and their willingness to participate in helping the town and state meet their water quality goals for the Pawcatuck River should be commended" acknowledged Fuller. "We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the town and private landowners to complete this transformational project."

"It is incredible to see the positive impacts the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law continues to produce for our communities and neighborhoods," said EPA New England Regional Administrator David W. Cash. "Reinvigorating our communities, especially those that have been disadvantaged for far too long, is a key component of EPA's mission. With this additional funding for our awardees, we continue to work towards restoring ecosystems, replenishing watersheds and our natural lands, and strengthening communities and making them resilient to the volatile changes in climate we face every day."

"I spearheaded the creation of SNEP to bring people together – across communities and state lines – to take a strategic, scientific-based approach to protecting and improving the health of the Bay and our entire coastal watershed," said U.S. Senator Jack Reed.

"Thanks to our Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, almost a million dollars in federal grants from Senator Reed's Southeast New England Program are headed to Rhode Island to harden frontline communities against climate-related threats," said U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. "These investments will help build climate resiliency in disadvantaged neighborhoods, mitigate flooding, and sustain the coastal areas that are so vital to Rhode Island's economy and way of life."

"Rhode Islanders across our state know all too well the devastating impacts of climate change on their lives and livelihoods, and we must treat this issue with the urgency it deserves," said U.S. Representative Seth Magaziner. "This starts with investing in climate solutions that will reduce flooding, ensure clean water, address climate vulnerabilities, and protect our most vulnerable residents."

"These grant awards are a testament to the role of Rhode Island as a leader not only in recognizing the disproportionate climate risks facing our disadvantaged communities, but also as a leader in preparing for and mitigating those risks using methods that are innovative and sustainable" said U.S. Congressman Gabe Amo. "I am grateful for the over \$1.2 million in federal funds being provided by the Environmental Protection Agency's Southeast New England Program network that will directly impact and improve the lives of Rhode Islanders. I look forward to the work ahead."

The Westerly's Resilient Riverfront Renewal project is managed by the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District in collaboration with the Town of Westerly. More information about the project can be found here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/89c64c24ae3146fdaeca8067b6c0e3f7>.

The Southern Rhode Island Conservation District (SRICD) promotes and achieves a healthy environment and sustainable use of natural resources for the people of Kent and Washington Counties and the State of Rhode Island, now and for the future, by coordinating partners to provide technical, educational and financial resources. ###