



Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund

OVERVIEW

The Long Island Sound is an estuary located between Connecticut and New York. It is one of the most densely populated estuaries in the United States, with 9 million people residing in the watershed. According to research conducted by the Long Island Sound Study (LISS), the Sound serves as an integral part of the regional economy, generating billions annually to the regional economy via boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and beachgoing. The goals of the program are: improving water quality and reducing contaminant and nutrient loads, restoring and protecting habitat and wildlife, supporting sustainable and resilient communities, and incorporating sound science and inclusive management. It is a critical priority to restore and protect the Sound, so it can continue to provide a diverse ecosystem, commercial opportunities, climate resiliency, and recreational access to all people.

The Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) is a partnership between Restore America's Estuaries, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Long Island Sound Study (LISS). The purpose of LISCIF is to provide technical and financial assistance to environmentally distressed communities to address environmental health and to improve the quality and accessibility of the Long Island Sound. Technical assistance will be provided through LISCIF regardless of submitting a proposal.

The first round of LISCIF will award up to \$1,500,000 in competitive funding to projects in the Long Island Sound region, in New York and Connecticut. The following organizations have been selected for the first round of funding with grant sizes ranging up to \$100,000.

RAE CONTACTS

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ABOUT RAE

Founded in 1995, Restore America's Estuaries is dedicated to the protection and restoration of bays and estuaries as essential resources for our nation. As the leader of a national alliance, we provide a unified voice for coastal conservation in Washington D.C. and advance the science and practice of habitat restoration through on-the-ground projects, groundbreaking science, high-level meetings, and our biennial National Coastal and Estuarine Summit.

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CONNECTICUT

Improving Youth and Community Resilience Capacity Through Regenerative Design (CT)

Grantee: Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed

Grant Amount: \$99,176.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

The Alliance includes four towns and two Tribal Nations in the Mystic River Watershed of Long Island Sound (LIS). We are building community resilience using regenerative design workshops to create a community-led Watershed Resilience Action Plan (WRAP). We will conduct a series of 10 workshops to engage our communities to address the interlocking challenges we face, such as housing needs vs. environmental needs or food security vs. biodiversity loss. These workshops use the best available science (physical and social) and regenerative community co-design thinking (problem-solving) to explore problems and craft solutions to them. The workshops, or “design circles” will begin with youth (first five) and expand to become multi-generational when young people then invite adult design experts, town commissioners, and staff in collaborative solution-seeking (second five).

Incorporated directly into our Mystic River Watershed Resilience Action Plan, our main project outcome will list projects including nature-based interventions to improve LIS and watershed ecological health and climate resilience. Measurable community resilience outcomes include strong coalitions centering Native and regional youth leadership, increasing and diverse participation in local decision-making and advocacy for LIS, deeper and more widespread knowledge about LIS coastal and watershed ecosystems, beneficial social and ecological behaviors, and the collective agency to use sound science to plan and support nature-based, regenerative solutions.

Connecticut Shell Recovery and Shellfish Restoration Collaborative (CT)

Grantee: Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration Foundation, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$99,880.00

CCMP Theme: Thriving and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife. Projects that help to improve water quality.

Recover and recycle shells from restaurants, festivals, and seafood businesses and create a sustainable supply of shells used for shellfish restoration work in Long Island Sound and the preservation of historical shellfish beds and reefs in Bridgeport, Stratford, and Branford, Connecticut. A collaboration of non-governmental organizations with the support of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAG) Bureau of Aquaculture and Laboratory will recover and plant approximately 250,000 pounds (5000 bushels) of shells. The project will significantly impact the sustainability and resilience of historical shellfish beds in Long Island Sound and address the strategies of the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan as outlined in this proposal. Oyster restoration

projects require large quantities of shells to ensure success. The more shells we can divert from landfills and recycle, the more restoration work we can facilitate. Growing more oysters and oyster reefs will improve water quality, provide habitat for other marine species, and stabilize shorelines, which ultimately benefits shoreline communities and residents.

Yellow Mill Youth Ambassador Program - Waterfront Green Space Revitalization and Engagement (CT)

Grantee: Groundwork Bridgeport, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$97,633.43

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The Yellow Mill Youth Ambassador Program is part of an ongoing initiative led by the Trust for Public Land, Groundwork Bridgeport, and the City of Bridgeport. It aims to enhance sustainability and resilience along the lower Yellow Mill River, a tidal estuary of the Long Island Sound in Bridgeport, CT. The focus will be redeveloping city-owned waterfront sites into public green spaces and establishing a waterfront pathway as outlined in the Bridgeport Waterfront Masterplan (2017).

The program funding will support student stipends for community outreach, education, and placemaking initiatives. The Youth Ambassador program will engage students to conduct a comprehensive community outreach and educational campaign, emphasizing coastal resiliency and restored waterfront access. This approach will empower the community with knowledge and instill a sense of environmental stewardship. Students will collect community feedback to inform placemaking activities such as plantings, educational signage, and waterfront events, as prioritized by the community, to activate the project sites. The outcome will be vibrant, nature-filled public spaces that promote inclusivity and strengthen the community's bond with the environment.

Housatonic River Watershed Connections: Building Community around Watershed Restoration (CT)

Grantee: Housatonic Valley Association

Grant Amount: \$99,998.50

CCMP Theme: Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds; Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The Housatonic Valley Association's (HVA) Connections program connects young people from underserved watershed communities with environmental restoration projects from approved watershed-based plans to provide hands-on environmental education, teach about green careers, provide job skills training, and raise awareness of their home watershed. Funding from LISCIF will support the ongoing Still River Connections program begun in 2016 and expand the program into the Ten Mile River watershed in Dutchess County, NY. Connections are built on strong partnerships between area schools, youth service non-profits, watershed municipalities, and conservation groups working to implement completed Watershed Plans. Connections is a year-long program that includes an in-school curriculum that sets the stage for summer projects aimed at reducing pollution, restoring habitat, and improving river-oriented recreational opportunities. Connections is an offshoot of a community-based watershed planning effort that began in 2014, when stakeholders came together as the Still River Partners (SRP) in Connecticut, and the Ten Mile River Collaborative in New York, to guide the development and implementation of a nine-element watershed-based management plan for the Still and Ten Mile Rivers respectively.

Bridgeport Watershed-Lab (CT)

Grantee: Mill River Wetland Committee

Grant Amount: \$26,987.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Fifth-grade students in Bridgeport's historically overburdened and underserved East Side neighborhood will participate in Mill River Wetland Committee's Watershed Unit in the fall of 2024. They will then partner with peers, who also participate in the Watershed study trip and live adjacent to the Long Island Sound Estuary, in spring of 2025 to exchange their own citizen science findings and personal learning experiences surrounding urban water

pollution and conservation practices where they live. This opportunity will connect diverse populations using a shared watershed preservation model.

Examining the unique environmental challenges facing the Sound will promote integrated problem solving and collaborative research study. Introducing same-age peers in unknown geographic proximity will motivate students to discover the regional waterways that connect them using maps, postcards, digital pen pal technology and zoom software. This project builds an aquatic based relationship of interdependent research study at an age when students are ready to use the skills taught in younger grades. Students will learn how their actions on and near their local waterways and wetlands can affect the health of the watershed and the Sound in both positive and negative ways.

Green & Blue Learning Lab: Community-led GSI and biological monitoring on the Byram River (CT/NY)

Grantee: Save the Sound, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$99,922.27

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Community-based science projects. Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship. Save the Sound will partner with the Youth Bureau of the Village of Port Chester, NY to lead a pilot Green & Blue Learning Lab for high school students. This program will foster public understanding and environmental stewardship via activities funded through this grant, including: the installation of small-scale green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and native plantings at the William James Memorial Gateway Park, adjacent to the Byram River; and macroinvertebrate monitoring in the freshwater portion of the Byram River in Connecticut as part of CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (CT DEEP) Riffle Bioassessment by Volunteers (RBV) program. Students will share their work at a Village of Port Chester public meeting. Municipal leaders will assume management of the site, which will continue to be a resource for constituents, offering increased access to green and blue spaces and opportunities for further skill-building through community science. Following this pilot, Save the Sound will seek additional funding sources to replicate this Green & Blue Learning Lab annually in partnership with community groups across the Long Island Sound Watershed. By nurturing awareness and skill-building through small-scale improvements like increased biodiversity and the natural filtration of polluted runoff, Save the Sound will equip a generation of environmental stewards, amplifying the forward impact of this program.

Enhancing Awareness of Green Infrastructure Benefits in Norwalk Neighborhoods (CT)

Grantee: Southwest Conservation District

Grant Amount: \$32,172.36

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

This project will evaluate areas of Norwalk that could benefit from distribution of outreach materials and installation of green infrastructure projects. Based on the results of these studies and residential, community-based outreach efforts, we will create and share educational resources about green infrastructure and relevant LID/BMP strategies. We will identify neighborhoods near the Norwalk River where this work would have the most impact, including the consideration of factors such as impervious cover, elevated pollutant or nutrient results from pre-existing monitoring data and socioeconomic needs. Examples include installing residential rain gardens and developing concept plans for a pocket park on municipal property.

This project intends to develop a comprehensive list of LID and green infrastructure needs in neighborhoods within environmentally distressed communities of the Norwalk River Watershed, in the City of Norwalk specifically, so we can create a series of recommendations and concept plans to help address issues of water quality impairment and provide relief and assistance within the distressed populations with whom we work. This project will include the installation of a series of smaller residential rain gardens on the property of local homeowners. The number and location of these will be determined by receptive property owners who are contacted through the outreach portion of this proposal.

A Resilient Bronx River Community for Long Island Sound (NY)

Grantee: Bronx River Alliance, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$48,951.00

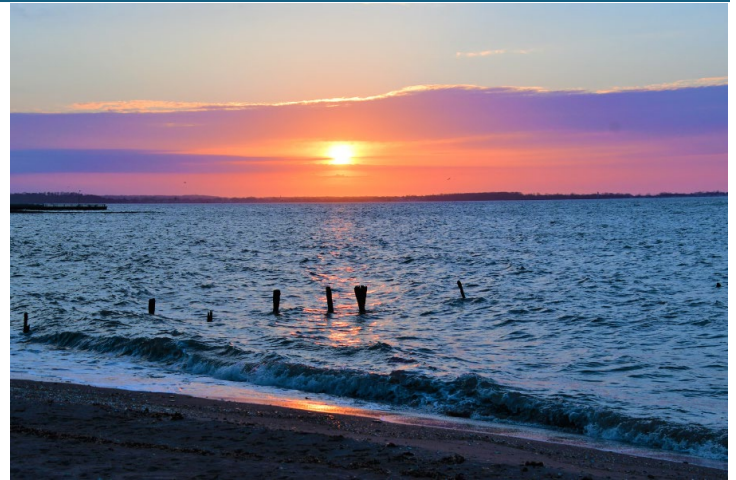
CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The Bronx River Alliance seeks funding to support the active involvement and education of the diverse and vibrant Bronx River Community in advocating for a thriving Long Island Sound (LIS). Our approach involves organizing captivating public stewardship events, offering accessible and dynamic educational programs, and utilizing creative storytelling through social media platforms centered around the Long Island Sound.

Our work takes place at an erstwhile derelict site that was once a concrete factory. Thanks to years of community organizing, the site has been transformed into a thriving beloved community park, known as Concrete Plant Park, home to NYC's only public edible food forest, the Bronx River Foodway. This park has not only provided solace to local residents but has also become a sanctuary for coastal / migratory bird species such as cormorants, and insects like butterflies and bees that have reignited Bronxites' connection to land.

Through this project, we aim to educate the over 200+ community members about the importance of these vital greenspaces, engage them in stewardship activities, and motivate regular community members to protect and advocate for this and other similar spaces along the Bronx River, which feeds into the Long Island Sound.



Future Stewards of the Sound (NY)

Grantee: Citizens Campaign Fund for the Environment

Grant Amount: \$65,003.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

CCFE, the Waterfront Center, and Uniondale High School will partner in a hands-on innovative project, "Future Stewards of the Sound" where Uniondale High School Students will connect global and local impacts to the Long Island Sound. Uniondale High School is in a designated disadvantaged community. The total minority enrollment is 99%, where 62% of the students are economically disadvantaged. Despite being only 11 miles from the Long Island Sound, the vast majority of Uniondale students have never been to this important water body or any coastal waterway. This program will break down barriers to allow access to the Sound, teach them about the marine environment, and this important program will provide a framework for students to become more involved in protection and restoration of the Sound to become Future Stewards of the Sound. In addition, two high school students will be eligible for a paid summer internship focused on the Sound!

The New Rochelle Coastal Eco-Ambassadors (NY)

Grantee: The Energy Justice Law and Policy Center

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The New Rochelle Coastal Eco-Ambassadors seeks to address the urgent need for youth empowerment and environmental education in an environmentally distressed community located on Long Island Sound. This summer program provides summer employment for youth ages 14-18 and paid internships for interns. The youth will gain place-based environmental education, leadership opportunities, training in environmental science and restoration methods, networking with community organizations, training in waterfront and watercraft safety and get to experience the joy of exploring Long Island Sound. The New Rochelle Eco-Ambassadors are partnered with organizations in New Rochelle that provide additional enrichment and outreach opportunities. The coordinators of the New Rochelle Eco-Ambassadors are veteran teachers in the CSDNR and leaders of the school district-based

Green Schools Committee. The LISCIF funding would expand the program to include field equipment and opportunities, curriculum development for youth participants and interns and opportunities to expand the summer programming to more students and teachers in New Rochelle during the school year through the Green Schools Committee. This project builds capacity for the establishment of a permanent coastal educational center focused on coastal resilience initiatives. This will be a hub for continuous stewardship and monitoring of the local environment.

Student Environmental Ambassadors - Don't Strain Your Drain (NY)

Grantee: Environmental Leaders of Color ELOC

Grant Amount: \$99,999.90

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

ELOC hosts the Student Summer Energy & Environmental Program for Teens in socially and economically vulnerable communities in Westchester County. With LISCIF grant funding, ELOC will expand the program to a year-round education and community-involvement program in Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, and Port Chester, the Student Environmental Ambassador (SEA) program. We will teach students about environmental issues and share knowledge within marginalized communities affected by environmental distress and health impacts.

2024's theme is "Don't Strain Your Drain!", focusing on the impacts of improper waste disposal on the Long Island Sound (LIS) watershed. ELOC will identify 15 student ambassadors from our summer program graduates. While learning more about the environmental impacts of waste, students will launch community awareness campaigns about substances harmful to drains and their proper disposal. The substances can cause damage to private and public sewer systems eventually contaminating the LIS watershed. We will identify local sites (such as fire stations, places of worship, libraries, local businesses, etc.) to collect and dispose of residential cooking oil and hazardous substances.

Building a Network of Rain Garden Stewards in Flushing Waterways (NY)

Grantee: Guardians of Flushing Bay

Grant Amount: \$99,993.08

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

In response to the need for an improved and community-based approach to GI rain garden maintenance, GoFB proposes to 1. build our internal capacity for rain garden maintenance by hiring a Bilingual (English/Spanish) Stewardship Organizer, 2. Continue to grow our partnership with a middle school in Corona, Queens to co-steward ten rain gardens and 3. develop a Program Strategy Framework to scale up our stewardship program based on lessons learned from the partnership in Corona. To ensure successful engagement in Corona, we will translate all materials (online and print) into English and Spanish. Our proposed work will be achieved in close coordination with the Raingarden Action in Neighborhoods (RAIN) Coalition, of which GoFB is a member, and Corona Arts and Sciences Academy, a Title 1 public middle school in Corona, Queens.

Climate Resiliency and FloodSafe Swim Initiative (NY)

Grantee: Hispanic Resource Center of Larchmont Mamaroneck Inc. (Community Resource Center)

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

Implementation of water safety and swimming lessons "survival skills" to 108 residents who live in flood prone areas of our Sound Shore community. Introducing a swim program for an underserved community prone to flooding requires careful planning to ensure safety, accessibility, and meaningful engagement. CRC will provide ongoing water education through classes and forums. We will provide a demonstration of lifesaving techniques and flotation device use. Basic swimming skills taught by certified instructors through a 12-week swim program engaging all ages from caregiver and me (under 5 years of age) to youth and adult individuals. Classes on water safety basics, including drowning prevention, recognizing flood hazards, and emergency procedures. Staff will use

maps and walks to point out areas of caution. We will provide demonstrations of life-saving techniques and flotation device use. Flood Preparedness and Survival Skills Discussion, including evacuation plans and emergency supplies. Simulation exercises on safely navigating floodwaters, including currents and debris. Funding will secure an indoor pool facility. CRC will provide appropriate water safety equipment and swim gear, including life jackets, goggles, and swim caps. Ensure the availability of first aid kits and emergency response equipment at all locations.

Identifying Industrial Pollution Along the Hutchinson River and Its Community Impact (NY)

Grantee: Hutchinson River Restoration Project

Grant Amount: \$83,020.65

CCMP Theme: Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds

LISCIF Program Priority: Planning and design that set the stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects, and resilience projects.

The Hutchinson River is a highly polluted tributary to the Eastchester Bay at the mouth of the Long Island Sound. Several agencies monitor the bacterial load in the river; however, there is little information about the point source pollution or quantity of industrial chemicals and minerals from runoff into the river. There are industrial and commercial companies along the river such as scrap metal recycling, asphalt production, bus depots, auto body shops, shopping centers, etc. To further the goals of creating a clean healthy waterway and shoreline, we are proposing a preliminary study to look for the probable harmful contaminants along the shoreline and water near the industrial settings to set the stage for further study and mitigation planning. We will take water and soil samples at specific locations and time frames and send those samples to a private laboratory to be analyzed and to determine the presence of harmful chemical contaminants. Another important aspect to this project is to engage the communities that live alongside the Hutchinson River in the project's objectives and communicate the results of this preliminary study to the appropriate stakeholders. HRRP will reach out to the public to increase their knowledge about industrial pollution in the river and help to create the appropriate mitigation and stewardship of the river.

Hunts Point Waterfront Shuttle (NY)

Grantee: THE POINT Community Development Corporation

Grant Amount: \$99,854.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Establish a free shuttle service that will transport residents of Hunts Point to three waterfront parks that are currently inaccessible because of their location on the outskirts of the industrial area of the neighborhood. Our aim is to increase access of Hunts Point residents to the Long Island Sound and inspire stewardship of the waterways through public programming and workshops held at the parks. The shuttle vehicles will be electric – an important factor for us, given our location in a neighborhood with an overabundance of vehicle emissions. Our goal is to serve 150 individuals each weekend, for a total of 2,400 visits to the waterfront that we'd facilitate over the course of the grant period.

We will create public programming around stewardship of the watershed to be held at the parks on the shuttle weekends, including: -Four environmental stewardship workshops led by students of the Marine Environmental Science program at SUNY Maritime College in The Bronx; - Two waterfront cleanup days; - Four performances to draw people to the parks and which will include an appeal around waterfront stewardship and tabling with information about keeping our waterways clean; - Four workshops in recreational birding and/or fishing, led by NYC clubs/groups dedicated to that purpose (we are in the process of identifying groups).

Environmental Science and Youth Development Program (NY)

Grantee: Rocking the Boat, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$54,848.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Community-based science projects. Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship. Rocking the Boat's Environmental Science and Youth Development Program is an intensive educational and experiential program serving 48 high school students annually in the Bronx. Over their four years of high school, a year-round curriculum invests them in the natural resources of their neighborhoods with hands-on study of the Bronx River in student-built rowboats. They learn the tools and methods to carry out conservation projects, share valuable knowledge and environmental awareness with their community, and are prepared for options to pursue study and work in environmental fields after high school. The organization closely partners with neighborhood schools and community-based organizations to recruit participants, and benefits from word of mouth, a robust alumni community, and legacy family enrollments. Joining as freshmen or sophomores, students advance through progressive levels of skill and responsibility. Participants who have reached their junior and senior years in high school and have demonstrated a level of proficiency in their technical track enter the Job Skills Program, tackling more complex projects and becoming responsible for sharing what they have learned and helping lead environmental and outdoor activities for the wider community.

Long Island Sound Oyster Shell Recovery Expansion Project (NY)

Grantee: Seatuck Environmental Association, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$86,933.66

CCMP Theme: Thriving and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife.

Increase collection of local oyster shell resources in Nassau and Suffolk Counties for use in shellfish restoration and shoreline protection projects in Long Island Sound. The project will include working with the Town of Huntington and Port Jefferson Village (in the Town of Brookhaven) to improve and expand their fledgling oyster shell collection initiatives, and with the Town of North Hempstead to initiate a sustainable shell collection program. Seatuck, the coordinator of the island-wide Half Shells for Habitat (H4H) shell recovery collective, will provide scientific, organizational, technical and outreach expertise and support. Seatuck will also maintain a system for tracking shell collection efforts to ensure compliance with New York State guidance and to safeguard water quality and shellfish resources.

Kiana: An urban riparian forest preservation and restoration project, Phase 1 Assessment (NY)

Grantee: Westchester Land Trust

Grant Amount: \$99,273.00

CCMP Theme: Clean Water and Healthy Watersheds

LISCIF Program Priority: Restoring habitat within the important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LISS

Through conversations with mainly BIPOC residents, Westchester Land Trust learned of a 2.85-acre urban riparian forest lot in Mount Vernon owned by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT). The lot is bounded by the Hutchinson River, Metro-North Railroad, and residential homes.

The land is not managed for ecological purposes or for public access. There is an opportunity for local organizations to partner to protect the land for the purpose of centering both western and indigenous ecological restoration practices, and to reconnect a predominantly BIPOC community to nature.

We respectfully request funding to complete phase one of a four-phase project (1. Assessment; 2. Community-Driven Design; 3. Restoration and Public Access Implementation; 4. Community Stewardship and Land Protection). Phase 1 includes site investigation and assessment: conducting physical, environmental, historical, and cultural assessments of the parcel; coalition building; and conducting community workshops. These assessments will guide a sound strategy for long-term protection, restoration, and stewardship. The results of the assessments will be shared with the community. Based on the outcomes of Phase I, the community will lead Phases 2–4, the restoration design, preservation, and stewardship of the project. Once Phase 1 is completed, we will pursue funding for Phases 2, 3, and 4.