

January 19, 2024, 10am-12pm

Zoom https://clarku.zoom.us/j/91977706024 Call: 646-876-9923 Meeting ID: 919 7770 6024

### Attendees:

Meenakshi Jani, Courtney Schmidt, Hemant, Donna Williams, Sarah Bower, Arthur Plitt, Jamuna Prajapati, Stefanie Covino, Bill Napolitano, Kassandra Florez, Patti McAlpine, Heidi Ricci, Amanda Coffuire, Allison Hamel, Katie Liming, Caleigh McLaren, Sherine Hamade, Carrie Banks, John Marsland, Kate McPherson, Nick Cohen, Dana Bauer, Sarah Plutnicki, Judy Rondeau, Eleah Caseau, Ted Beauvais, Dr. Adam Menard, Kate Abbott, Hillary King, Deb Cary

### **Recording Available:**

https://clarku.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=302e6450-bcfc-4be9-9ea4-b0fc0110d6da&start=0

#### **Presentations:**

<u>Heidi Ricci</u>, Director of Policy at Mass Audubon speaking about the <u>Growing Solar, Protecting Nature</u> report, and information on the <u>proposed regulation changes from DEP</u> on wetlands resilience, waterways resilience (Ch. 91), and 401 WQ Certification, plus the long-anticipated new Stormwater Manual!

### **Growing Solar, Protecting Nature:**

- Team: Mass Audubon, Harvard Forest, & Evolved Energy Research
- Guiding Research Question: Is there a way to get to the MA state clean energy goals without deforestation?
- Three scenarios:
  - Current Siting Scenario: Solar can be put anywhere that is technically & legally viable
  - Protecting Nature Mid-Impact Scenario: Protects prime farmland, essential biodiversity/ habitat, highest forest carbon sites, & lands most valuable for climate resilience
  - Protecting Nature Low-Impact Scenario: Same as Mid-Impact plus ~99% forests, floodplains and hurricane zones, open space with limited protection, historic places
- MA has significant solar potential on rooftops and parking lots (20.6GW rooftop/ 1.1 GW canopy solar)
- Rooftops don't always work for solar due to building's age, roof slope, or its construction
- Ran economic modeling and ID'ed significant forest carbon would be lost if things continue as is
- When the true value of carbon removal by forests is included, Protecting Nature is the lowest cost pathway
- NBEP is looking at solar trends across the Narragansett Bay Region also

#### Proposed Regulation Changes from DEP:

- Updating to NOAA 2014 atlas precipitation data
- Culverts and infrastructure will be sized at least to meet standards with this new data
- Updating stormwater manual
- All development designs require green infrastructure (GI)/low impact development (LID)
- This is the first take; there will be a 2.0 package proposed to update later
- Mass Audubon is asking people to look at this and write comments supporting larger picture that DEP has.
  - DEP will get a lot of negative comments from the development community, so it's important that the environmental/stormwater management community document their support to DEP.
  - Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 PM on March 1, 2024. The Department encourages
    electronic submission by email to <a href="mailto:dep.wetlands@mass.gov">dep.wetlands@mass.gov</a>; and must include "Wetlands-401 Resilience
    Comments" in the subject line.



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 MassRivers will be convening a group to talk about pros and cons of these regulations and collaborate on Comments. To join the group, contact Katharine Lange, Policy Director - <u>katharinelange@massriversalliance.org</u>

### **Subgroup Updates:**

- Bike/greenway
  - CMRPC & <u>MassBike</u> hosting a Basic Bike Education Workshop: 2/15/24, 6:30-7:30pm at Jacob Edwards Library (236 Main St, Southbridge, MA, 01550)
- University work
  - The Collab is hiring a new grad student intern, Jamuna Prajapati, this spring semester focusing on the costs/benefits of hydropower, with a focus on MA and RI, with the goal of a white paper and public outreach materials as deliverables.
- Fish passage
  - We haven't heard back yet whether RIDEM has received their NOAA grant, but will keep everyone posted. We are also waiting to schedule additional Advisory Committee meetings.
  - o Join us at the Fish Parade on 5/19/24! Help us advocate for migratory fish passage in the Blackstone.
- Water quality
  - Check out the "Dam Busters" webinar series on dam removal. Register for the webinars (the next is 2/7/24 on assessing local impacts) and view past recorded webinars here.
  - Worcester has had additional CSO events (listed in million gallons, or MG):

Date	Treated (in	Untreated (in
	millions of gallons)	millions of gallons)
12/18/23	42.7	23.8
1/10/24	61.6	10.8
1/13/24	25.8	0

 American Rivers has created a Community of Practice on Dam Removal. This national working group will share resources and expertise to expand and accelerate the practice of dam removal. Learn more and sign up here.

## Partner Updates:

 Stormwater Innovation Center: The 2023 Stormwater Innovation Center (SIC) Annual Report is out now! The Stormwater Innovation Center shares effective strategies and valuable insights about stormwater management and green infrastructure with municipalities, non-profits, and stormwater professionals throughout Rhode Island and Southeast New England.

#### • CMRPC:

- Mass Trails Youth Trail Stewardship Program in Partnership with Mass Audubon has concluded. The program will be a part of the Trail Accessibility and Inclusion Toolkit, which allows landowners to assess trails for accessibility and inclusion standards that go beyond the standards laid out in ADA regulations. The toolkit is being finalized this month.
- CMRPC and the Regional Environmental Council (REC) are looking to research properties in Worcester with a potential for urban agriculture, particularly food forests. For more information on this project contact Sam Carter at <a href="mailto:scarter@cmrpc.org">scarter@cmrpc.org</a>



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- The <u>Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)</u> is a federally mandated requirement applicable to all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and is now underway. It serves as a prioritized inventory of federal-aid transportation investments within an MPO's planning area for the upcoming five federal fiscal years 2025 2029. For any inquires related to the TIP, please contact Kevin Krasnecky at, kkrasnecky@cmrpc.org.
- Congratulations to CMRPC's transportation team for successfully securing \$600,000 in state and federal funding for their Central Mass <u>Safe Streets for All</u> Action Plan and Worcester Main South Demonstration Project through the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program.
- CMRPC & <u>MassBike</u> are collaborating on bike safety and education and have several events coming up; contact Nathan Lewis for more info at <u>nlewis@cmrpc.org</u>.
  - Learn more at tabling session: 2/14/24, 10am-2pm at Worcester State University
     Wellness Expo (486 Chandler St, Worcester, MA, 01602)
  - Basic Bike Education Workshop: 2/15/24, 6:30-7:30pm at Jacob Edwards Library (236 Main St, Southbridge, MA, 01550)
  - Priority Climate Action Plan for the Greater Worcester Region as part of the Climate
     Pollution Reland duction Grant Upcoming meeting, 1/18 at WPI or online.
- **Restore America's Estuaries:** RAE's Inclusive Coasts Community of Practice groups are back at the end of January! Topics are specific for community engagement professionals, program managers, and restoration professionals. Register here.
- Worcester Tech: Environmental Science Teachers at Worcester Technical High School are looking for co-op opportunities for their junior and senior students. Students work for 30 hours a week, every other week. If any environmental organizations are interested, please contact Becky Kruzel, Department Head of Environmental Science and Technology (<a href="mailto:kruzelb@worcesterschools.net">kruzelb@worcesterschools.net</a>), and Heather Courtney, Co-Operative Education/ Employment Coordinator (courtneyh@worcesterschools.net).
- Blackstone River Coalition: Emily Dart will take over Mike Sperry's water quality monitoring duties in the midreach of the Blackstone
- MA DER: DER's Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program is anticipates posting the next Request for Responses (RFR) in February. DER will be holding a Grant Briefing next Tuesday, January 23rd at 1pm for interested applicants.
  - o You can find more information <u>here</u> and register for DER's Grant Briefing <u>here</u>.

#### MassDEP:

- MassDEP Watershed Planning Program Pre-604(b) and 319 RFP Informational meeting, Wed. Jan 24th, 930-1130 am: Registration link: <a href="https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUkcOGvqTMuHtb48-MrkXTqc5iYJ4-9WPH0">https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUkcOGvqTMuHtb48-MrkXTqc5iYJ4-9WPH0</a> Website; scroll down to Section 319 Nonpoint Source Competitive Grants Program: <a href="https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality">https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality</a>
- DEP just released their request for summer seasonals (<u>Engineer Aide 1 23000D3O</u>) in the
   Watershed Planning Program. The positions begin in early May and extend through the end of



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September. First consideration will be given to those applicants that apply within the first 14 days of the posting date (1/17/24).

#### Friends of the Blackstone:

Hired a new (first!) Executive Director, Bruce Curliss, starting 2/1/24! Congratulations, Bruce!

### **Next meetings**

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**February 16, 2024:** Dr. John Rogan and Dr. Deborah Martin from the HERO program at Clark University **March 15, 2024:** Jamuna Prajapati, the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Hydropower Intern will present the

findings of her research.

April 19, 2024: TBD

## Legislative/Policy Updates:

- MassDEP has published proposed updates to:
  - Wetlands Resilience 1.0 DRAFT regulations (310 CMR 10.00)
  - 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) regulations (314 CMR 9.00)
  - Waterways (Chapter 91) Resilience 1.0 Draft Regulations (310 CMR 9.00)

Review a summary of the proposed changes from MACC <u>here</u>. Comments are due March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. MACC will also hold Lunch & Learn Information Sessions in January or February 2024 to discuss the changes. The following virtual information sessions and virtual public hearings from MassDEP are available for those interested: Virtual Information Sessions on:

- o Thursday January 18, 2024, 1:00 PM. Register here
- o Thursday, January 18, 2024, 6:00 PM. Register here
- o Thursday, January 23, 2024, 1:00 PM. Register here

### Virtual Public Hearings:

- o Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 1:00 PM. Register here
- o Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 6:00 PM. Register here
- o Thursday, February 1, 2024, 1:00 PM. Register here
- **RIDEM** signed into law the <u>Plastic Waste Reduction Act</u> in 2023, which is now come into effect as of 1/1/2024. This was designed to reduce the use of plastic checkout bags and retail sales establishments are now prohibited from making available any single-use plastic checkout bag or any paper checkout bag that is not a recyclable paper bag or a paper carryout bag at restaurants.

### Tools You Can Use! Tools and Resources

- 2023 Stormwater Innovation Center (SIC) Annual Report: The Stormwater Innovation Center shares effective
  strategies and valuable insights about stormwater management and green infrastructure with municipalities,
  non-profits, and stormwater professionals throughout Rhode Island and Southeast New England.
- National Dam Removal Community of Practice: American Rivers invites all dam removal practitioners to join our National Dam Removal Community of Practice. This group will share resources and expertise to expand and accelerate the practice of dam removal. You will receive email updates on upcoming training opportunities, projects, and other items of interest.



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### **Events:**

- January 17, 2024 EBC 6th Annual Briefing by the New England State Dam Safety Directors This event will again bring together the state dam safety directors from New England to provide updates from each of their respective states. This year the discussion will explore risk-based evaluations and how those changes are impacting the assessment process, financial decision-making process, and condition ratings, the permitting climate, and the increasing cost of dam repairs. This event is 9:00-12:00 and is \$30 for nonprofits to register.
- January 18, 2024 CMRPC Workshop on Priority Climate Action Plan for the Greater Worcester Region as part
  of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. Hybrid meeting 6-8:30pm at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI),
  Rubin Campus Center Building (3rd Floor) 100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA or online.
- January 18, 2024 and January 23, 2024 MassDEP Virtual Information Session on Proposed Wetland Regulation Changes These sessions are designed to give participants more information on the proposed wetland regulation changes to Wetlands Resilience 1.0 DRAFT regulations (310 CMR 10.00), 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) regulations (314 CMR 9.00) and Waterways (Chapter 91) Resilience 1.0 Draft Regulations (310 CMR 9.00). Register for the 1:00pm session on January 18th here, or the 1:00pm session on January 23rd here.
- January 24, 2024 Forest Adaptation Tool Talk The Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center (NE CASC) is hosting a zoom event to bring research and management perspectives together to inform conservation tools and gain a clearer understanding of frameworks for forest adaptation in our region. It is 1:00-2:00pm
- January 24, 2024 MA Environmental and Energy Agenda for 2024 and Beyond The Environmental Business
  Council is hosting this event. The keynote presentation will be by Rebecca Tepper, Secretary of the Executive
  Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. This event is in person from 4-6pm, in Boston.
- January 24, 2024 <u>Blue Carbon National Working Group Meeting</u> This group works to coordinate and support
  actions that lead to increased recognition and application of blue carbon ecosystem values to enhance
  management of and support for coastal wetland restoration and conservation. It begins at 1:00pm. Register
  here.
- January 25, 2024 <u>Inclusive Coasts Communities of Practice: Restoration Professionals</u> The intent of these groups is to form a community to rely on and share ideas with when implementing DEIJ initiatives in your workplace. This session's topic is "Community Restoration Event Planning". It begins at 2:00pm. Register <u>here</u>.
- January 30, 2024 <u>Inclusive Coasts Communities of Practice: Community engagement and environmental education</u> The intent of these groups is to form a community to rely on and share ideas with when implementing DEIJ initiatives in your workplace. This session's topic is "Support Rather than Shame when People make Mistakes". It begins at 2:00pm. Register <a href="here">here</a>.
- January 31, 2024 <u>Inclusive Coasts Communities of Practice: Program Managers</u> The intent of these groups is to form a community to rely on and share ideas with when implementing DEIJ initiatives in your workplace. This session's topic is "Reaching Under-Engaged Communities Without Isolating Current Connections". It begins at 2:00pm. Register <a href="here">here</a>.
- January 31, 2024 and February 1, 2024 MassDEP Virtual Public Hearings on Proposed Wetland Regulation Changes These sessions are designed to allow participants give feedback on the proposed wetland regulation changes to Wetlands Resilience 1.0 DRAFT regulations (310 CMR 10.00), 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) regulations (314 CMR 9.00) and Waterways (Chapter 91) Resilience 1.0 Draft Regulations (310 CMR 9.00). Register for the 1:00pm session on January 31st <a href="here">here</a>, or the 1:00pm session on February 1st <a href="here">here</a>.



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- February 13, 2024 <u>Adaptation Planning and Practices Online Training</u> The Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS) is hosting a training for forest and natural resource managers to develop project-specific climate adaptation plans with coaching from NIACS staff during an eight-week training. Register by 1/26.
   February 15, 2024 CMRPC & <u>MassBike</u> hosting a Basic Bike Education Workshop at Jacob Edwards Library (236 Main St, Southbridge, MA, 01550) from 6:30-7:30pm.
- March 2, 2024 <u>MACC Annual Environmental Conference 2024</u> Save the date for this fabulous spring
  conference at The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. They are currently seeking wetland and climate
  related workshop proposals for this event.
- May 13-16, 2024 <u>River Rally</u> in Grand Rapids, MI. This event combats feelings of isolation, overwhelm, and burnout for network members working at the intersection of water and justice by building knowledge and skills, diversifying perspectives and solutions, recognizing achievements within the network, and strengthening connections.
- May 14-16, 2024 <u>National Adaptation Forum</u> in Saint Paul, MN. This event is a bi-annual convening for
  adaptation professionals to innovate, network, and focus on established and emerging climate adaptation issues
  of the day.
- October 6-10, 2024 <u>Restore America's Estuaries Conference</u> in Washington, DC. This is the premier event for
  policy makers, practitioners, and managers in the United States to explore the latest research, policy, and
  practice in coastal restoration.

#### **Grants:**

- 1/18/2024 RIDEM's Urban and Community Forestry Program DEM, in partnership with the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC), is offering technical expertise and support for eligible Rhode Island municipalities to launch new urban forestry programs or to enhance their existing programs. This comprehensive program includes support for tree canopy mapping, planning, management, planting, code and ordinance development, master plans, policy development, and community engagement and education.
- 1/18/2024 North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) Grant program seeking proposals from organizations supporting environmental initiatives that will involve and empower Indigenous Peoples and communities and enhance climate adaptation by respectfully applying and protecting Indigenous knowledge systems.
- 1/19/2024 <u>Healthy Soils Challenge Grants</u> The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is
  offering to \$100,000 over 6-18 months to implement the Healthy Soils Action Plan with projects that improve
  soil health and sustainable land management.
- EXTENDED 2/16/2024 RI Section 319 This is a grant to assist in the implementation of projects that prevent and/or abate water pollution associated with nonpoint sources (NPS) and to improve or restore aquatic habitat.
- 1/26/2024 National Estuary Program Watershed Grant Program This nationally competitive grant program is designed to support projects that address urgent, emerging, and challenging issues threatening the well-being of estuaries within the 28 NEP boundary areas. There is a two-step application process. 1) LOI is due 1/26/2024. 2) full proposals (by invitation only) are due 4/5/2024. Awards will range from \$200,000-500,000 and will be completed within a four-year period.
- 1/31/2024 <u>Small Communities Big Challenges (SCBC)</u> This nationwide EPA grant is for local governments to demonstrate innovative and inclusive strategies for engaging with rural communities to understand these communities' environmental public health issues of concern.



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- 2/1/2024 MassTrails provides grants to support recreational trail and shared use pathway projects across the Commonwealth. The award amount ranges from \$60,000 for "local" projects and up to \$500,000 for projects demonstrating critical network connections of regional or statewide significance. Eligible activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared-use pathways, and the amenities that support trails. Contact Sam Carter at <a href="maintenance-scarter@cmrpc.org">scarter@cmrpc.org</a> for more information.
- 2/13/2024 <u>Climate Ready Workforce Grant</u> NOAA presents this program as a way of collaborating with
  coastal and Great Lakes communities to create a climate-resilient workforce to support partnerships fostering
  skill development and job placement.
- 2/21/2024 The Microprojects Program is the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) funding program for first and last-mile solutions, workforce transportation, and other small, non-traditional transportation projects, like bicycle racks, bicycle storage, and bike sharing capital expenses (not operations), and wayfinding for bicyclists and pedestrians. The CMMPO allocated \$400,000 per year to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Microprojects Program and it is funded with federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. For more information contact Yahaira Graxirena, Transportation Project Manager: ygraxirena@cmrpc.org
- 2/28/2024 DOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program –
  RAISE grants offer funding for planning or constructing a wide variety of surface transportation infrastructure,
  such as highway, bridge, rail, and culvert projects. \$1.5 billion in RAISE grant funding was appropriated for
  FY2024, and units of local government are among the entities eligible to apply for RAISE grants.
- 2/29/2024 <u>US Forest Service Supporting Underserved and Small-Acreage Forest Landowner Participation</u> –
   This funding supports the participation of underserved or small-acreage forest landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis starting 12/1/2023.
- (Anticipated Jan-Feb 2024) 604(b) Grant Program: Water Quality Management Planning Grant This
  competitive grant program funds watershed or sub-watershed-based nonpoint source assessment and planning
  projects. Regional projects are encouraged. To learn more contact Sarah Plutnicki at <a href="mailto:splutnicki@cmrpc.org">splutnicki@cmrpc.org</a>
- Rolling through 4/4/2024 <u>MassCEC's EmPower Massachusetts</u> offers multiple stages of investment in communities and community-based organizations so that they can explore, develop, and implement program models or projects that provide access to the benefits of clean energy for previously underserved populations. This MassCEC program crowd-sources new and innovative ideas, then helps put them into action.
- (Anticipated March 2024, due May 2024) MVP Action Grant Program Funding to address climate change impacts resulting from extreme weather, sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding and extreme heat, et al. Applicants must have completed the Community Resilience Building (CRB) process (or another EEA-certified process) and "MVP Community" designation via the MVP 1.0 planning process. There is a 25% cash or in-kind match requirement.
- (Anticipated March 2024, due May 2024) MVP 2.0 Grant Program Additional support to build resilience to climate change. Builds on MVP 1.0 to support communities with new processes, tools, and resources. The planning process will revisit MVP 1.0 priorities with enhanced involvement of the wider community to carry out equitable climate resilience work. It includes guaranteed funding to implement a seed project. No match requirement, joint municipal applications encouraged.
- (Anticipated May June 2024) <u>EEA Planning Assistance Grants</u> Support efforts to plan, zone, develop, and conserve land in ways consistent with the Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles. Priorities include



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zoning for sustainable housing production, mitigation of climate change through zoning and other regulations, and zoning that advances permanent land conservation. A minimum non-state match of 25% is required.

- (Anticipated July 2024) <u>Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Program</u> Reimburses
  municipalities for the purchase of land to be used for conservation and recreation purposes. Municipalities with
  up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plans can apply. The maximum award is \$500,000 with a reimbursement
  rate of 52-70%.
- (Anticipated July 2024) Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program –
  Reimburses municipalities for purchasing, developing, and renovating parkland and outdoor recreation lands.
  Municipalities must have up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plans. The maximum award is \$500,000 with a reimbursement rate of 52-70%.
- Rolling As Available <u>AMC Waters and Rivers Protection Fund</u> Receive up to \$10,000 to fund a project that supports the protection and understanding of our region's water resources, including but not limited to the development of recreational opportunities, research on, and protection of riparian environments, and advocacy to protect clean water and recreational access. Contact <u>markrallio@gmail.com</u> for more information.
- Rolling As Available MA Department of Fish and Game's In-Lieu Fee Program This program funds land conservation or aquatic resource restoration projects (all of Blackstone in MA is eligible). Municipalities, nongovernmental organizations, and state agencies are eligible to apply. Contact Aisling O'Shea at <a href="maisling.oshea@mass.gov">aisling.oshea@mass.gov</a> for more info or to apply. Materials are also available on COMMBUYS under BD-231046-COM-COM4-77929.

### **Job Opportunities:**

- Sage Environmental <u>Project Assistant</u>
- Strategic Environmental Services <u>Project Manager</u>
- TRC Wetland Services Program Leader
- Beals and Thomas Civil/Environmental Engineer-in-Training
- MassDEP <u>Engineering Aide I</u> (six available positions)
- National Park Service Hydropower Fellowship
- Mass Division of Ecological Restoration <u>Ecological Restoration Grants Manager</u>
- Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Executive Director
- Greenbelt Seasonal Stewardship Technician
- Environment Council of Rhode Island Administrator
- Housatonic Valley Association HVA Communications and Engagement Manager
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
  - o Communications and Outreach Manager
  - Environmental Educator
  - o <u>Greenway Volunteer and Event Coordinator</u>
  - River Ranger
  - Green Infrastructure Steward
- Groundwork Lawrence
  - o Development and Communications Director 2023
  - Pa'Lante Resident Task Force (Contractor Position)
  - o Green Team Youth Leader
  - o Summer 2024 Green Team



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- Kim Ludgren Associates Inc. <u>Director of Climate Solutions</u>
- City of Worcester <u>Upper Blackstone Clean Water Wastewater Operator</u>