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Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's New Leader Is Mike Gerel



Providence, Rhode Island, January 10, 2019 – Mike Gerel, an environmental scientist who has led and contributed to watershed health and resilience initiatives on both coasts, will lead the bi-state Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) starting February 4. The organization protects and preserves Narragansett Bay and its bi-state watershed. It is one of 28 national estuary programs designated by the U.S. EPA.

Gerel has more than twenty-five years' experience in ecosystem-based planning and restoration, facilitation and collaborative governance, and public policy. As NBEP's program director, he will oversee all operations and lead the development and implementation of initiatives and partnerships related to such matters as water quality, stormwater mitigation, habitat protection, and climate change. He joins NBEP as it is advancing work based on a comprehensive study of the health of the bay and estuary that was released in late 2017.

Gerel, who has New England roots, has held scientist and management positions with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Sustainable Northwest, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and other nonprofit, government, and private consultants. His work has been in concert with those whose livelihood and culture are tied to the land and water, such as farmers and foresters, commercial and recreational fisherman, Native American tribes, developers and other business interests, and federal, state, and local government regulatory officials.

Judith Swift, who chairs NBEP's Steering Committee, noted Gerel's work on "the study, recovery, and protection of some of the nation's most important river basins from their headwaters to the sea." That experience, she said, "makes him the ideal person to further NBEP's work in the bi-state successes and challenges outlined in the program's 2017 report, *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed*."

"Mike's scientific background and decades of experience employing science to answer management and policy concerns connects well with the direction the NBEP has taken following its 2017 *State of Narragansett Bay and*

Its Watershed,” said John King, the chair of NBEP’s Science Advisory Committee. “His enthusiasm and experience will increase momentum at the Estuary Program as we move forward with our mission,” he said.

Susan Sullivan, the executive director of the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission also welcomed Gerel. The interstate commission has been NBEP’s institutional “host” since 2012, providing programmatic and institutional support and advice. “Through science-based decision-making and authentic collaboration among diverse local interests, Mike will work with the Estuary Program’s partners to address and advance key issues in the Narragansett Bay watershed. He will bring valuable experience and expertise to this role and provide pivotal new leadership to the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program,” she said.

Gerel holds a Master’s in Environmental Sciences from Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor’s in Biology from the University of Richmond. He is a graduate of the Virginia Natural Resource Leadership Institute.

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is a bi-state program that works to protect and preserve the Narragansett Bay and its watershed through partnerships that conserve and restore natural resources, enhance water quality, and promote community involvement. The NBEP is part of the National Estuary Program, a national network of 28 programs working for collaborative solutions for estuaries designated by Congress as of critical importance.

NEIWPCC—the host of NBEP—is a not-for-profit interstate agency that works to meet the water-related needs of our member states – Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. This includes coordinating forums and events, developing educational and technical resources, training environmental professionals, and providing overall leadership in water management and protection.

