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CERF Condemns EPA Prohibition of Talks By Member Scientists
Silenced Scientists Will Present Their Work at CERF 2017 Biennial Conference

SEATTLE, Wa. (October 25, 2017) - The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) strongly condemns the actions of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prohibit three EPA scientists, who are also CERF members, from presenting their research at “The State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed” workshop in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 23, 2017. Such censorship compromises the fundamental role of science to understand and report on our natural world, and goes against the EPA's long history of being an important partner in coastal research.

“The action by EPA to censor scientists sends a chilling message to science societies that our nation does not protect the freedom of information exchange vital for an informed public to solve real and important coastal issues,” said CERF President Robert Twilley. “CERF condemns such action by a federal agency and strives to support scientists of all professions to engage in public discourse for the public good.”

The workshop announced the release of a comprehensive report on the condition of Narragansett Bay and its watershed by the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program. It summarizes work by more than 50 researchers from universities, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector, and went through extensive peer review and public comment processes. The workshop and report highlight the many successes resulting from sound, science-based policy and management of the bay. EPA cancelled scheduled presentations from three leading bay experts: Dr. Autumn Oczkowski, ecologist in the EPA Atlantic Ecology Division, was scheduled to provide the workshop keynote address, and Drs. Rose Martin (postdoctoral fellow with EPA Atlantic Ecology Division) and Emily Shumchenia (EPA consultant) were on the agenda as panelists.

Said Twilley, “CERF values scientific freedom and recognizes the importance of collaboration between scientists from all sectors to solve complex challenges facing coastal and estuarine systems worldwide. This report represents an outstanding example of the work aligned with CERF’s mission to promote the understanding and wise stewardship of coastal and estuarine ecosystems worldwide.”

Drs. Oczkowski, Martin, and Shumchenia are all scheduled to present research at the CERF 2017 24th Biennial Conference, also taking place in Providence Nov 5-9. Dr. Oczkowski is co-chair of the Conference and recipient of the prestigious Cronin Award for early career achievement, and

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Dr. Martin serves on the conference organizing committee. CERF looks forward to providing an open venue for scientific discourse for all attendees.

“When our members are effectively silenced, we can and will speak up on their behalf,” said Twilley. “The coastal scientific community has enjoyed a close working relationship with government scientists since its inception, and prides itself on celebrating and recognizing close collaboration among science, management, and policy specialists to solve pressing environmental problems, including adapting to the effects of a changing climate.”

Information on the CERF 2017 24th Biennial Conference can be found at <http://www.erf.org/cerf-2017-biennial-conference>. Members of the media interested in learning more about the conference or scheduling an interview with CERF President Robert Twilley should contact Leslie Larson at 206-276-2195.

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About CERF

The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) is a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advancing the understanding and wise stewardship of estuarine and coastal ecosystems worldwide. Members of the Federation include researchers, managers, educators, students, and others from a wide variety of sectors, including academia, government, industry, and non-governmental organizations. The CERF Biennial Conference is recognized as the premier conference on the science and management of coastal and estuarine systems and resources. Learn more about CERF at www.erf.org.