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Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation • Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society •
International Association for Great Lakes Research • North American Lake Management Society •
Phycological Society of America • Society for Freshwater Science • Society of Wetland Scientists

CASS Condemns Silencing of EPA Scientists

The Consortium of Aquatic Science Societies (CASS) is very concerned with the actions of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prohibit three EPA scientists from presenting their research at “The State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed” workshop in Providence, Rhode Island, on 23 October 2017. CASS values scientific freedom and recognizes the importance of collaboration among scientists from all sectors to solve complex challenges facing aquatic systems worldwide. Scientific research and the communication of findings must be protected to ensure informed decisions are made in the public interest.

“The action by EPA to censor scientists sends a chilling message to science societies that the United States does not protect the freedom of information exchange vital for an informed public to solve real and important coastal issues,” said Robert Twilley, President of the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation. “Such censorship compromises the democratic tradition of free speech and intellectual freedom, and goes against the EPA’s long history of being an important partner in aquatic science research.”

The workshop and associated report were developed by the EPA-funded Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, and summarize three years of work by more than 50 researchers representing universities, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. The final report went through extensive peer review and public comment processes, and is one of the most comprehensive studies of Narragansett Bay and its watershed to date. It highlights many successes that resulted from sound, science-based policy and management of the Bay. EPA cancelled the presentations of three scientists who were heavily involved in the development of this report: Dr. Autumn Oczkowski, ecologist in the EPA Atlantic Ecology Division, was invited to provide the keynote address, and Drs. Rose Martin (postdoctoral fellow with EPA Atlantic Ecology Division) and Emily Shumchenia (EPA consultant) were scheduled to speak on a panel.

CASS comprises nine professional societies representing almost 20,000 experts in the aquatic sciences. CASS members work in the private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies. CASS represents professional scientists and managers who combine deep subject matter expertise, a commitment to independent objectivity, and the critical review of environmental information, along with a passion for natural places and resources. CASS supports the development and use of the best available science to sustainably manage our freshwater, estuarine, coastal, and ocean resources for the benefit of all people worldwide.