

For immediate release

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Join RI Audubon and RWU hosts for a guided walk through “Five Ecological Piers”

WARREN—The public is invited to join a walk through “Five Ecological Piers,” a multi-faceted ecological art installation at the Audubon Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge, 99 Touisset Road in Warren from 10 am – noon on Saturday, April 30.

This free, public event is part of a series of community events being held as part of an exhibition called “Rising Seas: Envisioning the Future Ocean State” taking place at Imago Gallery in Warren and nearby saltwater marshes being impacted by sea level rise from April 21 – May 29.

Leonard Yui, Associate Professor of Architecture and Sustainable Studies faculty at Roger Williams University (RWU) and Audubon Senior Director of Conservation Scott Ruhren will lead the walk through the installation that depicts the impact of projected sea level rise on the fragile marsh area. Initially installed by a team of RWU architecture students and Audubon staff in 2018, “Five Ecological Piers” continues to evolve as new features are developed.

Key elements of the installation include tall piers designed to recognize the forerunners of today’s environmental movement: Rachel Carson, John Muir, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, Wes Jackson, and Aldo Leopold. Their messages are etched in Morse code on the piers and will also be accessible through a QR code embedded in the piers. Constructed from native Eastern White Pine, the piers were recycled, adapted and redesigned to provide habitat for native bird and insect species.

The piers also provide information on the ecological differences found in each setting, allowing visitors to view the changes to the piers and the property, especially as climate change influences how this landscape will look in the future. The piers, which are situated in various habitats on the Touisset Wildlife Refuge, are designed to act as measuring devices to mark expected sea level rise and storm events for the years 2050 and 2100.

Yui explains that this installation is different from other educational tools available on sea level rise as it connects impacts to a specific location. “Sea level rise oftentimes is studied from kind of an aerial perspective,” said Yui. “And there’s mass quantities of information. And, while that information is definitely important, from an individual perspective, it’s really hard to relate to. The strategy with this installation is to have people understand the site first. What is the current ecology of the Touisset property and what do visitors enjoy about the site? Then overlay how sea level rise might affect this space.”

While providing opportunities to reflect on messages from the past, the installation also educates visitors on the impacts of climate change. “Audubon has been involved with the project from the beginning,” said Ruhren. “We wanted to ensure that the land values were enhanced and protected. This art installation fits well into the landscape, educates on sea level rise, and adds to the visitor experience at Touisset.”

Visit asri.org/5-piers-touisset.html for more information about “Five Ecological Piers.”

Other public events offered as part of “Rising Seas: Envisioning the Future Ocean State” after this event include:

- A public walk into Jacob’s Point in Warren from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 14 (rain date on Sunday, May 15) led by Jenny Flanagan of the Warren Land Conservation Trust and Deirdre Robinson of the Saltmarsh Sparrow Research Initiative.
- A talk at Imago Gallery in Warren at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 18 by Elizabeth Rush, author of *RISING – Dispatches from the New American Shore* and an English professor at Brown University. Rush will address whose voices have been traditionally left out of environmental discourse and how we might make this conversation more whole moving forward in order to craft a more creative and collective response to the climate crisis.
- IFA-sponsored *Conversations with Exhibiting Artists, Planners and URI experts* on sea level rise from 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, May 26 at Imago Gallery in Warren.

This program is being supported in part by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional funding from BankNewport.

Caption:

Two views of the ecological “Piers” installed by Roger Williams University student at the Audubon Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge, 99 Touisset Road in Warren.

