

Deepening Connections through Community Engagement

Authors: Emily Diamond, Departments of Communication Studies and Marine Affairs, University of Rhode Island; Jaclyn Witterschein, Coastal Institute at the University of Rhode Island; Amber Neville, Coastal Institute at University of Rhode Island; Laurel Schaider, Silent Spring Institute

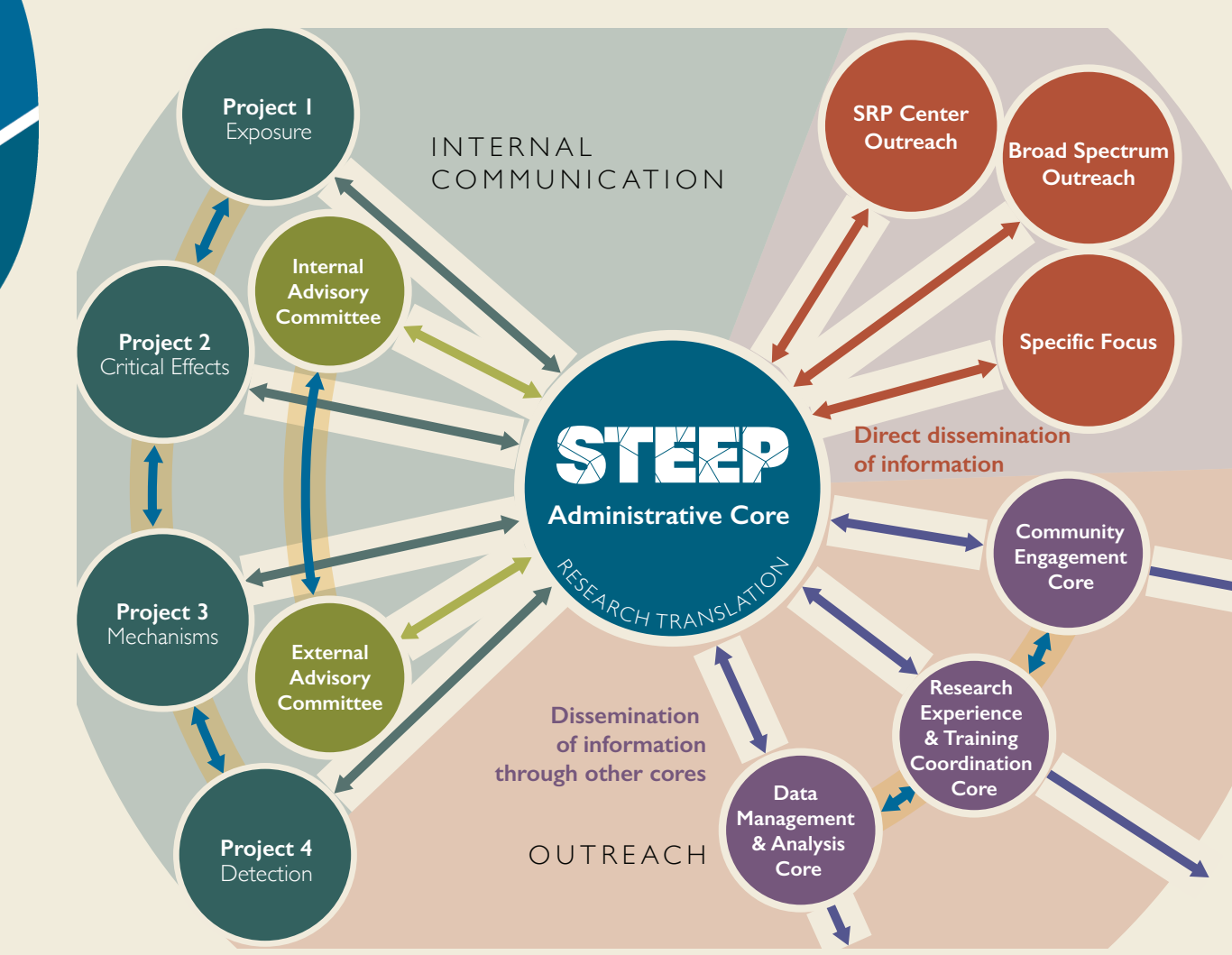
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AIMS

- Offer a testing program for homegrown produce and locally caught fish and support STEEP's extended exposure assessment in Hyannis.
- Collaborate with Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to collect fish and shellfish for PFAS testing, develop identity-based messaging strategies, and evaluate effectiveness of messages and delivery channels to reduce PFAS exposure.
- Connect STEEP trainees with high schools on Cape Cod to enhance understanding of PFAS and other water quality issues through supplemental curriculum and Cape-wide high school water quality summits.
- Collaborate with community organizations on Cape Cod and more broadly to educate and empower communities affected by PFAS contamination.

STEEP

Sources, Transport, Exposure & Effects of PFAS
UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND SUPERFUND RESEARCH PROGRAM

RESEARCH TRANSLATION AIMS

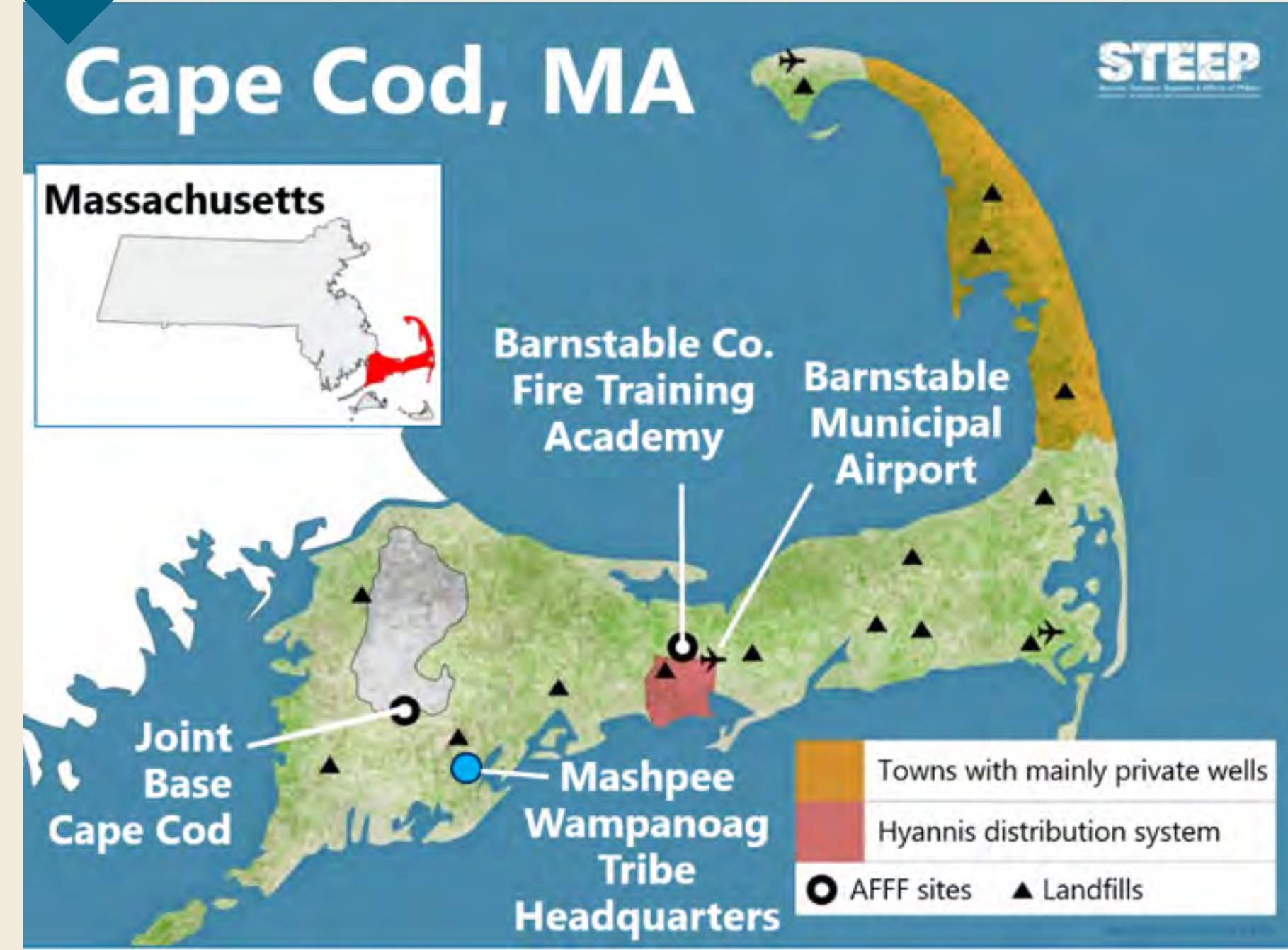


- Provide relevant and timely research translation and engagement.
- Identify and work with new/existing stakeholders and collaborators.

Multiple areas around Cape Cod have been impacted by PFAS from firefighting foams and other sources. CEC activities are planned to engage private well owners, members of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, high school students, and other residents on Cape Cod.

FEATURED ACTIVITY: TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT

- Implement fish and shellfish testing.
- Foster community engagement and education.
- Collaborate to understand community risk perceptions and concerns.
- Develop custom communication materials and strategies for risk prevention.



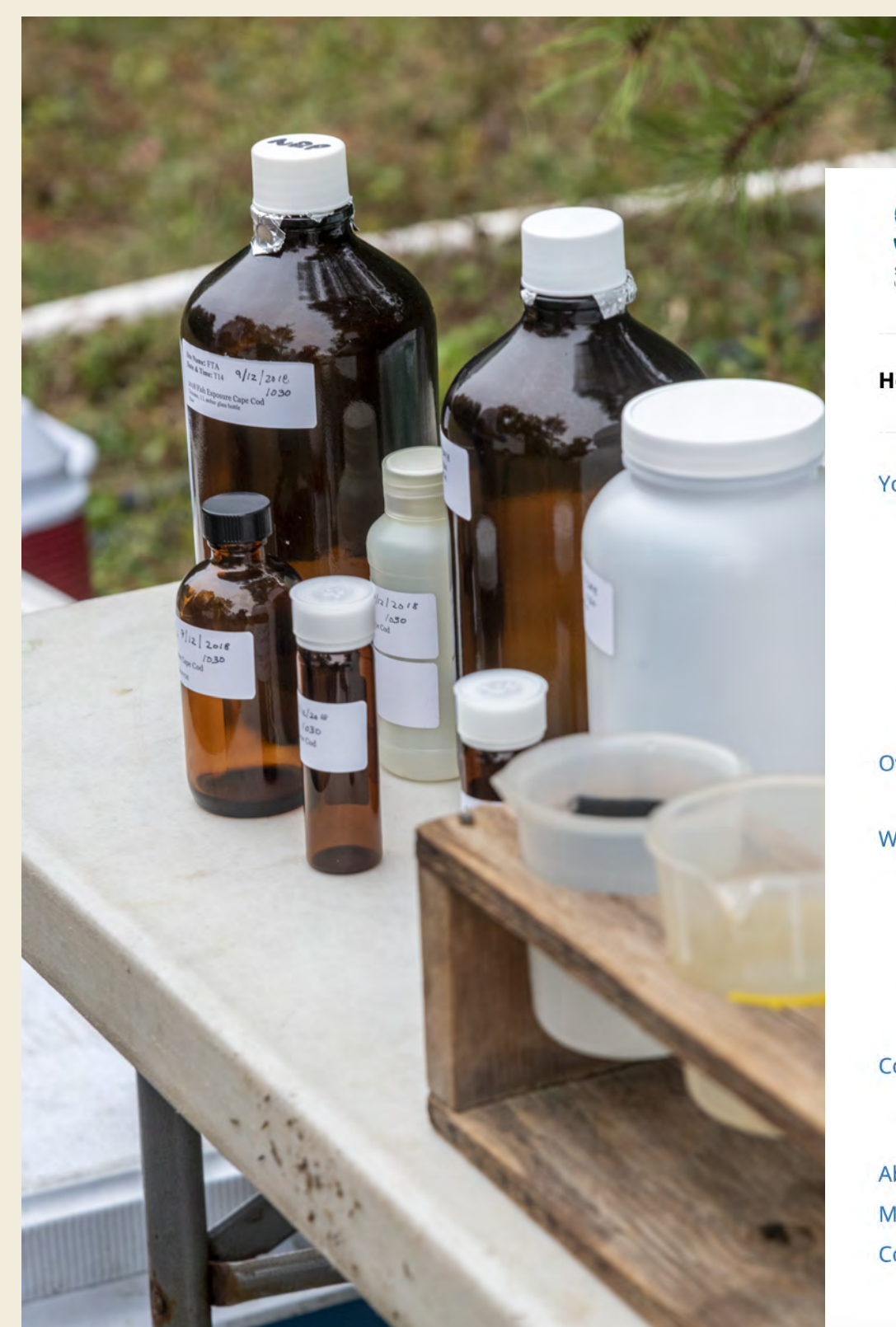
FEATURED ACTIVITY: PRIVATE WELL TESTING

- Continuing testing from prior years, a second round of samples were collected from around 70 Cape Cod homes from August to November 2021.
- PFAS analysis was completed in September 2022, as well as testing for markers of septic system impact (nitrate, boron).

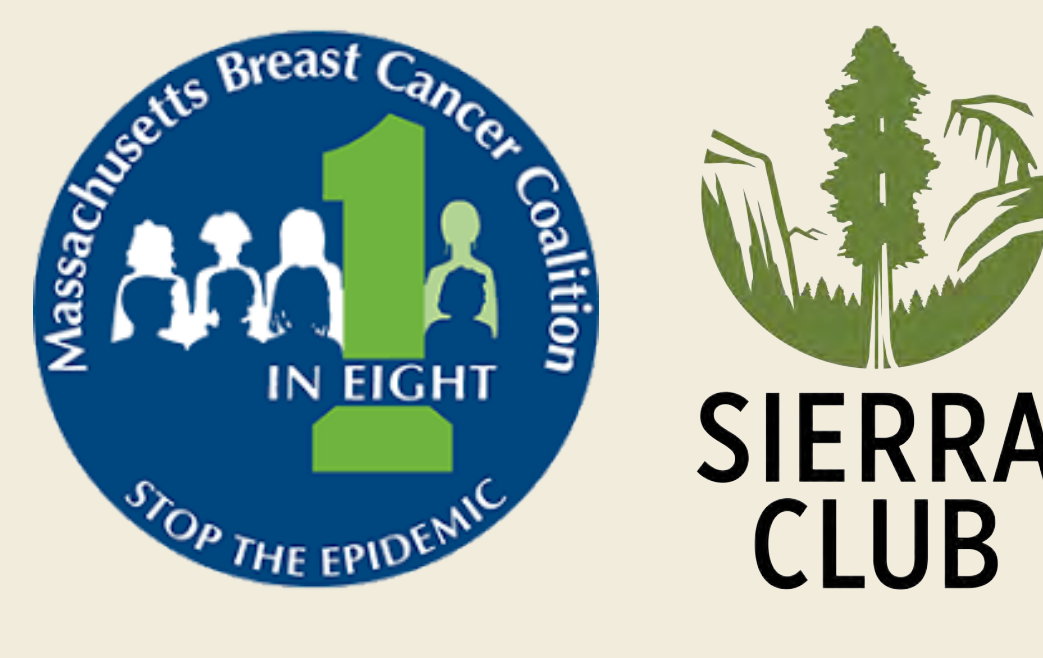
Silent Spring research assistant, Bethsaida Cardona, sorting private well samples on Cape Cod.



- Preparing customized reports for participants using Silent Spring Institute's DERBI (Digital Exposure Report-Back Interface) tool and community-level summaries and presentations.



COVID restrictions necessitated flexibility and encouraged STEEP to further engage Cape Cod residents in a community-led science effort: participants and organized volunteers were trained to collect their own well water samples. Future project goals include expansion of testing to homegrown produce and locally caught fish, and a similar community-science model may be used for data collection.



RTC activities springboard from CEC and Project goals, and aim to enhance STEEP visibility through trainee promotion and the creation of responsive, modern, and effective communication products.

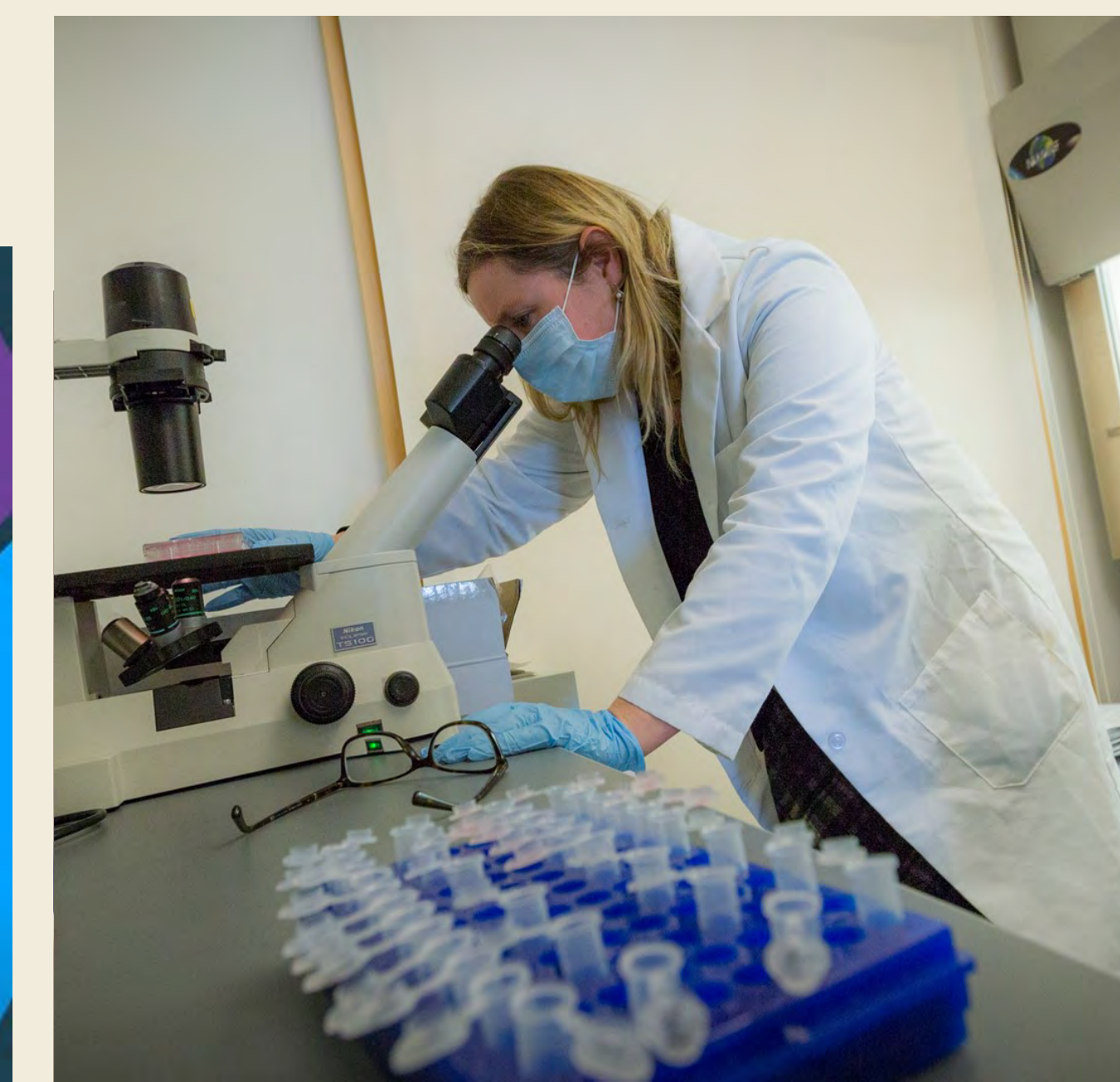
FEATURED ACTIVITY: SHARE STEEP

- Share research and create products to support work with CEC for Cape Cod residents and tribal partners.
- Assist in the dissemination of information for Faroe Island cohorts.
- Create continuous cycle of engagement with RETCC to promote research, accomplishments.
- Support RETCC mentorships in writing, rhetoric, and digital communications.
- Create plain-language updates of research, and design more effective ways to communicate with policy makers.

FEATURED ACTIVITY: INNOVATE WITH COLLABORATION

- Establish a formal partnership with the University of Rhode Island Harrington School of Communication and Media to create innovative multimedia RT products, including student-driven studio work.
- Use mobile, locative, and wearable technologies for community-engaging science communication, social justice, and environmental advocacy.
- Develop resulting mini-vids, podcasts, op-eds, creative writing anthologies, animations.

Silent Chemicals, Loud Science podcast advertisement, featuring STEEP Director, Rainer Lohmann.



Emily Kaye
STEPP Trainee in Slitt Lab

STEPP: Supporting the next generation of PFAS researchers is a student-produced short video highlighting the critical work of STEEP trainees.



Funded under grant P42ES027706.



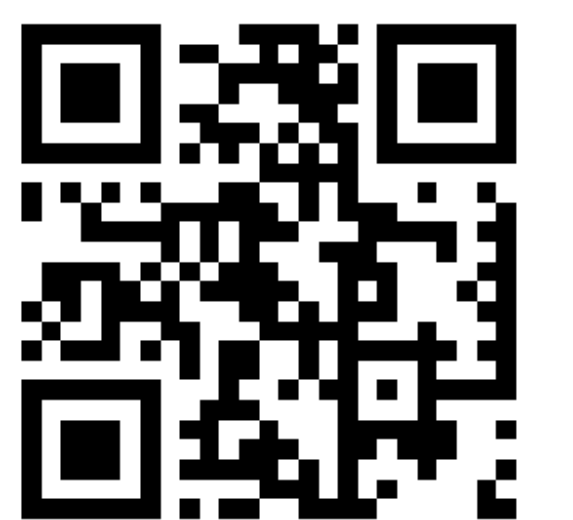
Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences



SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE
Researching the Environment and Women's Health



steepsuperfund



uri.edu/steep