

Coastal Resources Management Council

Coastal Briefings



Allin's Cove, Barrington, Rhode Island

Saltmarsh Restoration Project

Portions of this fact sheet are adapted from literature provided by the Allin's Cove Neighborhood Coalition and the US Army Corps of Engineers Section 1135 Preliminary Restoration Plan for Allin's Cove

Seven years ago, all it took was one look at the beauty of Allin's Cove and the secluded neighborhood along its western bank that Sandra Wyatt knew she "had to live here." But it wasn't long after she moved in that she noticed trouble. The rush of tidewaters through Allin's Cove each day was badly eroding the western bank, adjacent to Byway Road, where Ms. Wyatt lived. Alarmed, she set out to try to stop the erosion problem.

At the turn of the 20th century, Allin's Cove was bordered by about 25 to 30 acres of saltmarsh. Natural silting and shifting sands eventually covered portions of the marsh, and other sections disappeared as they were filled to accommodate road construction and other development. In 1959, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) filled eleven acres of remaining saltmarsh and some mudflats on the south shore of the cove with dredge spoils. This reduced the cove to about one fourth of its original size.

As the marsh was filled its elevation increased. This eventually excluded the daily tidal exchange of bay water. Fresh water continued to flow into the now degraded marsh from landward sources, and saltmarsh vegetation that could not tolerate freshwater conditions died off. They were replaced by the common reed (*Phragmites australis*) which quickly spread from the edge of the cove until it covered all the original saltmarsh above the high tide level. The fill also restricted the remaining lower elevations that still supported remnant saltmarsh to a much smaller, narrower area. This led to an increase in the velocity of tidewaters, and a resultant increase in erosion of the remaining marsh. Other resources that depend on the saltmarsh have also been affected by this destruction, including fish, shellfish, and that depend on saltmarsh habitat for food, shelter, and breeding grounds.

Thanks to the resolve of many people, including Sandra Wyatt, President, Allin's Cove Neighborhood Coalition, Save The Bay, State Representative Peter Ginaitt, and State Representative Mark Heffner from Barrington, progress has been made. A local effort to address the issue began with the Barrington Salt Marsh Working Group and Save The Bay.

After studying the history of Allin's Cove, the Working Group requested reparation from the ACOE for damage to the saltmarsh due to its initial filling and the subsequent erosion. The Corps responded in December 1999 by submitting a Preliminary Restoration Plan to the town of Barrington. The plan proposes to restore the degraded coastal wetland at the mouth of the cove. In addition, about eleven acres of degraded habitat will be restored to a healthy saltmarsh ecosystem by re-grading some of the area to an elevation suitable to encourage and maintain the growth of saltmarsh vegetation and potentially restoring some of the open waters that existed prior to the filling. The plan also proposes to stop the erosion at Byway Road by using a combination of excavated material from the fill area and new material to widen and stabilize the eroding coastal shoreline.

CRMC has agreed to be the lead non-federal sponsor of the Allin's Cove Salt Marsh Restoration Project. The proposed ACOE plan will cost approximately \$760,000. \$172,000 of the \$190,000 non-federal sponsor share for the Allin's Cove project will come from CRMC and \$18,000 from the Town of Barrington through in-kind services and/or cash.