

Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund

R.I.G.L.CHAPTER 46-23.1

**Projects Approved for Funding
FY2009**



Application and Approval Process

The Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund legislation, which allocates \$250,000 from the Oil Spill Prevention, Administration and Response Fund (OSPAR), established within the Coastal Resources Management Council a Rhode Island coastal and estuarine habitat restoration trust fund. Pursuant to the legislation, the “trust shall be available for disbursement by the council in accordance with the restrictions and purposes of this chapter and subject to an annual appropriation by the legislature.” (RIGL §46-23.1-3).

The Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Team, an advisory technical committee as mandated by the Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund, drafted and adopted the State Estuary and Coastal Habitat Restoration Strategy. This program describes the state’s coastal and estuarine habitats, restoration goals, inventory of restoration projects, projected comprehensive budget and timeline to complete the goals, funding sources, outreach elements, and provisions for updating the plan and project inventory.

The Team met on January 14, 2009 to evaluate submitted project proposals and make funding recommendations to the Coastal Resources Management Council for FY2009. On January 27, 2009, the Council unanimously approved funding for seven coastal habitat restoration projects chosen by the Restoration Team. An open and competitive state-wide process was used to solicit applications for projects that seek to restore coastal and estuarine habitats including seagrass beds, salt marshes and river systems. The information requested from the applicants that was used to evaluate each project included: the type of restoration initiative to take place, the historical impact to the site, the natural resources benefited and impacted (target species), any physical, ecological, biological, cultural/historical, geological and survey data collected to date, a site map, any available aerial photography and photographs of the site, preliminary restoration drawings, maps and engineering plans, and proof of property owner permission for the restoration activity to take place. Projects were evaluated and ranked for funding based on these factors to be considered for the purposes of granting monies for estuary and coastal habitat restoration activities, as stated in the legislation:

- (1) consistency with the state estuary and coastal habitat restoration strategy, the Narragansett Bay comprehensive conservation and management plan, the state coastal nonpoint pollution control plan, the coastal resources management program, the department of environmental management regulations, and pertinent elements of the state guide plan;
- (2) the ability of the applicant to provide adequate personnel funding, and authority to carry out and properly maintain the estuary and coastal habitat restoration activity;
- (3) the proposed monitoring plan to ensure that short-term and long-term restoration goals are achieved;
- (4) the effectiveness of any nonpoint source pollution management efforts upstream and the likelihood of re-impairment;
- (5) whether the estuary and coastal habitat restoration activity can be shown to replace habitat losses that benefit fish and wildlife resources;
- (6) potential water quality improvements;

(7) potential improvements to fish and wildlife habitats for species which are identified as rare or endangered by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey or the federal Endangered Species Act;

(8) the level and extent of collaboration by partners (e.g., municipality, nongovernmental organization, watershed council, federal agency, etc.); and

(9) potential direct economic benefit to a community or the state.

FY2009 Project Descriptions

Lower Pawtuxet River Restoration, Warwick

Award: \$50,000

Lead Organization: Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Partners: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Restore America's Estuaries (RAE), Save the Bay, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Rhode Island Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP), American Rivers

The goal of this project is to restore over seven linear miles of anadromous fish habitat by breaching or partially removing Pawtuxet Falls Dam in Warwick and Cranston. Historically, the Pawtuxet River supported large annual runs of migratory fish. The construction of the dam in 1924 and deteriorating water quality due to discharges from mills and wastewater treatment facilities once made the lower Pawtuxet River unsuitable as anadromous fish habitat. Water quality in the river has since drastically improved, and breaching the dam will restore passage and habitat for several fish species including American shad and river herring, as well as restoring a wide range of additional riverine ecosystem functions. The awarded funds will be used as match for federal funding of project construction activities in 2009.

Blackstone River Fish Passage Restoration, Pawtucket

Award: \$50,000

Lead Organization: Blackstone River Watershed Council and Friends of the Blackstone

Partners: USDA NRCS, Pawtucket Hydro, LLC., City of Pawtucket

The purpose of this project is to restore anadromous fish passage across the first four dams on the lower Blackstone River. The goal is to restore the Blackstone anadromous fish runs that have been obstructed for nearly 200 years. This project will improve the riverine ecosystem, increase recreational opportunities for activities such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and historic tours, and provide economic benefits for four towns in the project area. The awarded funds will provide non-federal match for construction of fish passage facilities on the first two dams on the lower Blackstone, Main Street Dam and Slater Mill Dam, both in Pawtucket, R.I.

Silver Creek Salt Marsh Restoration, Bristol

Award: \$9,879

Partners: USDA NRCS, RI DEM (Historic Parks Grant Program)

Silver Creek is a thirteen acre, tidal estuary on the eastern shore of Bristol Harbor. The creek is tidally restricted by a former railroad bridge (the East Bay bike path), the Route 114 bridge, and a town-owned foot bridge which have restricted tidal flow into the marsh. These restrictions have impounded freshwater, diminished connectivity with Narragansett Bay, and have allowed for the expansion of *Phragmites australis* in the salt marsh.

The goals of this restoration project are to improve the tidal flushing to the creek, reduce the amount of *Phragmites australis* in the upper marsh, restore the native salt marsh plant community, reduce the impounded water in the marsh, reduce mosquito breeding habitat and reestablish vegetation on mud flats in the lower marsh. The awarded funds will be used to match NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) funds secured by the Town of Bristol to excavate existing creeks in the upper portion of the salt marsh and treat and mulch the *Phragmites australis*. Restoring the tidal hydrology to this 13 acre marsh will result in reestablished characteristic high and low salt marsh plant communities, decreased density, height, and vigor of the invasive plant, *Phragmites australis*, and increased density and diversity of recreational and commercially important fish species.

Shannock Falls Fish Passage Restoration, Richmond

Award: \$50,000

Partners: USDA-NRCS, NOAA-RAE

The goal of this project is to provide passage for a range of species, including Atlantic salmon, American shad, blueback herring, alewife, sea lamprey, American eel and brook trout at the Lower Shannock Falls Dam and ultimately to provide passage for these species to the remainder of the mainstem Pawcatuck River and Wordens Pond. Completion of the project will restore nearly 1300 acres of spawning and nursery habitat, and provide additional benefits such as restoration of riverine functions, recreational opportunities and improved safety. The awarded funds will be used towards construction activities including sediment analyses, construction oversight services, project management and bedrock removal.

Gooseneck Cove Salt Marsh Restoration, Newport

Award: \$25,000

Partners: City of Newport, Aquidneck Island Land Trust

Gooseneck Cove is a city-owned, 63 acre salt marsh and open water cove bordered by Block Island Sound in Newport, RI. The cove is tidally restricted by three structures: the Ocean Drive Causeway, a small dam, and an unimproved dirt road. These restrictions impound freshwater and restrict salt water flow in and out of the upper cove, which exhibits signs of habitat and water quality degradation. The goal of this restoration project is to restore the salt marsh plant community, to prevent future subsidence of the marsh, and to improve the cove's water quality by restoring tidal flushing of the cove. The project will also include improving public access to the northern cove area.

Manton Pond Dam Fish Passage Restoration, Johnston

Award: \$29,200

Partners: USDA NRCS, USFWS

The purpose of this project is to restore fish passage to the entire length of the lower Woonasquatucket River to the prime spawning habitat of Manton Pond. Manton Pond Dam is the last of five dams in a long-term restoration strategy for the lower Woonasquatucket River. It is the last link in a project to restore spawning habitat for an estimated annual return of 40,000 adult blueback herring, alewife and shad. The focus of the project will be to plan, design and construct a fishway at Manton Dam. Awarded funds will be used for planning and design of the proposed fishway.

Brenton Cove Salt Marsh Restoration, Newport

Award: \$6,421

Partners: Brenton Cove Condo Association, City of Newport, RI Department of Environmental Management Mosquito Abatement Coordination Office

The Brenton Cove salt marsh is approximately 4 acres in size, and opens on the seaward side onto Newport Harbor. The goal of this project is to reopen existing mosquito ditches to reduce stormwater ponding in the rear portion of the salt marsh and facilitate control of the invasive species *Phragmites australis*, which has overtaken portions of the marsh. The awarded funds will go towards implementation of an open water marsh management plan as well as invasive species control, to be carried out by the RI DEM Mosquito Abatement Coordination Office and the Brenton Cove Condo Association in cooperation with the City of Newport. In addition, the City of Newport will be investigating Low Impact Development stormwater management practices to implement within the watershed that will help reduce the amount of stormwater runoff entering the marsh.