

Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund

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

**Projects Approved for Funding
FY2010**



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, 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 February 10, 2010 to evaluate submitted project proposals and make funding recommendations to the Coastal Resources Management Council for FY2010. On March 9, 2010, the Council unanimously approved funding for ten coastal habitat restoration projects chosen by the. 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.

FY2010 Project Descriptions

Lower Pawtuxet River Restoration Sediment Management, Warwick

Award: \$41,659

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 the Pawtuxet River Restoration 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 for sampling and removing approximately 2000 cubic yards of sediments to prevent the sediments from migrating downstream into Pawtuxet Cove following the dam removal.

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.

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.

Woonasquatucket River Paragon Dam Fish Passage Restoration, Providence

Award: \$9,000

Lead Organization: Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC)

Partners: US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), USDA NRCS, RI Foundation

The proposed project is part of a larger restoration effort that will enhance depleted spawning populations of river herring and possibly shad. River herring have been observed below the first dam. Fish passage in the lower Woonasquatucket River, a federally designated “American Heritage River”, is currently obstructed by five abandoned mill dams. Preliminary surveys by state and federal fisheries biologists have found suitable habitat and conditions for river herring (blueback herring and alewife) and possibly American shad in the lower river. Restoration of river herring to the Woonasquatucket River will provide ecological benefits to the river and upper Narragansett Bay by restoring historic anadromous fish spawning and rearing areas.

The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council is currently partnering with federal, state, and local agencies and private developers to restore fish passage through the first five obstructions on the River. All five dam structures located in the lower 5 miles of the Woonasquatucket River are old mill dams comprised of either stone or concrete.

In September 2007, thanks in part to funding by the Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund, the first fish ladder was completed at Rising Sun Mills dam, the first dam on the Woonasquatucket. With passage at the first dam secured, the awarded funds will support a partial removal of the second dam, Paragon only .25 miles upstream from Rising Sun.

Funds awarded to the Paragon Dam project will be used to partially remove the already failing dam structure to allow for fish passage.

Manton Pond Dam Fish Passage Restoration, Johnston

Award: \$9,000

Lead Organization: Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC)

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 to complete a full site survey necessary for the project's design.

Allin's Cove Invasives Control and Upland Restoration, Barrington

Award: \$6,891

Lead Organization: Barrington Land Conservation Trust

Partners: USDA NRCS

In 1959 the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) filled in approximately 8 acres of salt marsh and tidal water on the south central area of Allin's Cove with dredged material excavated to deepen the navigation channel into Bullocks Cove. As a result, most of this wetland area was overgrown with *Phragmites australis*, and the channel into the cove migrated to the west causing excessive erosion of the bank and salt marsh along Byway Road. Following a 2005 restoration project to restore the salt marsh and tidal habitats, invasive plants colonized 3 areas where restoration work occurred.

The purpose of the project is to restore 3.5 acres of land abutting Allin's Cove by replacing invasive *Phragmites australis* and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) with native grasses, shrubs and trees. The invasive plant management and native plant establishment will occur at three distinct sites adjacent to the Cove. The awarded funds will be used to control the invasive plants *Phragmites australis* and *Fallopia japonica* at these sites and reestablish a community of native coastal plants and warm season grasses in the Allin's Cove coastal buffer.

Buckeye Brook Brackish Marsh Restoration, Warwick

Award: \$1,450

Lead Organization: Buckeye Brook Coalition

Partners: RI Rivers Council

The goal of this project is to restore a native, brackish marsh in the upper Buckeye Brook by treating *Phragmites australis* that has become established and has been expanding in recent years. The awarded funds will be used for herbicide treatment and cutting of the dead *Phragmites*.

Round Marsh Salt Marsh Restoration, Jamestown

Award: \$15,000

Lead Organization: Jamestown Conservation Commission

Partners: USDA NRCS, Town of Jamestown

The project's restoration goal is to reduce the advancement of *Phragmites* in the eastern portion of Round Marsh and to restore conditions appropriate for native salt marsh vegetation wherever

possible. From an ecological perspective, Round Marsh is a wonderfully diverse and relatively intact example of a salt marsh system characteristic of this region. The site is home to a wide variety of native flora and fauna that rely on salt marsh habitat. Restoration efforts undertaken at the proposed location will benefit the integrity of the entire Great Creek / Round Marsh complex, by reducing the advancement of *Phragmites* and preserving native salt marsh habitat. These efforts will increase the extent of productive salt marsh wildlife habitat available to native fish and wildlife species, improve scenic views, and provide educational opportunities to the public. In addition, better design and control of drainage in this section of marsh will reduce mosquito breeding habitat. The awarded funds will be used for mowing and mulching of *Phragmites* as well as tidal creek excavation and restoration.

Restoring Hard Clams in Rhode Island's Salt Ponds, Charlestown (Ninigret Pond)

Award: \$40,000

Lead Organization: The Nature Conservancy

The purpose of this project is to improve ecosystem function in Ninigret Pond by restoring a self-sustaining population of hard clams within a Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) designated shellfish spawner sanctuary. This action will provide immediate and long-term improvements in water clarity and increase juvenile hard clam recruitment pond-wide. It will also create important bottom structure and improved benthic habitat for a variety of other marine species. Awarded funds will be used to purchase and transplant 500,000 clams and monitor the success of the project.