

What is the project?

The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers have been working together on the South Coast Habitat Restoration Project since 1997. One part of the project will restore 40 acres of eelgrass habitat to Ninigret Pond by dredging the flood tidal shoals in the pond to an optimum depth for eelgrass growth. Eelgrass provides a habitat that is essential for the lifecycles of several important fish species. It also contributes to the health and productivity of the coastal ecosystem by filtering harmful nutrients and contributing to the food web.

The sand from the dredged areas will be used to replenish the nearby beaches. These beaches are eroding. Sand that was transported into Ninigret Pond through the Charlestown Breachway will be returned to the shoreline. This will provide more protection to the houses along the shoreline in the event of a severe storm.

The project will be maintained by excavating a sediment basin in the Charlestown Breachway. Sand will be captured in the basin instead of entering the pond. This will ensure that the restored eelgrass beds are not reburied. The state will maintain the sediment basin by periodic dredging and pumping the sand back to the beaches.

How will the project affect me?

- Dredging will be done at a time of year that will be the least disruptive to you as a homeowner. Dredging will not begin before October and will stop by April.
- Sand will be hydraulically pumped onto the ocean facing beach east of the Charlestown Breachway.
- An 8 inch or 14 inch diameter pipe will extend along the shoreline from the dredge site. The pipe needs to be placed on the beach in front of your property during the dredging period from October to April.
- Sand will be pumped below the mean high water line (MHW). Waves and currents will move this sand onto the beach, making wider beaches. This will make your property more resistant to storm damage.
- When work is completed, and the pipe is removed, the beach will return to its natural state. Earthmoving equipment may be used to shape the final beach profile.

What are the benefits to beachfront homeowners?

- 40 acres of eelgrass will be restored in Ninigret Pond, creating essential fish habitat for winter flounder, striped bass, bay scallop, mussel and lobster.

- New eelgrass beds will help improve water quality in Ninigret Pond by removing harmful nutrients.
- Sand that is filling the channel and burying the eelgrass beds in Ninigret Pond will be returned to the shoreline to create wider beaches in front of your property.
- Extra sand on the beach will increase storm protection and slow the erosion rate in front of your property.
- More sand will be available for dune formation, further increasing shoreline protection for you as a beachfront homeowner.

Next Step:

- In order to go forward with this project all affected property owners must sign a temporary license agreement with the State of Rhode Island to allow placement of the pipe along their beachfront.
- If the license agreements are not signed by all property owners, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers may choose to cancel the project, or choose to place the pipe in front of the affected property below mean high water (MHW) which does not require approval.
- This license agreement is temporary and is limited to the period of September 15 to May 15.



Charlestown beach September 2002 showing a wide beach and foredune zone.



Charlestown beach October 2002 after coastal storm eroded beach and foredune. With more sand on the beach, storm waves will break further seaward, losing energy before hitting the back beach and houses.

Project supporters:

- Town of South Kingstown
- Town of Charlestown
- Town of Westerly
- Salt Ponds Coalition
- URI/GSO
- URI Department of Geosciences
- RIDEM
- US Fish & Wildlife
- National Marine Fisheries Services

Find out more:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Final Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment are available for review at the Cross Mills Public Library and at the CRMC office at 4808 Tower Hill Road, Wakefield, RI (401-783-3370).

Additional information about the project can be found at www.crmc.ri.gov/projects or by contacting:

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The Rhode Island South Coast Habitat Restoration Project



Eelgrass Restoration and Beach Replenishment at Ninigret Pond, Charlestown and South Kingstown, RI

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