

# Massachusetts River Restoration Project Receives National Award

## Partners recognized for completion of the Eel River project in Plymouth

BOSTON - February 18, 2011 - Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr. today announced that the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and its partners have received a Coastal America Partnership Award for their successful restoration of the Eel River Headwaters in Plymouth.

The national award honors an array of DFG's local, state, federal, non-profit and corporate partners who helped restore over 60 acres of habitat and two miles of headwater stream extensively altered and degraded by human use. In addition to producing significant environmental benefits, the project helped bolster the economy by sustaining a dozen construction and engineering jobs.

"This is major accomplishment, and I would like to congratulate all of the partners and especially recognize the leadership of the town of Plymouth and the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Ecological Restoration, who helped guide this complicated project from start to finish," said Secretary Sullivan.

"On behalf of the Obama Administration and the Coastal America Partnership, I congratulate the Eel River team for completion of this impressive restoration project that shows what is possible under a strategic partnership model, working together with a great landowner to restore degraded habitat for the benefit of the watershed and the community," said Virginia Tippie of Coastal America.

Aimed at protecting, preserving and restoring the nation's coastline, Coastal America is a partnership of 16 federal agencies including the Executive Office of the President and the Environmental Protection Agency, state and local governments, and private organizations.

In partnership with DFG's Division of Ecological Restoration and others, the town of Plymouth coordinated the project to remove the Sawmill Dam, restore 40 acres of diverse wetlands habitat, excavate over 30,000 cubic yards of sediment, create two miles of new river channel, replace two road crossings, and plant more than 24,000 native trees and shrubs to re-establish a rare Atlantic white cedar wetland.

"The project provides a wide range of benefits to the river, wetland, and upland resources of the Eel River headwaters, and, within six months of full stream restoration, we are seeing species such as American eel, trout, and insects associated with the best streams in the Commonwealth coming back," said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin. "We look forward to replicating this partnership model across the state to continue to promote large-scale aquatic habitat restoration."

"The Eel River restoration is truly an environmental success story," said Kenneth L. Kimmell, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, a project partner. "This interagency effort turned an abandoned cranberry bog back into a fully functioning,

vital ecosystem."

The project was initiated in 2005 as part of the Eel River Conservation Reserve land acquisition. Formerly a series of seven discrete cranberry bogs, the area is now protected open space owned by the town that offers public walking trails, excellent bird watching, and fishing.

"The town of Plymouth is truly honored to receive national recognition and the town thanks our partners for making this precedent-setting restoration happen to improve water quality, sustain local jobs, and replace aging town infrastructure," said Town Manager Mark Stankiewicz.

The \$2 million project was funded through a variety of sources with major contributions provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Section 319 Grant Program (through a partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).

"This is just the type of ecosystem restoration project we seek to support," said Tom Chapman, New England Field Office Supervisor of the USFWS. "The project not only restores a globally-rare habitat type, it also sustains high quality jobs and builds ecosystem resiliency in the face of a changing climate."

"NRCS is proud to be involved in both the acquisition and restoration of the Eel River Reserve," said NRCS State Conservationist Christine Clarke. "Our agency's goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program. The Eel River project helps us to achieve that goal."

Other key partners recognized by Coastal America include: The Nature Conservancy, American Rivers, USFWS - Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Massachusetts Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, the Horsley Witten Group, and A.D. Makepeace Company. The design engineer was Inter-fluve of Cambridge and the general contractor and partner was SumCo Eco-Contracting of Salem.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the conservation and enjoyment of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land protection and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and wildlife species, and ecological restoration of fresh water, salt water, and terrestrial habitats. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

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