

Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Announces Federal Grant for Commonwealth's Largest Freshwater Wetlands Restoration Project

PLYMOUTH - Friday, February 27, 2015 - Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton today announced that the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) has received a \$790,290 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the restoration of 250 acres of coastal freshwater wetlands in Plymouth. This funding is the final amount needed for the Tidmarsh Restoration Project, the largest freshwater wetlands restoration effort to date in Massachusetts.

"Wetland restoration creates a more resilient and healthy environment, improves quality of life and spurs economic growth," said EEA Secretary Matthew Beaton. "I thank the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their help funding the Tidmarsh Restoration Project, which will benefit wildlife, enhance flood protection and water quality, as well as provide economic and recreational benefits for the public."

"Coastal wetlands are among the richest and most important natural places on the planet," said Wendi Weber, Northeast Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "They are habitats for fish and wildlife, but also play an important role for people - such as providing clean water and special places to get outside and enjoy nature. National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants are a critical to our work with partners to protect and restore these important places."

The grant will help restore coastal freshwater wetlands within a series of retired cranberry bogs. DER is leading the partner-based effort, which involves several years of scientific assessment, engineering design, public outreach and construction. The project will restore wetland communities by removing dams and water control structures, plugging agricultural ditches, moving thousands of tons of sediment and planting extensively over several years.

"The Tidmarsh restoration involves an impressive public-private partnership of federal, state and local government, as well as some of our leading academic institutions and environmental organizations," said DFG Commissioner George Peterson. "Coastal wetland restoration helps communities adapt to climate change and will improve habitat for brook trout, river herring and other wildlife."

The USFWS grant complements funding of approximately \$300,000 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), American Rivers, Gulf of Maine Council, USFWS, the Massachusetts Environmental Trust and DER. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) holds the conservation easement on the property and is contributing \$1.9 million for project implementation. The total project cost of approximately \$3 million is projected create over \$3.5 million dollars in economic activity.

"We are thrilled about the Fish and Wildlife Service's funding and we remain committed to helping move the project to completion with our diverse partner team," said Christine Clarke, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. "This project is a model for partner collaboration and restoration of retired agriculture lands in coastal Massachusetts."

Mass Audubon has been working with DER, USFWS and other project partners for years and is currently working with the landowners on the potential creation of a new nature sanctuary.

"This funding represents a crucial advance as we strengthen our partnerships with Tidmarsh Farm's visionary owners, the state Division of Ecological Restoration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service," Mass Audubon President Henry Tepper said. "There is great potential for Tidmarsh to serve as a 'living observatory' for many audiences—

from students to academics and natural resource professionals—and we are thrilled to be part of this compelling initiative.”

"We are delighted to participate with USFWS in the important work of restoring coastal wetlands," said Glorianna Davenport, Trustee of Tidmarsh Farms. "With the broad partnership housed in living observatory, we are committed to developing the science, interpretation and experience of environmental change for experts and the public."

The Tidmarsh grant was one of 25 projects selected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. Wetlands in coastal watersheds in the United States are experiencing an annual loss of more than 80,000 acres, highlighting the importance of coastal wetland conservation and restoration.

Project partners for the Tidmarsh Restoration Project include Tidmarsh Farms Inc., USDA-NRCS, DER, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Massachusetts Audubon, NOAA Restoration Center, American Rivers, The Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET), Mass Bays Program, Gulf of Maine Council for the Marine Environment and Living Observatory (a diverse group of academic partners including MIT, UMass and others). Project implementation is expected to commence in the summer of 2015.

"I want to thank the Baker Administration and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for their commitment to the Town of Plymouth," said State Senator Vinny deMacedo. "This community has worked diligently to restore the natural riverbeds, however, without the assistance of the state and federal government, we would not be able to move at the speed that we have in past years."

"We are honored to receive this funding for Tidmarsh, and the Manomet community of Plymouth," said State Representative Mathew Muratore. "This projects complements the environmental plans the Town has set forth since forming the new Marine and Environmental Department a few years ago."

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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