

# Patrick-Murray Administration Announces Wetlands Restoration Milestone

## 1,000 acres restored with completion of 20-acre salt marsh project in Brewster

BOSTON - Wednesday, December 15, 2010 - Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles today announced that since 1998, the state has managed more than 1,000 acres of wetlands restoration projects across the Commonwealth. With the completion of a salt marsh restoration project in Brewster, the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) has overseen more than 62 projects over the past 12 years.

"Boosted by community partnerships and spurred recently by federal stimulus dollars, this is significant milestone for this program, which protects wildlife habitat and sustains commercial and recreational fisheries," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles, whose office includes DER.

At the end of November, the town of Brewster and its partners completed major construction on the Stony Brook Salt Marsh both on schedule and under budget. Funded by a \$1.36 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), the project included installation of a new culvert under Route 6A where it crosses the tidal portion of Stony Brook, restoring natural tidal flow to a 20-acre degraded salt marsh and enhancing fish access to 386 acres of ponds that provide essential habitat for river herring and American eels.

When the Massachusetts Wetlands Restoration Program (now part of the Division of Ecological Restoration) was created in 1994, it was the first state program in the nation to help communities restore degraded wetlands. These projects - the first of which was completed in 1998 - deliver significant environmental benefits including reduced flood damage, improved water quality, and enhanced fish and wildlife habitat. Since 2007, modest investments of state resources in projects from the Berkshires to Cape Cod have leveraged \$23 million in federal, municipal, non-profit and private sector funding.

"I want to congratulate Governor Patrick for reaching this important milestone for our coastal economy," said Congressman Bill Delahunt. "The Brewster project is the most recent initiative in a long list of restoration projects we are undertaking in my district. While the federal government funds the lion's share of work, the projects simply would not happen without the enthusiastic support of our governor and an impressive coalition of groups, including local and county government, and environmental organizations like the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod."

Like the Brewster Stony Brook project, most of the wetlands restored to date are salt marshes that have been degraded by road, rail and other man-made crossings that restrict tidal flow.

"Salt marshes continue to be one of the most critical coastal habitats under the greatest threat from water pollution, antiquated infrastructure, development, invasive species and sea level rise," said John Catena, Northeast Regional Supervisor of the NOAA Restoration Center. "The Commonwealth is one of our strongest restoration partners nationwide."

"Habitat restoration promotes healthy rivers, streams and wetlands, which pay important economic, environmental and quality of life dividends for our communities today and for future generations," said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin.

Tidal wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on earth and their productivity directly supports commercial and recreational fisheries. The healthier marshes are, the better they can serve as nurseries for a host of fish, from predators such as striped bass and winter flounder, to prey such as sticklebacks and mummichogs.

Created in 2009 by the merger of the Wetlands Restoration and Riverways Programs, DER now spearheads and

coordinates habitat restoration activities throughout the state. There are more than 40 wetland projects under development representing over 2,000 acres of future restoration potential.

"Massachusetts is a regional and national leader in wetland acres restored and sheer number of projects implemented," said Bill Hubbard of the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Coastal America Partnership. "In addition, projects in the state frequently involve contributions from the private sector through a strategic partnership with the Massachusetts Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP)."

"Our partnership with state restoration programs and others has been very rewarding and productive. It allows our corporate members and their employees to give back to local communities in ways that enhance everyone's quality of life," said George Olson, CWRP Chairman and Procter & Gamble representative. "The Massachusetts CWRP has donated well over one million dollars in cash and services, helping to leverage millions more in federal grants to priority ecological restoration projects in Massachusetts over the past decade."

In addition to NOAA and USACE, other key federal restoration partners include the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The mission of the Division of Ecological Restoration is to restore and protect the Commonwealth's rivers, wetlands and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment. The Division was created in 2009 with the merger of the Riverways and Wetland Restoration Programs and is coordinating 80 ecological restoration projects across the Commonwealth.

DFG is responsible for promoting the enjoyment and conservation of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land preservation and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and game species, and enforcement of the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. 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 lakes and ponds.