

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Grants for River Restoration Projects

\$72,000 in State Grants Leverage More Than \$1.1 Million in Federal Funds

BOSTON— December 9, 2015- The Baker-Polito Administration today announced \$72,000 in state grant funds for river restoration efforts in Andover, Freetown, and Pelham, matched by more than \$1.1 million in federal grants. The funds have been awarded to implement ongoing projects coordinated by the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Ecological Restoration (DER).

"It is important to remove aging and unsafe dams that pose a risk to public health, public safety and key economic centers," said Governor Charlie Baker. "These state and federal funds will enable rivers to be restored to their natural state, reducing flooding risks and improving ecological conditions."

"In addition to protecting the Commonwealth's natural resources, ecological restoration projects create green jobs in the engineering, construction and nursery industries and boost local economies," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. "I am proud we could work with our federal partners to help communities fund these important dam removal and restoration projects."

"Ecological restoration projects reduce flood impacts, increase property values, and assist in the recovery of commercially and recreationally important fisheries," said Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton. "The Baker-Polito Administration is committed to conserving the Commonwealth's land and wildlife, as well as proactively taking steps to increase our resilience to the effects of climate change."

Each of the grants was awarded to projects previously designated as part of the DER's Priority Projects Program. DER pursues wetland and river restoration, urban river revitalization, and stream flow restoration projects that present the greatest benefit to the Commonwealth, ecologically, socially and economically.

"The staff of the Division of Ecological Restoration knows how to work with our great partners to take a small amount of state resources to attract significant federal grant funds," said Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner George Peterson. "These projects benefit many types of fish and wildlife, including cold water fish like trout, and migratory fish such as river herring and sea lamprey."

Investments in ecological restoration projects produce an average employment demand of 12.5 jobs and \$1.75 million in total economic output for each \$1 million spent.

In addition to the \$72,000 of state funds from the Environmental Bond Bill, an additional \$30,000 from the Holyoke Coal Tar Natural Resource Damages (NRD) Trustee Council will support the Pelham project. EEA Secretary Beaton is one of three trustees on this NRD council, and the NRD program in Holyoke is being implemented by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

"Dramatic habitat improvements have already been demonstrated since the removal of the Bartlett Rod Shop Company Dam in 2012," said MassDEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg. "Use of a portion of the remaining NRD funds for the removal of the timber dam will extend these ecological benefits even further."

The Department of Fish and Game designates Priority Projects through an open and competitive process. The following grants were awarded in the latest round of Priority Projects funding.

Town of Andover and Atria Senior Living, Inc. - \$25,000 awarded to the Town of Andover and \$12,000 to Atria

Senior Living, Inc. for two dam removal projects on the Shawsheen River in Andover. These funds help to match \$789,000 from the Department of Interior's Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief-Coastal Resilience Grant program via the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Shawsheen River is a tributary of the Merrimack River, and removal of the dams will restore passage for resident and migratory fish and improve public safety. Both dams exacerbate flooding and are in various stages of disrepair.

City of Fall River - \$35,000 awarded to the City of Fall River for the restoration of Rattlesnake Brook, a tributary of the Taunton River. State funds will help match \$368,000 federal funds from the Department of Interior's Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief-Coastal Resilience Grant program via the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Funds will pay for the removal of the Bleachery Dam located at the mouth of Rattlesnake Brook where it meets the tidal Assonet River in Freetown. The brook flows out of a protected watershed in the Freetown/Fall River State Forest, and the aging and unsafe dam is owned by the City of Fall River.

HRD Press of Pelham - \$30,000 awarded for the second phase of the Amethyst Brook Restoration Project. Following the removal of the Bartlett Rod Shop Company Dam in 2012, construction funds will pay for the removal of Allen Dam, a timber structure on a high-quality coldwater stream in the Connecticut River watershed. Funding for this project is provided by Clean Water Action and the Holyoke Coal Tar Natural Resource Damages Trustee Council, including National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

"Ecological restoration is a key part of ensuring our natural resources are protected for future generations," said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst). "Additionally, by leveraging federal grants, Massachusetts is being fiscally responsible by maximizing federal dollars to grow our economy and protect our environment."

"This grant will enable removal of an unsafe dam and will offer improvements to Rattlesnake Brook, a significant regional asset," said State Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport). "The brook has great environmental and wildlife importance, and I thank the Baker-Polito administration for their attention to our state's ecological resources."

"Flooding is and has been a serious problem and remains a major concern for residents and businesses in certain locations along the Shawsheen River in Andover," said State Senator Barbara L'Italien (D-Andover). "These important projects will go a long way toward improving public safety and alleviating concerns of property owners along the Shawsheen. The positive impacts to local wildlife and the natural environment by removing these aging structures are also huge pluses for the town and area. I am very grateful to the Baker-Polito Administration and the federal government for its support of this funding."

"Restoring Rattlesnake Brook has been a focus of mine since many of my constituents have a vested interest in the brook and its environs," said State Representative Carole Fiola (D-Fall River). "These funds are a tremendous boost in preserving our natural resources so they may be enjoyed for generations to come. I would like to thank the Baker-Polito Administration and the DER for their leadership and attention to this natural treasure in my district."

"This dam was a surprise when it was discovered: both historically significant and a problem for the health of Amethyst Brook," said State Representative Ellen Story (D-Amherst). "I am glad that people like Prof. Joseph Larson have researched and documented it, and I am grateful to the Department of Fish and Game for providing the second round of funding to dismantle it."

"The South Coast as a whole will greatly benefit from state and federal funding to restore the ecological functions of Rattlesnake Brook," said State Representative Paul A. Schmid (D-Westport). "I would like to especially thank the Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Fish and Game for their commitment to environmental and ecological conservation."

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 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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