

EEL RIVER HEADWATERS RESTORATION PROJECT

FACT SHEET

October 2009

River and wetland restoration activities are underway in the headwaters of the Eel River, a small spring-fed system that eventually drains to Plymouth Harbor. The purpose of the project is to make dramatic improvements to wetland and riverine habitat that will result in new and more abundant fish and wildlife, help the local ecology be more resilient in the face of future stress, and enhance public use of conservation land now and for the future.

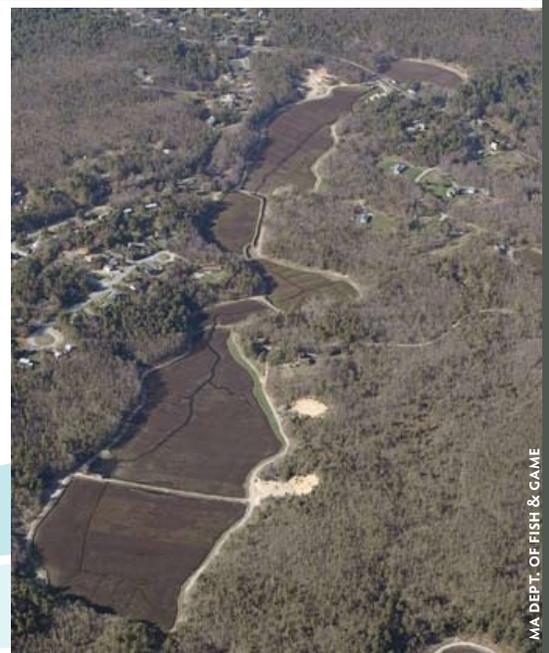
The project area includes approximately 40 acres of retired cranberry bogs, as well as the Sawmill Pond Dam, a small stone dam and impoundment located downstream of the bogs. Now known as the Eel River Preserve, the area is managed by the Town of Plymouth for public use and benefit.

HOW WILL THE RESTORATION BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Restoration activities in the bogs will include reconstruction of a natural stream channel, placement of in-stream habitat features, filling of artificial side channels, removal of berms and water control structures, and replacement of undersized culverts to enhance fish passage. Sawmill Pond Dam will be re-configured to allow fish passage, and a restored river channel and floodplain will be rebuilt in the existing impoundment.

Rare wetland plant communities will also be reestablished. Over 24,000 plants including more than 17,000 Atlantic white cedar trees will be planted. This is the first large scale restoration of this rare wetland type in Massachusetts.

The majority of site restoration activities are expected to be completed by 2011, with follow-up monitoring and planting for several additional years as needed.



MA DEPT. OF FISH & GAME

THE EEL RIVER HEADWATERS RESTORATION PROJECT INCLUDES SOME 40 ACRES OF RETIRED CRANBERRY BOGS.

EEL RIVER BY THE NUMBERS

Total project cost	\$1.9 million
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$1 million
USDA-NRCS	\$350,000
Mass. DEP	\$400,000
Total project area	60 acres
Wetland acres restored	40 acres
Miles of stream restored.....	1.7 miles
Atlantic white cedar trees planted	17,000
Other trees, shrubs and herbs planted	7,000
Earthwork material	30,000 cubic yards
Wood used to construct in-stream habitat	500 large pieces

PROJECT PARTNERS



WHY IS THIS WORK NECESSARY?

Past agricultural activities resulted in the removal of trees, modification of the stream channel, and construction of upland berms and water control structures.

The downstream dam is a barrier to fish migration and the impoundment affects habitat, water quality and natural riverine processes.



EEL RIVER CRANBERRY BOGS IN 2005.

USDA - NRCS

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS?

The Eel River Headwaters Restoration Project will improve fish passage, promote a healthy coldwater fishery, improve water quality, establish rare wetland communities, and provide the public with recreational and educational opportunities.

The increased biological diversity in the headwaters area will improve ecological resilience. As a cold-water fishery, the restored stream will provide suitable habitat for temperature-sensitive species, such as brook trout.

The restored landscape will be connected to other conservation land, providing migration corridors for a variety of species while also becoming part a recreational trail that interprets the historical use of the area.

The project will also provide conservationists with valuable information that will guide other wetland restoration efforts. And, future generations will inherit and enjoy the Eel River Preserve.

HISTORY OF THE EEL RIVER PRESERVE

The Eel River Preserve was historically a wetland known as "Finney's Meadow." The river once flowed uninterrupted to the ocean and supported an array of wildlife. In the early 1800s, a series of mills and dams were constructed. Cranberry farming began in the late 1800s and continued until 2002.

In 2006, Plymouth's Community Preservation Committee purchased cranberry bogs from the Phoenix Cranberry Corporation. This land abutted other town-owned property purchased with CPA funds from cranberry grower Ashley Holmes. The town converted the entire area to public conservation land.

A partnership including the The Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts, the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, the Hornblower Foundation, the Sheehan Family Foundation and local residents funded conservation easements, the land purchase and some of the restoration costs. 💧



MORE THAN 17,000 ATLANTIC WHITE CEDAR TREES WILL BE PLANTED.



THE EEL RIVER

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THE SAWMILL POND DAM

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EASTERN BOX TURTLE

LIZ WILLEY



BRIDLE SHINER

MA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



BARRENS BUCKMOTH

M.W. NELSON

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Town of Plymouth

www.plymouth-ma.gov

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

www.fws.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov

Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game

Division of Ecological Restoration

www.mass.gov/dfwele

The Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org