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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Grants to Restore Rivers, Increase Climate Readiness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

2/16/2018

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Department of Fish and Game

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced \$97,397 in state grant funds for Priority Projects in the City of Northampton, and the Towns of Duxbury, Middleton, and West Boylston to remove dams, aid in the restoration of rivers to their natural state, and increase climate readiness. Benefits of river restoration include increased habitat for fish and wildlife, flood management, landscape development, and an increase in recreational opportunities and access. The grant funds are administered by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game’s (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER).

“By working with local communities and organizations, the Baker-Polito Administration is able to assist in the removal of aging dams, which will reduce the impact of floods, and improve ecosystems and habitats,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton.** “The projects receiving funding benefit local, regional, and state economies by creating and sustaining jobs within the construction, engineering, and nursery industries.”

Priority Projects are evaluated by DER on their ecological benefit, cost, size, practicality, feasibility, contribution to climate readiness, opportunity for public education and recreation, available program resources, and partner support. They are chosen through a state-wide, competitive process, with selected projects commencing when the DER issues a pre-Request for Responses (RFR). Eligible applicants include municipalities, private property owners, non-profits, and academic institutions. Selected projects are also eligible to receive technical services such as data collection, engineering, design work, and permitting; project management and fundraising assistance from DER staff; and small grants.

“We are particularly excited about the benefits that these projects provide for cold water fish such as brook trout and migratory fish such as river herring,” **said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Ronald Amidon.** “River restoration also provides greater recreational opportunities for people who enjoy fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.”

The four Priority Project grant projects include:

Ipswich River Restoration, South Middleton Dam Removal, Middleton

Award: Ipswich River Watershed Association, \$22,397 (state grant)

The South Middleton Dam is located on the Ipswich River in Middleton, MA. The dam is the furthest upstream obstruction on the Ipswich River, but is the only structure that does not provide fish passage for migrating species. The removal of this structure will eliminate an aging, unused dam from the river, improving public safety and reducing risk to downstream infrastructure, including the Boston Street Bridge. This project is also one of the largest river restoration opportunities in Massachusetts. Dam removal will improve river function by restoring upstream connectivity to 57 miles of river and tributary habitat, as well as 119 acres of coastal headwater ponds that were historically important spawning and nursery areas for river herring. In addition to river herring, removal of this dam will also benefit sea

lamprey, American eel, and native eastern brook trout. This grant will support cultural and historical resources, surveys of the dam, and its environs.

South River Restoration, Temple Street Dam Removal, Duxbury

Award: Town of Duxbury, \$10,000 (state grant)

The South River is home to alewife, blueback herring, American eel, and sea lamprey. American shad spawn at the head of tide, and its tributaries have isolated populations of wild eastern brook trout. The third dam on the river, the Temple Street Dam (a.k.a. Boys and Girls Club #2 Dam) is owned by the Town of Duxbury which is exploring its removal. The removal of this dam would provide a habitat gain of 4.2 miles (75% of potential stream miles) of headwater stream plus 6.5 acres of open water wetland. A tributary to the South River, Phillips Brook, enters upstream of Temple Street Dam and has been documented as brook trout habitat by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. This grant will provide funds to complete analysis of the hydrological conditions at the site and the hydraulics affected by a potential dam removal. Partners on the project include the North and South Rivers Watershed Association, the Town of Duxbury and the Town of Marshfield

Quinapoxet River Restoration, Quinapoxet Dam Removal, West Boylston

Award: Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), \$40,000 (state grant)

DER and MWRA are working together to remove the Quinapoxet Dam on the Quinapoxet River at Oakdale Station in West Boylston. The dam is next to the exit-shaft of the Quabbin Aqueduct and is just upstream from the Wachusett Reservoir, part of the water supply for the Boston area. The dam does not serve a purpose, and MWRA, DFG, and DCR are working together to remove it while also protecting the drinking water infrastructure managed by MWRA. The Quinapoxet River is a well-loved coldwater fishery, and removing the dam will open up an estimated 35 miles (upstream, including main stem and tributary) of coldwater habitat for landlocked salmon and other species. Removing the dam will also eliminate liability and maintenance for the dam owner. The grant will assist MWRA to develop permit-ready plans for the removal.

Upper Roberts Meadow Brook Restoration, Upper Roberts Meadow Brook Dam Removal, Northampton

Award: City of Northampton, \$25,000 (state grant)

The City of Northampton (City) Department of Public Works (DPW) is removing the Upper Roberts Meadow Reservoir (URMR) Dam to improve public safety and restore Roberts Meadow Brook. The brook is a cold water stream with a resident trout population. Removal of the 30-foot high dam will provide numerous environmental benefits, including conversion of the dam impoundment back to a free-flowing reach, re-connection of approximately nine miles of upstream habitat for fish and other aquatic

organisms, and repair of ecological processes that support a healthy stream system including the movement of sediment and organic matter. This grant will support the City in completing the permitting phase, conducting the bid phase, and beginning the project implementation phase.

“I am very happy that West Boylston was able to secure this Priority Projects funding,” **said Senate President Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester)**. “The Quinapoxet Dam removal project will open up the environment to new freshwater space, and will protect existing drinking water infrastructure. Receiving this grant is fantastic news.”

“Removing the Quinapoxet Dam will provide additional habitat for salmon and other wildlife in our beloved Quinapoxet River while preserving the integrity of the Wachusett Reservoir,” **said State Representative James O’Day (D-Worcester)**. “I am grateful to the Department of Fish and Game’s Division of Ecological Restoration for this grant to enhance West Boylston’s natural waterways and remove the unnecessary dam.”

“Preserving and strengthening the health of the Ipswich River is a critical mission for our region and our state,” **said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester)**. “This grant funding supports important steps in advancing that mission, and gives resources to an organization that has proven time and again its commitment to the stewardship of the river and its ecosystem.”

“Removing the South Middleton Dam will result in many important environmental and public safety benefits for residents of the Ipswich River Watershed District, as it will eliminate a hazardous structure, provide for increased recreational access along the waterway, and allow fish to migrate up and down stream for the first time since the dam was built,” **said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading)**. “The grant funding awarded by the Department of Fish and Game will help move this important project one step closer to completion.”

“Removing this dam is a quick and efficient solution to restore the flow of the Ipswich River which will improve recreational opportunities and allow the fish in the lower part of the river unimpeded access to thrive and repopulate the upper watershed for the first time in centuries,” **said State Representative Theodore Speliotis (D-Danvers)**.

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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DER restores and protects rivers, wetlands, and watersheds in Massachusetts for the benefit of people and the environment.

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