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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Grants for Marine Animal Conservation and Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects

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FALMOUTH – The Baker-Polito Administration today awarded \$542,354 in grants to 16 projects across the state for the restoration and improvement of aquatic habitat, rivers and watersheds, and protection of endangered marine animals, including at-risk sea turtles and the rarest large whale, the North Atlantic right whale. The grants, funded by the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, were announced by Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton during an event at the Waquoit Bay Estuary Watershed.

“The Massachusetts Environmental Trust continues to have a meaningful impact on the Commonwealth’s environmental resources and natural habitat,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “Funding projects that aim to preserve and protect marine wildlife and environmental resources is consistent with our Administration’s commitment to working closely with local partners around the Commonwealth to improve natural habitats and promote environmental stewardship.”

Since it was founded in 1988 as part of the Boston Harbor cleanup, the Massachusetts Environmental Trust has awarded more than \$20 million in grants to organizations statewide that provide a wide array of environmental services, from supporting water projects in communities to protecting coastal habitats. Funding for this program comes from the sale of the state’s three environmentally-themed specialty license plates: the Right Whale Tail, the Leaping Brook Trout, and the Blackstone Valley Mill.

“The grants being awarded by the Baker-Polito Administration will help to protect marine animals and restore critical aquatic ecosystems,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “This funding has been made possible because over 40,000 drivers in Massachusetts choose to purchase one of the three environmental license plates, and I applaud our state’s residents for their continued commitment to the well-being of the Commonwealth’s environment.”

The grants awarded by the Baker-Polito Administration include:

Association to Preserve Cape Cod (Dennis) - \$50,000 has been awarded to improve habitat for at-risk fish by providing Report Cards on the health of Cape Cod’s waters, an Atlas of Water Restoration Needs, and a State of the Waters report to improve public knowledge of water quality and guide policy and restoration.

Associated Scientists at Woods Hole (Woods Hole) - \$6,000 has been awarded to help underwrite Right Whale News, a quarterly newsletter distributed electronically to enhance informed participation in efforts to conserve and recover the North Atlantic right whale and its habitats.

Berkshire Environmental Action Team (Pittsfield) - \$35,000 has been awarded for the continuation of a regionalized method of surveying and sampling stormwater outfalls in Berkshire County. BEAT and partners will survey stormwater outfalls in Pittsfield, Dalton, and Lanesborough. In 2015, in partnership with the HVA and a grant from MET resulted in a “Model Separate Sewer System Surveying and

Monitoring” program where BEAT and volunteers surveyed 17.75 miles of the Housatonic River and mapped 288 outfalls and tested 9 outfalls of which 6 tested outside the state regulation.

Blackstone River Coalition (Worcester) - \$25,000 has been awarded to re-launch a campaign called “*Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone Valley River.*” This project will take a grassroots approach to tackling stormwater impacts with the goal of reducing phosphorus, improving aquatic habitat, and increasing recreational opportunities, specifically in the cold-water fishery resources in the Massachusetts reach of the watershed.

Buzzards Bay Coalition (New Bedford) - \$17,500 has been awarded for the installation of over 100 signs at high-visibility waterfront locations around Buzzards Bay. These signs will describe the health of the local water body and how it is impacted by nitrogen pollution.

Clean River Project (Methuen) - \$45,000 has been awarded to remove 200 floating trees that are causing serious problems in the Merrimack River and to clean up 11 abandoned homeless encampments along the river. The floating trees need to be removed as they are interfering with the safety and healthy use of the river. The abandoned homeless camps also pose a serious health threat to the river and area surroundings. The outcome will be that these dangerous, disease ridden, seriously polluted areas will be transformed into environmentally safe and healthy spots to be enjoyed by all.

Coonamessett Farm Foundation (East Falmouth) - \$17,060 has been awarded to improve our understanding of sea turtle ecology in Cape Cod waters by conducting stable isotope and fatty acid analyses on various tissue types to assess general patterns in prey preferences and habitat utilization within and among sea turtle species.

Connecticut River Conservancy (Greenfield) - \$30,000 has been awarded for Year 3 of a project to restore the imperiled Brook Floater freshwater mussel to suitable waterbodies in Massachusetts by conducting field surveys of Brook Floater and assessing habitat and water quality condition in streams with mussels while simultaneously working to develop methods to propagate Brook Floater for population augmentation and reintroduction.

Groundwork Lawrence (Lawrence) - \$31,696 has been awarded for the restoration of riparian corridor, erosion control through riverfront pathway construction, and trash removal along the riverbank on the riparian corridor along the Spicket River and Merrimack River at the Ferrous Site Urban Wild in Lawrence. These activities will encourage young adult engagement in natural resources management of an urban river.

Housatonic Valley Association (Stockbridge) - \$13,529 has been awarded to create a community project to restore and protect the Southwest Branch of the Housatonic River. The goal is to get this branch delisted from the MassDEP Category 5 303 (d) list of impaired waterways for bacteria and sedimentation.

Ipswich River Watershed Association (Ipswich) - \$43,160 has been awarded to incorporate a novel tidal road-stream crossing protocol into the existing North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) crossing assessment system while training regional survey leaders throughout the state in the implementation of the protocol to the Parker, Ipswich, and Essex (PIE) Rivers' watersheds in northeastern, Massachusetts. This project is in partnership with the UMass Amherst.

Mystic River Watershed Association (Arlington) - \$25,000 has been awarded to educate municipal leaders and residents on phosphorus monitoring and impacts on water bodies and approaches to reduce nutrients based on the conclusion of a multi-year study and control plan for phosphorus pollution in the watershed.

Nashua River Watershed Association (Groton) - \$24,282 has been awarded to restore aquatic habitat on small streams by making community officials, citizens, and volunteers aware of the importance of managing and improving road culverts to improve stream connectivity and avoid flooding.

The Sporting Safety, Conservation and Education Fund of Falmouth (Falmouth) - \$59,810 has been awarded for completion of the design and permitting process required to remove an earthen dam and repair a fish ladder to create a more natural river channel and coldwater habitat to support brook trout in the Upper Childs River. This is a collaborative effort by many partners in the Falmouth and Mashpee communities, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration.

Trout Unlimited (Statewide) - \$45,043 has been awarded to collect novel data on water quality, macroinvertebrates, and fish responses to dam removal across diverse streams in Massachusetts and to advance knowledge of river restoration through dam removal and guide future restoration.

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (Woods Hole) - \$74,274 has been awarded for a collaborative pilot study to gather critical physical and physiologic data from Leatherback sea turtles during Atlantic Large Whale and Sea Turtle Disentanglement events off Massachusetts; and to monitor post-release survival via satellite and acoustic telemetry. Post-release mortality data are important for the purpose of developing lethal and non-lethal incidental take estimates for NMFS Section 7 consultations for federal fisheries and for Section 10(a)(1)(B) permits for incidental taking of protected species in state fisheries.

"The vibrant and diverse wildlife and ecosystems of Cape Cod are one of its defining features and greatest assets," **said State Senator Vinny deMacedo (R-Plymouth)**. "I want to thank the Baker-Polito Administration for their continued investment in protecting these valuable natural resources and recognizing their importance in bringing visitors and groundbreaking research to our region."

"I want to thank the Baker-Polito Administration and Secretary Beaton for their continued commitment to our fragile environment here on Cape Cod," **said State Representative Timothy Whelan (R-Brewster)**.

“These monies will help the APCC tackle some very serious concerns and for that I am very grateful”

“The Massachusetts Environmental Trust is once again using state revenue wisely to protect endangered marine animals and improve our aquatic habitat which is fundamental to preserving the quality of life on and surrounding Cape Cod,” **said State Senator Julian Cyr (D-Truro)**. “In particular, this year’s investment in projects and reports that keep track of the health of Cape Cod waters will be a vital resource for so many municipalities and environmental stakeholders as we work collectively to remove excess nitrogen that has polluted our waters for too long.”

“The Cape and Islands is unparalleled in its natural beauty and it is incumbent upon us to preserve our region for future generations,” **said State Representative Dylan Fernandes (D-Falmouth)**. “Thank you to the Administration for investing in our natural resources and working to protect marine life.”

The Massachusetts Environmental Trust, established by the Massachusetts Legislature as a state trust in 1988, is governed by a nine-member board of trustees appointed by the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

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