

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

New Bedford Harbor, Massachusetts

The Problem

New Bedford Harbor is a major commercial fishing port and industrial center in southeastern Massachusetts. From the 1940s to the 1970s, electrical parts manufacturers discharged wastes containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and toxic metals into the harbor. Hundreds of acres of marine sediment were highly contaminated, resulting in reproductive impairment and death of marine life.

Restoring the Resources

In 1992, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (Trustees) reached a settlement with the Responsible Parties for \$20.2 million. Priorities for restoration include marshes and wetlands, shellfish, anadromous fish, endangered species, and recreational areas. To date, the Trustees have spent \$12 million and completed 13 restoration-related projects. The Trustees have fully funded each of the restoration efforts; however, a number of organizations have provided in-kind services.

Accomplishments

Land Preservation

- Permanently protected 388 acres of land in the New Bedford Harbor environment through purchase or conservation restrictions. A variety of habitats, including tidal and riverine wetlands, beach, and forested uplands, were protected.
- Total Project Cost: \$3 million
- Partners: Fairhaven/Acushnet Land Preservation Trust, Town of Fairhaven
- Status: Additional protection efforts are ongoing.

Highlights

- Protected 388 acres of wildlife habitat in the New Bedford Harbor environment.
- Restored 6.5 acres of saltmarsh in Dartmouth, Massachusetts.
- Enhanced federally-listed endangered roseate tern habitat.
- Implemented a variety of actions to improve New Bedford Harbor shellfisheries.
- Restored herring access to 200 acres of spawning habitat in the Acushnet River.
- Restored four eelgrass beds in New Bedford Harbor.

B. Bryant, The Coalition for Buzzards Bay



Land protected at Popes Beach, Fairhaven, MA will preserve limited remaining beach front habitat.

Salt Marsh Restoration

- Restored 6.5 acres of saltmarsh in the Town of Dartmouth in 2003. Currently assessing feasibility of restoring 130 additional acres of degraded saltmarsh in Dartmouth and Fairhaven.
- Total Project Cost: \$47,000 for 6.5-acre project
- Partners: Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust, Town of Dartmouth, University of Rhode Island
- Status: ongoing

B. Bryant, The Coalition for Buzzards Bay



Padanaram saltmarsh in Dartmouth, MA following restoration.

Terns

- Monitoring, managing and enhancing federally-listed endangered roseate and common tern nesting locations at Bird, Ram and Penikese Islands to increase local tern populations. Greater nesting opportunities are also being created by filling and stabilizing portions of Bird Island.
- Total Project Cost: \$1 million
- Partners: State of Massachusetts, Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Status: ongoing



Public access is limited as part of an effort to enhance tern nesting at this location on Bird Island in Marion, MA.

Shellfish

- Purchased and planted adult and seed quahogs, bay scallops and soft shell clams, relayed contaminated quahogs to clean areas to allow depuration to take place, and developed a regional shellfish management plan with monitoring and enforcement activities.
- Total Project Cost: \$1.35 million
- Partners: City of New Bedford, Town of Fairhaven, Town of Dartmouth
- Status: ongoing

NOAA



The completed fishway at the New Bedford Reservoir restores herring access to 200 acres of spawning habitat.

Anadromous Fish

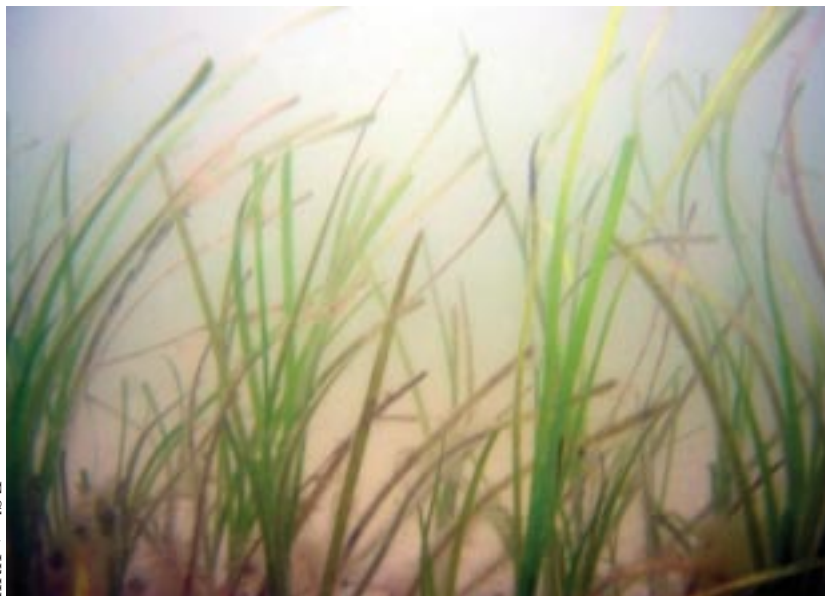
- Restored herring access to 200 acres of spawning habitat via a 265-foot-long fishway at the New Bedford Reservoir dam in the Acushnet River.
- Total Project Cost: \$170,000
- Partners: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Marine Fisheries
- Status: Continuing to assess and restore fish passage at other dams on the Acushnet River.

Eelgrass

- Surveyed and assessed the distribution and condition of eelgrass throughout the New Bedford Harbor estuary and transplanted eelgrass from established beds to four priority restoration areas.
- Total Project Cost: \$450,000
- Partners: University of New Hampshire, volunteers
- Status: Monitoring is ongoing.

Other

- Dedicated \$4.4 million for the construction of two parks in the City of New Bedford.
- Funded the New Bedford Harbor Wetlands Restoration Plan, which was released in 2003. The Plan identified 69 potential wetland restoration sites in the New Bedford Harbor environment.



F. Short, UNH

One of four restored eelgrass beds off Fort Phoenix Reservation, Fairhaven

For more information, contact:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New England Field Office
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300
Concord, NH 03301-5087
603/223 2541

Federal Relay Service
for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
1 800/877 8339

<http://www.fws.gov>

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