



For more information contact:
Monica Allen, NOAA, 301-713-2370
Steve Block, NOAA, 978-281-9127
Jack Terrill, NOAA, 978-281-9136

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 11, 2007

New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council and partners celebrate opening of fish passages on the Acushnet River

The New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council and its project partners dedicated three fish passages today that allow migratory fish to swim the entire eight-mile length of the Acushnet River to reach spawning habitat.

The \$1.4 million project enables river herring, eels and other migratory fish to travel from Buzzards Bay up the Acushnet River and into the New Bedford Reservoir, an important freshwater spawning area for herring that has been difficult for fish to reach for decades.

Increasing the amount of habitat for these species helps restore fish populations and improves the overall health of the ecosystem. River herring are an important food for species such as striped bass and bluefish that are valuable to recreational and commercial fishermen.

"New Bedford Harbor, the Acushnet River, and Buzzards Bay are glorious natural resources that were badly damaged by industrial pollution," said Ian Bowles, Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, who serves as trustee for the Commonwealth on the Harbor Trustee Council. "The projects we are celebrating today will help restore wildlife habitat in the Buzzards Bay Basin by restoring migratory fish access to a four-mile stretch of the Acushnet River."

"We appreciate the cooperation and support we have received from our many public and private partners on this project, said Christopher Mantzaris, Harbor Trustee Council representative for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "This unique project was possible because of the help of landowners willing to sell their property for protection, landowners willing to let us work on their property, and assistance from key town and state agency officials."

"I am truly pleased by the progress made to protect and restore the natural resources that were injured as a result of contamination. This restoration project will contribute to the healthy return of populations of finfish and other wildlife to the area," said Michael Bartlett, trustee representative for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The project includes the partial breach of the Acushnet Sawmill Dam and construction of a weir system made of native stones that allows fish to swim over the remaining portion of the dam. The sawmill fishway involved the purchase of the Acushnet Sawmill site by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay with funding from the New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council.

Further upriver, another fishway made of native stones will allow migratory fish to swim over the Hamlin Street Dam. The third fishway, completed five years ago, is a 265-foot Denil fish ladder at the New Bedford Reservoir. A Denil fish ladder uses a series of closely spaced baffles in a channel to redirect the flow of water to allow fish to swim over a dam.

The New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council is composed of trustee representatives from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Council administers a \$20.4 million fund derived from settlements with manufacturers that discharged polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into New Bedford Harbor and the Acushnet River. The fund is dedicated solely to the restoration of injured natural resources and their uses. For more information about the Trustee Council, please visit their website at www.restorenbh.gov

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries Service, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

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