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**NOAA Renews Partnership with The Nature Conservancy:
Works with New England Communities to Restore Coastal Habitats**

NOAA has teamed up once again with The Nature Conservancy to preserve America's valuable coastal resources. The new three-year partnership will build on past successes protecting coastal and marine habitat, while engaging local communities through volunteer and educational opportunities.

NOAA's Restoration Center has awarded \$800,000 in the first year to fund the restoration of fish and shellfish habitat in 14 innovative projects that stretch from the California shores to the oyster beds of New England and Florida. NOAA will award \$123,149 to three projects in New England. NOAA staff collaborated with The Nature Conservancy during the project selection process and will provide technical expertise and oversight through the life of the partnership.

"America's rich history began with early settlers building their communities on the wealth of marine resources available along our coasts and rivers," said William T. Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries Service. "These projects will help rebuild oyster reefs, open rivers for sturgeon and salmon and restore habitat for oysters and other shellfish. They will improve the environment and benefit the economies of local communities."

In the Northeast region, the following projects were selected to receive partnership support. In addition to the NOAA award listed below, TNC's Global Marine Initiative will provide a match.

**Characterizing Shortnose Sturgeon Spawning Habitat in the Penobscot River, Maine
\$25,149**

In 2006, shortnose sturgeon – a federally listed endangered species – was documented in the Penobscot River for the first time in 30 years. The upcoming removal of the Veazie and Great Works dams will likely have profound implications for sturgeon and other migratory fish species in the river. The partnership-funded study will provide a true assessment of sturgeon reproduction and reproductive habitat requirements that can be used to better plan future restoration activities and anticipate potential recovery benefits from the dam removals.

**Restoring Hard Clams and Eelgrass in Rhode Island's Coastal Ponds
\$55,000**

TNC and local partners plan to enhance existing spawning sanctuaries for quahogs by transplanting 360,000 disease-free adult clams into the Ninigret and Quonochontaug ponds. They will simultaneously expand eelgrass habitats by hand-planting 20,000 shoots in areas adjacent to the sanctuaries. Shellfish transplanting efforts will involve local shellfishermen and volunteers organized by the Salt Ponds Coalition while Save the Bay will actively solicit volunteers for the eelgrass restoration.

Opening Up Fish Passage in the Canoe-Snake-Mill River Watershed, Massachusetts \$43,000

This project seeks to restore river connectivity and habitat, provide fish passage, and improve public safety at four dams in the Canoe-Snake-Mill River watershed: Taunton State Hospital, Reed & Barton, Whittenton Pond, and Morey's Bridge dams. An estimated 37 river miles of habitat will be opened up for river herring, American eel, and other resident fish species.

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 70 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.

NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP), a financial and technical assistance program within the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, promotes strong partnerships at the national, regional and local level to fund grassroots, community-based activities. The NOAA-funded projects provide strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that offer educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. More information about CRP can be found at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

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