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NOAA and Partners Restore Salt Marsh and Fish Passage on Cape Cod *First NOAA Open Rivers Initiative Project in Massachusetts*

NOAA and its local and national partners have successfully completed a \$1.5 million multi-year project to restore a salt marsh and fish passage for migrating herring on Cape Cod.

“We worked with our partners to restore an entire watershed – an impressive accomplishment,” said Tim Keeney, NOAA deputy assistant secretary for oceans and atmosphere. “This project demonstrates that something as simple as replacing a culvert can have a dramatic effect in helping sustain our nation’s fisheries.”

NOAA and its partners provided the town of Dennis, Mass. with technical assistance and funding to successfully complete the restoration project. NOAA contributed \$475,000 to the project.

The restoration involved replacing a failed, 2-foot diameter culvert beneath Bridge Street with two 12-foot wide by 10-foot tall box culverts – 60 times the size of the original culvert. This wider opening will allow much more saltwater to flow upstream, where it will restore the marsh’s natural tidal flow, salinity, and native vegetation, bringing life back to 65 acres of salt marsh. The increased flow will also allow river herring to swim upstream to spawn in Scargo Lake.

In the process, the project also addressed a public safety problem. Bridge Street had a recurring sink hole in the road because of the failed culvert, causing the town to close the bridge over Sesuit Creek to traffic for several months in 2007. The new culverts will allow vehicles to safely travel over the creek; a new sidewalk promotes pedestrian safety for a once-dangerous crossing.

“This project is the best example of a multi-level, multi-interest partnership that this town has ever experienced,” said Paul McCormick, vice chairman of the town’s Board of Selectmen. “Federal and state agencies supported and encouraged the local public and private commitment for the project at every opportunity.”

This project is the first in Massachusetts to be funded by NOAA’s Open Rivers Initiative, which provides funding and technical expertise for community-driven, small dam and river barrier removals. Under the initiative, NOAA works with communities to remove up to 50 obsolete dams and rundown culverts across the nation each year. These projects will begin to repair river systems while also eliminating dangerous conditions that are prevalent at these outdated structures.

NOAA worked with several federal partners on the project, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, as well as state and local partners such as the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management’s Wetlands Restoration Program, the Massachusetts Highway Department, the town of Dennis, and the Sesuit Neck Homeowners Association.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, 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.

On the Web:

NOAA's Open Rivers Initiative: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/ORI/>