



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
New York District



## **\$27 Million NY/NJ Urban Wetlands Program Springs into Gear**

*Program Overhauls 143 Acres of Land, Hand Planting 1.5 Million New Plants*

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NEW YORK- April 24, 2006- Creating urban wetlands, which clean our water, reduce flood risks and provide essential fish and wildlife habitat, in one of the most populated regions in the world is no easy task. Balancing the needs of the Port of New York and New Jersey, the third largest port in the nation, and the Hudson Raritan Estuary, one of the largest estuaries on the east coast, takes planning, partnership and good science and engineering.

As part of Earth Day celebrations across the nation, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) today broke ground on a \$4.3 million Woodbridge Creek Ecosystem restoration project to build and preserve wetlands in New Jersey. Land for the site was donated by the Township of Woodbridge and property access granted by the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. This project is part of the ongoing \$27 million environmental mitigation program in the Hudson Raritan Estuary and being implemented in conjunction with the \$1.6 billion New York and New Jersey Harbor Deepening Project. The overall program will require a variety of more than 1.5 million plants to be replanted throughout the region.

“Working with our local, state and federal partners, we are capitalizing on opportunities to create and preserve wetlands in one of the most urbanized, industrialized areas in the

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nation. While these restoration projects are being undertaken to mitigate impacts from the harbor deepening project, the overall program will have long term, positive effects on our estuary long after the deepening projects are complete. Let there be no doubt. The Corps is committed in deed and action to environmental cleanup and enhancement. Nearly \$30 million of construction work is and will be undertaken with this groundbreaking and more than 1.5 million new plants are being planted in the restored wetlands. The environment isn't a side consideration, nor does it take a back seat to the critical federal channel deepening work. They go hand-in-hand," said Col. Richard J. Polo, Jr., New York District Engineer. "By balancing the needs of the 20 million people our port serves, while preserving and restoring the surrounding harbor estuary," Polo added," we are finding solutions and taking the proper steps to create a world class harbor estuary here in the Port of New York and New Jersey."

"The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is firmly committed to environmental stewardship while ensuring that we continue to enhance our ability to handle increased commerce to the region," said Richard Larrabee, Director, Port Commerce Department. "The Woodbridge wetlands restoration project represents a good example of what strong partnerships between public agencies can accomplish to effect positive change to our environment."

"Wetlands protect drinking-water supplies by filtering out contaminants, provide high-quality open space and serve as critical habitat for significant populations of New Jersey's fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. The DEP's participation in this partnership to restore urban wetlands demonstrates our commitment to protecting and enhancing this priceless natural resource," said DEP Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson.

In addition to the site in Woodbridge, N.J. other project areas include:

- \$3.3 million for the Joseph P. Medwick Park Restoration in Carteret, N.J., awarded to Dawson Corporation of Clarksburg, N.J.;

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- \$5.4 million for the Salt Marsh Mitigation Project at KeySpan Corporation in Staten Island, New York awarded to New York Concrete Corporation of Staten Island, N.Y.;
- and \$13 million for the Elder's Point (East) Island Restoration in Jamaica Bay, New York, awarded to Galvin Brothers of Great Neck, N.Y.

The Corps and the Port Authority will be restoring approximately 23 acres of tidal wetlands with an additional 27 acres being set aside for state preservation. A variety of more than 240,000 low marsh and high plants will be replanted. This restoration work will offset potential, unavoidable shallow water habitat impacts related to the deepening of the Port of New York and New Jersey. The project was awarded to Rencor Inc., of New Jersey. In coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the NJDEP, the project also allows for the restoration of 17.5 acres of tidal wetlands to provide compensatory restoration for the 1990 Exxon Bayway Oil Spill. The combined sites, including preservation areas, total nearly 70 acres and will be set aside as a wetland conservation area for the State of New Jersey.

Overall, the program will be mitigating, preserving and restoring more than 143 acres of wetland areas to re-establish tidal flow in the region. Once tidal flow to the areas has been reestablished, water and sediment quality will be improved, promoting the return of native fish and wildlife. This includes hand planting more than 1.5 million various types of low and high marsh plants, and removing more than 110,00 cubic yards of material. Removing invasive species such as phragmites, and replanting with a diverse group of high and low marsh plants such as smooth cordgrass, saltmeadow hay, spike grass and marsh elder, will provide nursery habitat for fish and other marine life in the estuary. These diverse marshes will also provide food and cover for waterfowl foraging and nesting in the area.

The program includes bi-state, local and federal partners such as New York State Department of State (NYSDES), New York State Department of Environmental

Conservation(NYSDEC), New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP), National Parks Service (Gateway), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), NOAA Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NJDEP, and Middlesex County, N.J. Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

The Hudson-Raritan Estuary, which surrounds the Port of New York and New Jersey, is more than 42,000 square kilometers, making it one of the largest estuaries on the east coast and one of the most populated with 20 million people in the region. According to the USFWS, nearly 80 percent of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary's tidal salt marshes have been lost and even less of its 224,000 acres of freshwater wetlands remain.

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