



The Coastal Program in the Southern New England – NY Bight *Caring for Our Coastal Habitats*

Overview

The Coastal Program is one of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's most successful and effective cooperative conservation programs. The mission of the Coastal Program is to protect and recover Federal Trust Species (threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and inter-jurisdictional fish) by supporting voluntary restoration and enhancement of high-priority coastal habitats. The Coastal Program provides financial and technical assistance to on-the-ground habitat restoration and protection projects through

locally-based field coordinators in 22 coastal areas around the nation. As a part of an on-going strategic planning effort, the Coastal Program is working with its Federal, State, local and non-governmental partners to identify geographic focus areas and develop targets to support conservation plans.

Priorities

The Southern New England – New York Bight Coastal Ecosystems Program (SNEP):

- identifies and shares information regarding important fish, wildlife, and plant populations;

- identifies fish and wildlife habitats that are significant from a watershed perspective and;
- creates opportunities to protect and restore priority habitat areas through local, state, corporate, and Federal partnerships.

The ecosystems of our area have been affected by destruction, alteration, and secondary impacts of human activity for over 300 years. Nationally, over 50% of the population lives along the coast. Housing, commerce, recreation, transportation, and energy infrastructure impacts to the coasts are enormous. The SNEP project area has the highest population density in our nation making conservation in our area very expensive and complex.

Coastal Program Locations



Future Challenges

Partnerships in the future must adapt to new realities if we are to be successful.

- climate change affects trust species diversity and habitats
- sea level rise threatens tidal wetlands and their restoration
- municipal land use decisions offer tremendous opportunity to protect fish and wildlife habitat

Our Program area and examples of several recent partnership projects are shown on the map. Several state partnership highlights are described below.

Rhode Island

Technical Support - SNEP was proud to contribute to several recent partnerships in the Ocean State. The first is our technical support role for the South County Land Trust Coalition. SNEP provided Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and biological expertise to identify and prioritize important land protection opportunities. The Coalition can now work more effectively to consult land owners and build partnerships to conserve important lands.



Restoration - the restoration of anadromous fish to historic habitats is a high priority for Rhode Island conservation partners. SNEP provided important technical support and funds to the partnership working to restore river herring in the Wood – Pawcatuck watershed in western Rhode Island. Using funds provided by a SNEP cooperative agreement, the Rhode Island DEM arranged for the analysis

of fish passage alternatives and public involvement for a fish passage project on the Patuxet River.



Connecticut

Long Island Sound - SNEP coordinated the final screening and recommendations for special ecological areas for the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative. This included discussions with Connecticut resource experts, preparing appropriate maps, and participating in public meetings to provide results and receive comments. There are 17 Connecticut inaugural sites recommended for the Stewardship Initiative such as Barn Island Wildlife Management Area pictured below.



Fish Access - SNEP provided technical expertise and crucial funding to the Branford Land Trust for site preparation and installation of a fish ladder at

the Branford Supply Ponds on Queach Brook, a tributary to the Branford River. The fish ladder restores anadromous fish access to 86 acres and 4 miles of productive habitat. This project will add biodiversity to the ecosystem and enhance the food web for fish-eating bird species.



Branford Fishway

New York

Long Island Sound – SNEP helped to launch the first year of the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, a \$1 million dollar grant program for the watershed. SNEP participated in applicant workshops, provided technical assistance to applicants, and ranked the proposals. As a result, 13 applicants from New York sites along the Sound received funds for a variety of restoration, monitoring, education, and stewardship projects. These projects engage diverse constituencies in efforts to conserve the natural resources within the watershed.



Futures Fund Project - Flax Pond, North Shore

Catadromous fish – SNEP worked with a variety of partners on Long Island planning and securing funding to restore catadromous fish access into several Long Island streams. Work on the Carmans River, Mud Creek, Swan River, and Nissequogue River will return alewife and other fish to historic habitat that has been blocked for many decades. Returning these species will add biodiversity to the watershed and enhance the food web for fish-eating bird species.

New Jersey

SNEP provided funds to the New Jersey DEP for a partnership to control invasive plants and replace a water control structure at the Petrecca property in southern New Jersey. This partnership enhanced habitat values at New Jersey's only accessible site for handicapped waterfowl hunters.



Massachusetts

SNEP contributed to recent partnership success along the coast as well as inland. In western Massachusetts SNEP was a partner in the removal of the Ballou Dam that restored Atlantic salmon and other migratory fish access to several miles of habitat along Yokum Brook.

In Buzzards Bay SNEP provided technical support that produced a NAWCA large grant to the partnership to protect wetlands along Slocum's River.

For More Information

For more information about SNEP contact Don Henne, Project Leader at 401-364-9124 or visit our internet site. <http://www.fws.gov/r5snep/>



Recent Highlights
Habitat Protection, Restoration,
Partnerships & Outreach

Southern New England / New York Bight
Coastal Ecosystems Program
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Charlestown, Rhode Island

