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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA, partners restore critical fish migration in Pennypack Creek

Philadelphia is one of America's first great cities, but most people don't think of it as a coastal area, much less the site of one of the most important coastal habitat restoration projects on the East Coast.

NOAA and its restoration partners would like Philadelphians to reconsider.

On Thursday, May 24, Tim Keeney, NOAA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, joins with NOAA's federal, state and local community partners to celebrate the removal of a series of dams from the Pennypack Creek, an important and historic tributary to the Delaware River. The event, followed by a tour of the creek project, begins at Pennypack Park at 10:15 a.m.

Three dams have been removed in the last two years, and a fourth is slated for removal later this year. In addition, a "rock ramp"-type fish passage is being installed on another dam. By the end of the project in 2008, seven dams will either be removed or retrofitted with fish passages, allowing migratory fish to reach more than 22 miles of important upstream spawning and nursery habitats for the first time in 300 years.

"This collaborative approach to restoring Pennypack Creek is the type of effective, locally-driven project that the NOAA Restoration Center seeks to support," said Keeney. "Removing these dams improves community safety, enhances recreational opportunities, and promises to restore populations of American shad, blueback herring, hickory shad and striped bass."

The Pennypack restoration opens the way for fish to swim from the ocean upriver where they can spawn and rear their young in the cool rocky streambed. While opening up new habitat alone will not immediately revive the fish species that have been dwindling in recent decades, it will greatly improve their opportunities to reproduce. The state of Pennsylvania will also help jump start the populations of hickory shad with a proven fish stocking program.

In some locations, dam removal has also spurred community efforts to restore stream banks, by planting new shrubs and grasses and improving trails, which has improved public access to the creek. It has also improved some creeks for kayaking and fishing, and boosted water quality. By removing obsolete dams at Bethayres, Frankford Avenue and Rhawn Street, NOAA and its partners have eliminated safety hazards for children, hikers and fishermen.

Another critical benefit for removing the Pennypack dams is for human safety. Without the dams, the chance of severe flooding is greatly diminished, which has been

a problem for communities along the waterway.

Along with NOAA, the Pennypack project has been led by several key partners including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, American Rivers, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Trout Unlimited, the Philadelphia Water Department, the Fairmount Parks Commission and the FishAmerica Foundation.

NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program has contributed more than $118,000 to this project, leveraging more than $250,000 in matching funds. In total, project partners and private stakeholders have invested $370,000 in the project.

NOAA is also working with its partners on other dam removal projects around the country as part of the new "Open Rivers Initiative." Under this initiative, NOAA will work with communities to remove up to 50 obsolete dams and rundown culverts around the country annually. To learn more about the Open Rivers Initiative, see our website for more details: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/ORI/.

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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