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NOAA and Partners Celebrate Dam Breaching on Patapsco River
Funding for project from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

NOAA and local partners yesterday celebrated the opening of 20 miles of stream habitat along the Patapsco River in Maryland and its tributaries, a critical step in restoring the Patapsco River and restore the health of the river and strengthen the environmental community. The breaching of the Simkins Dam is a direct result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“Breaching the Simkins Dam brings us closer to returning this portion of the Patapsco River to a thriving, free-flowing river,” said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service. “And it’s terrific that while we are restoring habitat, we are also working to restore our economy through the jobs created in this effort.”

Removing the dam will enhance the health of the river by allowing the natural transport of sediment, restoring 20 miles of spawning habitat for migratory fish—including American eel and alewife—and other species, and creating a safer recreation area. The dam removal will also increase safety for swimmers and kayakers.

“I fought to put \$167 million in the federal checkbook under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for marine and coastal restoration projects, which put more than 1,100 people to work on 50 projects across America. I am so happy to see that \$4 million of these funds are being used right here in Maryland to restore our own Patapsco River,” Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (Md.) said. “Restoring this river to its natural condition is important to the animals that depend on it and the people who use it. Removing this dam and others like it means more than 30 miles of the river will eventually flow freely, connecting the Patapsco River State Park to Baltimore Harbor and the Bay.”

The Patapsco River Restoration Project received \$4 million last year funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment to remove both the Simkins and Union dams. NOAA, American Rivers, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Friends of the Patapsco Valley State Park have worked more than 36 months to implement this project and develop partnerships for future dam removals in the watershed.

“The removal of Simpkins Dam to restore the Patapsco River is a historic milestone for Maryland,” said Rebecca Wodder, President of American Rivers. “A healthier river will enhance the economy, local community and the Chesapeake Bay. American Rivers is proud to have partnered with private industry, government and other nonprofit organizations on this landmark restoration project. Rivers are remarkably resilient and we are all excited to see the Patapsco River restored.”

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. It is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century.

Through the Recovery Act, NOAA was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration. The 50 projects funded by NOAA across the country have already put more than 1,140 people to work full time in green jobs. More than 40 projects have broken ground,

with the 10 additional projects taking off in the next three to eight months. These projects were selected from a pool of 814 proposals that totaled more than \$3 billion in requests.

When all the planned projects are complete, 8,700 acres of habitat will be restored, and fish will gain access to 700 stream miles that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reef habitat. This will benefit salmon, migratory birds, turtles and a variety of threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.

On the Web:

NOAA Restoration Center: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/index.html>

NOAA and the Recovery Act: <http://www.noaa.gov/recovery/>

American Rivers: www.americanrivers.org/

Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park: <http://fpvsp.org/>

Maryland Department of Natural Resources: www.dnr.state.md.us