

## **PROMISING INTERSECTIONS: INFRASTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION IN MASSACHUSETTS**

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Transportation crossings of wetlands and waterways frequently contribute to resource impairment by altering hydrology and degrading aquatic habitat functions and services. In coastal areas, many existing bridges and culverts are too small to pass natural tidal flows, and thus restrict upstream tidal range and flushing. Without the critical influence of natural tides, upstream estuarine wetlands become degraded. Inland crossings often fragment critical habitats, impound water, and pose significant obstacles to fish and wildlife movement. Crossings in all landscape settings also commonly exacerbate flooding, channel erosion, and water quality problems.

As existing crossings deteriorate over time and are scheduled for replacement by transportation agencies, many offer the chance to correct past design errors and improve environmental conditions. These dual-purpose infrastructure replacement and environmental restoration (IR/ER) projects provide unique opportunities to accomplish two important public interest goals at the same time: restore degraded aquatic habitats while replacing failing infrastructure assets. Further, where these goals converge, the mutual benefits can often be achieved at significant cost savings compared to single-purpose projects.

In Massachusetts, an important initiative is underway to advance policy, planning, and project development efforts that capitalize on IR/ER opportunities. This presentation will highlight innovative partnerships between transportation and restoration interests from the public, private, and non-profit sectors working to identify, assess, prioritize, permit, fund, and construct dual-purpose IR/ER projects. It will also emphasize the significant potential for restoration represented by these projects and will offer strategies to transform that potential into results at the local, state, and national levels.

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