

New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council

Commonwealth of Massachusetts • U.S. Department of Commerce • U.S. Department of the Interior

PROJECT UPDATES: NOVEMBER 2004



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The New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council (Council) has completed thirteen restoration-related projects since 1998. Descriptions of each project and associated project reports can be accessed via the Council's website: <http://www.darp.noaa.gov/northeast/>

DATE	LOCATION	ACRES	COST	RECIPIENT
Dec 1998	Sconticut Neck (North), Fairhaven	160	\$394,000	Fairhaven/Acushnet Land Preservation Trust
Feb 2003	Popes Beach, Fairhaven	2.6	\$869,000	Town of Fairhaven
Nov 2003	Marsh Island (North), Fairhaven	14	\$50,000	Fairhaven/Acushnet Land Preservation Trust
Dec 2003	Acushnet River Valley, Acushnet	208	\$968,000	Fairhaven/Acushnet Land Preservation Trust
Jan 2004	Popes Beach (South), Fairhaven	3.6	\$757,000	Town of Fairhaven
TOTAL		388.2	\$3,038,000	

LAND PRESERVATION

To date, land purchases supported by Trustee Council funds have resulted in the permanent preservation of approximately 388 acres of land in the New Bedford Harbor Environment. A variety of habitats, including tidal and riverine wetlands, beach, and forested uplands have been preserved through purchase and/or conservation restriction. The Trustee Council provided

funding for the purchases. The preserved lands will be held by land trusts to be used and enjoyed by the public while yet

preserving the natural resource values and diverse habitat of each property.

The Council is working with Hands Across the River Trust for Land to purchase the *Riverside Auto Wrecking* parcels in Acushnet. Once contamination at the sites has been remediated, the Council will proceed with funding the purchase of these properties.



A portion of lands conserved at Sconticut Neck.



NEW BEDFORD HARBOR WETLANDS RESTORATION PLAN

In January 2003, the Massachusetts Wetlands Restoration Program completed the *New Bedford Harbor Wetlands Restoration Plan*. This Plan, funded by the Council, identified 69 potential wetland restoration sites in the New Bedford Harbor environment. Copies of the plan were distributed in the Greater New Bedford

area to encourage nomination of these sites for potential restoration or mitigation projects. Copies of the Plan may be obtained by contacting Hunt Durey of the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Wetlands Restoration Program at hunt.durey@state.ma.us.

SALT MARSH RESTORATION

In April 2003, the Town of Dartmouth completed the *Padanaram* salt marsh restoration project with \$46,968 in Council funds. This is the first salt marsh restored by the Council. This project replaced an undersized culvert with a larger, properly-sized culvert to connect the 6.5 acre Padanaram saltmarsh to Apponagansett Bay. The project results were almost immediate. Woody vegetation and invasive species that had encroached upon the marsh began to die off once increased tidal inundation and soil salinity were restored. In addition, fish that were unable to access the marsh surface prior to the restoration are now present in the thousands.

Council staff along with staff from the Town of Dartmouth will continue to monitor the changes in vegetation, substrate, and fish on the marsh for several years. The Council is currently studying the feasibility of restoring an additional 130 acres of degraded salt marshes at *Nonquitt* in



The marsh side of the new Padanaram culvert in Dartmouth.

*Above: installation of new culvert headwall
Below: newly-installed culvert and headwall functioning as intended
(Photos courtesy of Michael O'Reilly, Town of Dartmouth)*



Sawmill Dam



Completed fishway at the New Bedford Reservoir.

Dartmouth and at *Marsh Island* and *Scoticut Neck*, both in Fairhaven.

ANADROMOUS FISH RESTORATION

The Council, in association with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries and Massachusetts River Restore Program, is working to reestablish fish passage for herring (*Alosa* spp.) and other fish species along the Acushnet River. In 2002, the project partners installed a 265-foot long fishway at the uppermost dam forming the New Bedford Reservoir. This fishway will allow herring to access the 200-acre reservoir to spawn. Plans are underway for the breach of the two lowermost dams, Sawmill Dam and Hamlin Street Dam, both in the Town of Acushnet. Upon completion, these projects will allow river herring to access approximately 4.4 miles of river in addition to the reservoir and upstream habitats.

SHELLFISH RESTORATION

The *shellfish restoration* project consists of a variety of actions that will improve New Bedford Harbor shellfisheries. Conducted by the Regional Shellfish Restoration Committee, with funding from the Council, activities include the purchase and planting of adult and seed quahogs; the purchase and spreading of bay scallop and soft shell



Shellfish relay operations

clam seed; relays of contaminated adult quahogs to clean areas to allow depuration to take place; the development of a Regional Shellfish

Management Plan; and monitoring and enforcement activities. The shellfish monitoring work included the initiation of a study to:

- 1) determine the effectiveness of shellfish seeding efforts over the last several years, and
- 2) evaluate techniques that may improve the efficacy of future seeding efforts.

EELGRASS RESTORATION

Conducted in partnership with the University of New Hampshire Jackson Laboratory and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, the *eelgrass restoration* project included surveying the distribution and condition of eelgrass throughout the New Bedford Harbor estuary; identifying priority areas for potential



2004 Photo of a restored eelgrass bed off Fort Phoenix Reservation, Fairhaven.

eelgrass habitat; and, with the assistance of numerous volunteers, transplanting eelgrass from established beds to priority reestablishment areas.



Volunteers attaching eelgrass harvested from donor stands to frames that were used to transplant the eelgrass to the restoration sites.

These transplants will improve the ability of the Harbor to provide habitat for a variety of finfish and shellfish resources. The eelgrass was transplanted in 1999 and 2000, and has established and spread at three of the transplant locations. This project also includes monitoring the effectiveness of the eelgrass transplantation.

TERN RESTORATION

The Council provided funding to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to monitor, manage, and enhance nesting locations for Roseate Tern (a Federally listed endangered species) and Common Tern. The goal of the project is to rebuild and restore populations of Roseate and Common Terns that were injured while feeding on PCB-contaminated fish in the



Tern colony at Bird Island. The stakes in the foreground mark tern nest locations.

New Bedford Harbor environment. This project involves moving other species, such as gulls, off nesting areas; daily monitoring of seasonally nesting terns; and the enhancement of nesting habitat at Bird, Ram, and Penikese Islands in Buzzards Bay. The project also involves filling and stabilizing portions of Bird Island to provide greater nesting opportunities.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Council has dedicated funding for the construction of two parks in the City of New Bedford. The Council will provide \$2 million to the City for the construction of *Riverside Park* at the former site of the Pierce Mill on Bellevue Avenue. Riverside Park will provide passive recreational oppor-

tunities and, eventually, harbor access. Sub-grade material has been brought in to the site and the City is working on a final park design.



The pier at Ft. Taber Park under construction, 2004.



Completed pier.

At **Fort Taber Park**, the Council provided \$2,208,000 to the City to construct a community center, bathhouse, restroom facilities, and reconstruct a stone fishing pier. Council-funded work at Fort Taber Park was completed in 2004.

MONITORING BOAT

In 2004, the Trustee Council awarded a monitoring boat contract to the Coalition for Buzzards Bay. Under the contract, the boat periodically monitors the Council's restoration sites, conducts water quality monitoring in the vicinity of the New Bedford Hurricane Barrier, acts as a deterrent to further environmental abuses of the Harbor, and will produce and distribute brochures to educate the public on responsible boating practices.



Photo courtesy of the Coalition for Buzzards Bay.

OTHER PROJECTS

The Council recently completed feasibility studies for the **artificial reef** and **Scotcut Neck water quality** projects. The Council decided not to construct reefs in the harbor due to the limited benefits to injured natural resources. The results of the water quality study are under review.

The Council has been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a scope of work for a feasibility study to determine if one or more box culverts in the New Bedford Harbor **hurricane barrier** will increase tidal flushing and water quality in the Inner New Bedford Harbor. The Council hopes to start the study in early 2005.

A grant solicitation for the **shellfish growout facility** has been submitted for review and publication in the Federal Register. The Council expects the solicitation to be published in December 2004. It will also appear in www.grants.gov.

For further information, contact:

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