

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

North Cape Oil Spill, Rhode Island

The Problem

In January 1996, a 340-foot oil barge, the North Cape, ran aground off Trustum Pond National Wildlife Refuge, spilling 828,000 gallons of home heating oil that resulted in the deaths of millions of lobsters, surf clams, and fish, and billions of invertebrates. Over 2,000 birds were killed, including numerous loons and sea ducks. The piping plover, a federally-listed threatened species, was impacted by reductions to its food base.



USFWS

On January 19, 1996, the Tug Scandia and barge North Cape ran aground, spilling 828,000 gallons of home heating oil.

Restoring the Resources

In August 2000, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (Trustees) reached a settlement agreement with the insurer of the companies responsible for the North Cape oil spill. As part of the agreement, 1.24 million lobsters were restocked by the Responsible Party and \$8 million was paid to the Trustees to restore loons, sea ducks, piping plovers, shellfish and anadromous fish.

Accomplishments

Loons

- Permanently protected, through conservation easements and fee acquisitions, nearly 1.5 million acres of Maine forests and lakes that provide nesting habitat for at least 125 loon pairs.

C. Ayres



North Cape settlement funds have helped leverage in excess of \$100 million to protect over 200 lakes and ponds in Maine.

Highlights

Assisted with protection of 1.5 million acres of land that provide nesting habitat for at least 125 common loon pairs in Maine.
Increased productivity of federally-listed threatened nesting piping plover pairs in Rhode Island.
Protected more than 600 pairs of nesting common eider in Maine.
Protected 64 acres of coastal salt pond buffer habitat in southern Rhode Island.
Restored spawning and nursery habitat for river herring in the Saugatucket River, Rhode Island.

- Total Project Cost: \$117 million
- Trustees Restoration Program share: \$3 million
- Partners: USFWS, New England Forestry Foundation, Downeast Lakes Land Trust, Forest Society of Maine, The Nature Conservancy, State of Maine, International Paper Co., Wagner Forest Management LLC, Typhoon LLC, numerous local communities, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and thousands of individual donors
- Status: Protection nearly 90% complete; loon monitoring and management will continue through 2007.



USFWS

Management guidelines recorded with fee acquisitions and conservation easements help ensure long-term loon protection.



Four years after the piping plover monitoring and management effort began, nearly 20 new pairs nested and three historic beaches were re-colonized.

Piping Plovers

- Five-year monitoring and management effort has resulted in piping plover nesting pairs in Rhode Island increasing from 35 pairs on nine beaches in 2000 to 54 pairs on 12 beaches in 2004.
- Total Project Cost: \$350,000
- Trustees Restoration Program share: \$195,000
- Partners: USFWS, State of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge, local communities, U.S. Coast Guard
- Status: Monitoring and management will continue through 2006.

Sea Ducks

- Permanently protected Flag Island, a 42-acre island in Casco Bay, Maine that is home to more than 600 pairs of nesting common eiders.
- Total Project Cost: \$1 million
- Trustees Restoration Program share: \$300,00 for protection, \$100,000 for monitoring and management
- Partners: USFWS, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Nature Conservancy, State of Maine, Casco Bay Estuary Project
- Status: Protection completed; monitoring and management will continue through 2008.



Over 600 common eider nests were protected with the purchase of Flag Island.

Shellfish

- Permanently protected 64 acres of land adjacent to a coastal salt pond to improve water quality and prevent ecological impacts from future land development. Implemented a two-year quahog, oyster and bay scallop seeding and habitat restoration program.
- Total Project Cost: \$3.5 million
- Trustees Restoration Program share: \$3.1 million
- Partners: NOAA, USFWS, State of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, University of Rhode Island, over 100 local volunteers
- Status: Protection was completed in 2001. Shellfish restoration and monitoring will be ongoing through 2006.



J. Prezioso/NOAA

Volunteers logged over 500 hours to help implement shellfish restoration projects, including preparing over 2,000 shell bags as substrate for growing oysters.

Stephen Rubicam Photography



Forty-two-acre Flag Island was protected with funds from two settlements: North Cape oil spill and Julie N oil spill.

Anadromous fish

- Constructed a fishway at Indian Lake to restore access to spawning and nursery habitat for river herring in the Saugatucket River.
- Total Project Cost: \$200,000
- Trustees Restoration Program share: \$200,000
- Partners: NOAA, State of Rhode Island, USFWS, local communities, individual homeowners
- Status: Fishway was completed in 2004; modifications and monitoring are ongoing.

For more information, contact:
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