

Restoring Natural Resources After the North Cape Oil Spill

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program



The Problem

In January 1996, a 340-foot oil barge, the North Cape, ran aground off Trustom 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.



NOAA

The Scandia tug grounded on Moonstone Beach in southern Rhode Island after the tug caught fire, spilling an estimated 828,000 gallons of home heating oil into Block Island Sound and surrounding tidal waters.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

When hazardous substances enter the environment, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources can be injured. The Department of the Interior, along with State, Tribal and other Federal partners, acts as “trustee” for these resources. Trustees seek to identify the natural resources injured and determine the extent of the injuries. Trustees work with the responsible parties to carry out restoration activities, or recover funds from responsible parties to carry out the restoration activities. These efforts are possible under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program (NRDAR), the goal of which is to restore natural resources injured by oil spills or the release of hazardous substances.

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 64 acres of coastal salt pond buffer habitat in southern Rhode Island
- Protected more than 600 pairs of nesting common eider in Maine; and
- Restored spawning and nursery habitat for river herring in the Saugatucket River, Rhode Island.

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.



Oil spill clean-up

USFWS



USFWS

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

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.
- Total Project Cost: \$117 million
- Trustee Restoration Program Share: \$3.4 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, more than 50 foundations, and thousands of individual donors



Keith Carver

Common Loon with chick

Piping Plover

- Ten-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 63 pairs on 10 beaches in 2008. Efforts to selectively remove predators have increased production of chicks at several beaches.
- Total Project Cost \$500,000
- Trustee Restoration Program Share: \$345,000
- Partners: USFWS, State of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge, local communities, U.S. Coast Guard



USFWS

Common Eider nest



Richard Kuzminski

Piping Plover

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
- Trustee 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



NOAA

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

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 five-year quahog, oyster and bay scallop seeding and habitat restoration program.
- Total Project Cost: \$3.7 million
- Trustee Restoration Program Share: \$3.3 million
- Partners: NOAA, USFWS, State of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, University of Rhode Island, over 100 local volunteers

nursery habitat for river herring in the Saugatucket River.

- Total Project Cost: \$200,000
- Trustee Restoration Program Share: \$200,000
- Partners: NOAA, State of Rhode Island, USFWS, local communities, individual homeowners

For additional information or questions contact:

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Anadromous Fish

- Constructed a fishway at Indian Lake to restore access to spawning and