

Restoring Wildlife Habitat in Northern Rhode Island

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program



The Problem

The Landfill and Resource Recovery, Inc. (L&RR) Superfund Site, situated in North Smithfield, Rhode Island, is a 28-acre former landfill facility that received domestic, commercial, and industrial wastes from 1920 until 1986. At that time the landfill was closed and covered with a synthetic cap. The capping process permanently destroyed one acre of palustrine emergent and scrub-shrub wetland and temporarily degraded 23 acres of adjacent early successional field.

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.

Restoring the Resources

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the State of Rhode Island (Trustees) sought compensation for the habitat losses through protection and restoration of similar habitats. In a 1997 settlement with the Responsible Party (RP), the Trustees received \$200,000 to implement habitat restoration and \$525,000 for habitat protection. Using these funds, the Trustees purchased a dilapidated Drive-In along the Blackstone River in Lincoln, RI. Twenty acres of asphalt and assorted debris were

Highlights

- Restored 7 acres of wetland and 13 acres of upland;
- Protected 41 acres of wetland and upland in perpetuity; and
- Purchased defunct hydroelectric facility to facilitate restoring migratory fish to the Blackstone River.



Diadromous fish, including river herring and American shad, are expected to benefit from efforts to create fish passage at the Elizabeth Webbing Site.

removed, creating a 7-acre wetland, and restoring 13 acres of upland riparian habitat. The Trustees also purchased the Elizabeth Webbing Site, a defunct hydroelectric facility, on the Blackstone River. The State plans to construct a denil fish ladder and educational viewing facility at the Site. Simultaneous efforts by numerous organizations and agencies to construct fish passage facilities at 3 other dams in the lower Blackstone River will help restore diadromous and catadromous fish to the River for the first time since the 1790s.

A Partnership for Success

Money from the L&RR settlement was combined with state grants, an award from the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership and funds from the Army Corps of Engineers to implement the \$2.6 million restoration

project. The US Environmental Protection Agency and the Blackstone River John H Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor assisted with the land protection efforts.



A parking lot, bikeway and educational kiosk promote recreational and educational opportunities for visitors at the former drive-in.

For additional information or questions contact:

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Six years after removing asphalt and other debris, a natural wetland/ grassland complex is evolving at the former drive-in.

