

Restoring Migratory Bird Habitat in Bennington, Vermont

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program



The Problem

Wastes from a local battery manufacturing operation were deposited in unlined settling lagoons and subsequently contaminated a drainage area, a shallow pond, and a forested wetland with heavy metals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). As a result, the 2.5-acre landfill on the Woodford and Bennington town line was designated the Burgess Brothers Landfill Superfund Site.

At another site (the Tansitor Electronics Superfund Site) 3.5 miles west of Bennington, wastes generated during the manufacturing process of electrical capacitors entered a nearby, intermittent stream and eventually migrated to a perennial stream south of Route 9. Groundwater and soil were contaminated with VOCs and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs); surface water and sediments were contaminated with heavy metals. Contamination at both sites reduced the quality and quantity of habitat and food available to aquatic and wetland-dependent species including migratory birds such as warblers, thrushes and herons.

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

- Restored two acres of wet meadow and scrub/shrub wetlands for migratory birds;
- Created seven acres of grasslands from an abandoned gravel pit; and
- Partnered with local high school to complete restoration.

Restoring the Resources

To compensate for natural resource injuries associated with the Burgess Brothers and Tansitor Electronics Superfund Sites, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) used funding from the two natural resource damage settlements (over \$115,000), in addition to other sources, to restore wetland and grassland habitat at a former gravel pit in Bennington.

In October 2007, approximately 15,000 cubic yards of gravel spoils were removed to restore two acres of wet meadow and scrub/shrub wetland. The spoils were used to fill and grade portions of the adjacent gravel pit. The areas were then seeded to create seven acres of grassland and two acres of wetland. To further enhance the restoration, over 250 trees and shrubs were planted by local high school students.



Larry Masters

The restored wetland will provide habitat for amphibians, such as the green frog.



Bill Majoros

The wetland and grassland is expected to benefit species that favor scrub/shrub habitat like Yellow-rumped Warbler.



USFWS

High school students and staff from the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center helped plant over 250 wetland trees and shrubs.



USFWS

American Woodcock is another species that will benefit from this restoration.

Thanks to Our Partners

The Town of Bennington helped to purchase and protect the restoration area and surrounding forest (approximately 30 acres) and provided funds and in-kind services for the wetland construction. Monies from the Department of Interior (DOI) Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) fund and technical expertise from the DOI Restoration Center supported the restoration planning and design. The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) provided funds and expertise to seed and grade the gravel pit and to control invasive species. The USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program provided additional funds for the restoration. Lastly, students and staff from the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center provided essential help with the wetland plantings.



Fringed gentian.



Volunteers and staff after a hard day of planting.



Prior to restoration, the gravel pits and spoil area offered limited habitat for migratory birds.



Two years post-restoration, the former gravel pit is evolving into a wetland/grassland complex.

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