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## Coventry gets \$170K in Superfund settlement

COVENTRY — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants input from residents in deciding how to use \$170,000 the town received as a settlement for the dumping of hazardous waste on a former pig farm in western Coventry.

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In 1977, it was discovered that an eight-acre portion of the 100-acre Picillo Farm, now a federal Superfund site, was used as a dumping ground for hazardous wastes and liquid chemicals, including metals and PCBs. The state Department of Environmental Management and the Environmental Protection Agency performed clean-up efforts, but much of the wildlife habitat was injured by the contaminants.

The Department of the Interior, of which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a part under the Superfund law, assesses impacts to natural resources and negotiates with liable parties to help with the compensation of clean-ups. "We looked at the Picillo Farm site and determined that there were impacts to migratory bird habitats," said Molly Sperduto of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Northeast Region.

The waste impacted approximately 4.5 acres of wetlands and one acre of upland habitat, which has made conditions at the site non-conducive for wildlife.

A variety of migratory birds use the area, including waterfowl such as the American black duck and wood duck, wading birds like the great blue heron, green-backed heron, as well as passerine varieties such as the American robin, ovenbird and yellow warbler.

The department received a settlement of \$146,000, which has earned interest over the years, bringing the grand total to \$170,000, which will be put toward some sort of compensation plan, but the exact nature of the restoration is yet to be decided.

"So what this plan does, is outline different possibilities" said Sperduto. "We could either do something with the landfill itself, we could do some land protection in town, or, what we've proposed, is to do some restoration at a site on Sandy Bottom Road in the eastern part of Coventry."

The Sandy Bottom Road site is located across from the shopping plazas and is composed of piles of rough fill. Because of its proximity to the Pawtuxet River, not only could it host a variety of birds, but fertile pools could also be created in the woods to provide habitat for amphibians like yellow-spotted salamanders and wood frogs.

During its discussions about what type of restoration plan would be beneficial to the town, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials look for a location similar to the area that was originally impacted.

While the existing landfill at the Picillo site could be restored, Sperduto said the department was hesitant about choosing that location because the town may have future development plans for the site.

Another factor against using the Picillo site is its unavailability to the majority of the public; it's fairly isolated in the less-populated western end.

The Sandy Bottom Road site, she said, is more accessible to the public and it features the same types of wildlife species that were displaced at the Picillo Farm.

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"We really want the public's input and to get their opinion of what they think makes the most sense," said Spurduto. "We don't always know what the best projects are, so sometimes we get additional projects through this avenue, if people have other ideas."

Sperduto mentioned that Guy Lefebvre, director of Coventry's Parks and Recreation Department, had a larger vision for the area and that his plan would also be looked at when determining how the restoration takes place.

On Tuesday, Lefebvre said that it was encouraging to hear that the public would have the opportunity to give their advice about what reclamation plan they feel would work best for the town.

"If we went with the reclamation at Sandy Bottom, our intent is to build a park and have access there," said Lefebvre. He noted that the Sandy Bottom Road site, if added to other previously preserved parcels in that same area, would create a 56-acre green space able to house trails, riverfront access as well as open up opportunities for environmental education.

Whether it's the Picillo site, the Sandy Bottom Road parcel or purchasing new land for preservation, Lefebvre said he would keep an open mind as citizen comments come in.

"I'm not going to pre-judge which is the better of the three options," said Lefebvre. "I think the public can weigh in on it and look at it from their perspective, what might be the most beneficial for the town as a whole."

Any Coventry resident interested in making suggestions to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can submit written comments until Aug. 31 to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New England Field Office, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, NH 03301.

The plan is available for review at the Coventry Public Library or online at:  
[www.fws.gov/northeast/newenglandfieldoffice/Contaminants-NRDR-restoration\\_projects-PicilloFarm.htm](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/newenglandfieldoffice/Contaminants-NRDR-restoration_projects-PicilloFarm.htm).

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