



## **Rhode Island news**

### **Superfund site settlement may help pay for Coventry park**

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The continuing cleanup of one of the state's nastiest chemical dumps during the last 30 years may help trigger the creation of a scenic park in the town of Coventry — right in the middle of one of the state's most densely developed neighborhoods.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is recommending that a \$146,000 settlement with the parties that contributed to the Picillo Farm Superfund site three decades ago in western Coventry be spent to restore and improve wetlands on Sandy Bottom Road, in the heavily developed eastern end of town.

The wetlands restoration could be the impetus for cleaning up some 56 acres of town-owned land, providing access to the Pawtuxet River and hiking trails for the public.

"We have almost 2,000 feet of frontage on the river there," says Guy Lefebvre, the town recreation director. "This creates the opportunity to be a tremendous open space in the middle of all that development in Tiogue and Route 117. It's a little oasis."

The town has commissioned studies of how to make use of the Sandy Bottom Road property, but so far has taken little action. Lefebvre said it's been difficult raising money to improve the property. Along the river, piles of asphalt and dirt have been left. Garbage and old appliances have also been dumped.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is charged with restoring habitat, replacing habitat or acquiring the equivalent of what was damaged, according to Molly Spurduto, who is in charge of the local program for the federal agency.

The agency considered several alternatives, including doing work on the Picillo site, before it recommended Sandy Bottom Road.

The Picillo dump was discovered in 1977 when a chemical reaction caused it to blow up, creating a plume of smoke that could be seen in Providence. In the years that followed, the Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Management removed 10,000 barrels of chemicals that were buried in trenches dug by farmer Warren Picillo.

Some 6,500 yards of contaminated soil were trucked away, and treatment began on contaminated groundwater. Four years ago, another 2,450 yards of soil contaminated with epoxy wastes were discovered and hauled away. To this day, contractors continue to pump contaminated water from the ground and remove pollutants.

In 1994, the Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the hazardous substances at the site adversely affected migratory birds and their habitats, particularly wetlands. It sought compensation from the companies whose wastes ended up in the dump to create eight acres of wetlands to make up for what was lost, and to protect two acres of adjacent uplands.

Fish and Wildlife estimated the project could cost \$500,000, but it settled for \$146,000. It decided to move ahead while still pursuing compensation from some of the responsible parties.

It considered four alternatives:

- Taking no action. But this would mean injuries to migratory birds and their habitats would be uncompensated.
- Restoring wetlands on the Picillo site. But the agency felt this choice was not optimal because Coventry has considered developing a police training facility nearby, and there would be no opportunity for public access because the Superfund site remains restricted.
- Acquiring equivalent resources. The agency looked at three nearby sites, but none involved creation or restoration of wetlands.
- Restoring the wetlands along Sandy Bottom Road and the Pawtuxet River. With limited resources, the agency could remove debris, road sand and other fill and directly restore two acres of wetlands. The property also offers opportunities for wetlands education and passive recreation.

"I like the idea of putting the money in a place the public can use," Sperduto said last week. She said she hopes the federal project helps the town get money to improve the rest of the site.

"We could work together," Sperduto said. "We could help them with some trails and maybe wetlands education. The town could leverage our money to get money for boating access and other improvements."

The federal recommendation was made public earlier this month. The public has until Aug. 31 to offer comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New England Field Office, 70 Commercial St., Suite 300, Concord, NH, 03301.

Copies of the agency's review can be obtained at: [www.fws.gov/northeast/newenglandfieldoffice/Contaminants-NRDAR-restoration\\_projects-PicilloFarm.htm](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/newenglandfieldoffice/Contaminants-NRDAR-restoration_projects-PicilloFarm.htm) or at the Coventry Public Library.

Sperduto and Lefebvre said they hope people come forward and voice their opinions on the project.

Meanwhile, out at the Picillo site, DEM expects to continue pumping and treating the groundwater for another 20 years.

The EPA estimates \$15 million to \$20 million in private and public money has been spent to clean up the dump, so far.

Public invited to solar party

The University Heights Whole Foods Market will provide information on how people can power their homes with solar power, during a catered Sunset Soiree at the store from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday.

The soiree is a celebration of the store's use of solar power. There is no charge.

Photo contest highlights refuges

The seventh annual photo competition designed to highlight the beauty of the state's five National Wildlife Refuges is now under way. The deadline for entries is Sept. 5.

Amateur photographers are encouraged to submit 8-by-10 or 8-by-12 photographs along with a \$10 entry fee to the Friends of the National Wildlife Refuges Rhode Island office at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center at 50 Bend Rd. in

Charlestown or to the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Middletown.

All photographs entered will be exhibited at the Courthouse Center for the Arts in West Kingston. The Best of Show will be awarded \$100; other prizes will also be awarded.

For more information, call (401) 783-9081 or send an e-mail to [Morrison.rifw@gmail.com](mailto:Morrison.rifw@gmail.com).

Landfill to accept old computers

Rhode Islanders will have an opportunity to dispose of their older computers free of charge on Saturday at the state's Central Landfill in Johnston.

From 8 a.m. to noon, people may drop off monitors, keyboards, mouse devices, printers, scanners, laptops and cell phones. Televisions also will be accepted for a fee of \$5, which covers the cost of recycling their cathode ray tubes.

In the last year, the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Authority has collected more than 513,000 pounds of electronics and more than a million pounds of computer electronics for recycling.

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