

News Release

Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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Public Invited to Red Maple Trail Celebration Along the Sudbury River

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service invites the public to the official opening of the improved Red Maple Trail at the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Sudbury, Massachusetts, on Saturday, May 13 at 11 a.m. The event, at 73 Weir Hill Road, will be attended by federal and state officials, elected officials, conservation partners and volunteers, and will include a brief program and guided walk.

The Red Maple Trail circles a small pond, and passes a buttonbush marsh and through a red maple swamp, both of which are connected to the Sudbury River. Before the rehabilitation, the trail was narrow, rutted, and often muddy. Thanks to designs by MassAudubon and construction by refuge staff, contractors and volunteers, the half-mile trail is now accessible by wheelchairs and strollers. A new wildlife observation platform extends into the buttonbush marsh and a 1,500-foot long boardwalk keeps visitors' feet dry.

Funding for the trail was provided primarily through the Nyanza Natural Resource Damage (NRD) Assessment Fund, which aims to restore natural resources damaged by the Nyanza Chemical Waste Dump Superfund site located in Ashland, Massachusetts. The trail rehabilitation was one of three projects focused on improving recreation and public access to the Sudbury River and its associated habitats.

The Nyanza NRD Assessment Fund is overseen by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. These agencies have an important role in conserving and restoring natural resources damaged by Superfund sites.

"The new and improved Red Maple Trail will provide better access for visitors to explore and enjoy the Sudbury River and its associated wetlands," said Wendi Weber, Northeast Regional Director for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We are particularly pleased that this trail is wheelchair and stroller accessible. We appreciate the work of our partners to help us compensate the public for environmental impacts that occurred upstream in the watershed."

"The enhanced trail offers great views of the pond, marsh and swamp in the Great Meadows Refuge that provide important habitat for American eels, which in turn provide food for larger fish, birds, and other animals that live in this refuge," said John Bullard, regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region. "NOAA will continue to work with the Nyanza Trustee Council to improve fish passage at the Talbot Mills Dam, which would allow river herring to return to this stretch of the river."

"Over the decades, hazardous materials were released from the Nyanza site, impacting the natural resources all along this stretch of the Sudbury River," said Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin Suuberg, whose agency represents the Commonwealth on the Trustee Council. "With this newly enhanced riverside trail, the river and its watershed are much-improved and now accessible to everyone."

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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