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Common Loons to Benefit from Funded Restoration Projects throughout New England and New York

$3.7 million of B-120 Oil Spill Settlement funds will be used to restore common loon populations following a 98,000-gallon oil spill in Buzzards Bay in 2003.

State and federal environmental agencies have selected six projects through a competitive grant process to receive funding to restore common loons affected by the tank barge Bouchard B-120 oil spill in April 2003. The work is funded by a $13.3 million natural resource damages settlement from Bouchard Transportation Co., Inc. and others with $7.3 million designated for common loon restoration planning and implementation.

An estimated 531 common loons died as a result of direct or indirect impacts from the spill. Common loons were killed in especially large numbers because they were overwintering in Buzzards Bay when the spill occurred.

The goals of the grant are to Increase productivity and survival of nesting common loons at breeding sites across New England and New York. Restoration will be implemented through a variety of management activities, including:

- Deploying nesting rafts to withstand fluctuating water levels and reduce disturbance from predators and people,
- Installing educational signs and hiring seasonal wardens to watch over nests to reduce disturbance,
- Reducing individual common loon mortality through rehabilitation of stranded birds, promotion of lead tackle exchange programs, public volunteer participation, and public outreach aimed at reducing lead poisoning of loons, and
- Conserving land to protect loon breeding habitat.

After a thorough evaluation, the B-120 Trustee Council authorized five comprehensive management projects and one land acquisition to receive funding. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be administering the grants and providing funds to the following projects:

- Comprehensive Common Loon Restoration in New Hampshire, Loon Preservation
Committee: $844,881

- *Restore Breeding Common Loons in New York’s Adirondack Park*, Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation: $796,005
- *Comprehensive Approach by Maine Partners to Restore Common Loon Losses Resulting from the B-120 Oil Spill*, Maine Audubon: $825,445
- *Increasing Common Loon Populations in Vermont through Management, Monitoring, and Outreach*, Vermont Center for Ecostudies: $446,393
- *Gaining Common Loons in Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island: An approach using rescue, rehabilitation, outreach, and increasing loon productivity through active raft management*, Biodiversity Research Institute: $522,774
- *Conserving Loon Nesting Habitat through a Conservation Easement in Coburn Gore, Maine*, Forest Society of Maine: $250,000

"The Service is pleased to initiate this final phase of common loon restoration activities with six experienced partner organizations and numerous contractors and sub-awardees, including lake associations, Native American tribes and paddling guides,” said Audrey Mayer, Supervisor of the Service’s New England Field Office. “Almost $4 million in oil spill settlement funds will be used to increase the productivity and survival of breeding loons, and protect existing nesting sites. We are excited to partner with this diverse community of organizations to restore these captivating birds and their charismatic calls to our lakes and ponds across New England and New York."

“The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection looks forward to partnering with these organizations to help restore common loons that were impacted by the oil spilled from the Bouchard Barge in Buzzards Bay,” said Commissioner Martin Suuberg. “These projects complement the successful common loon translocation work that is ongoing in Massachusetts.”

“Successful wildlife conservation comes from teamwork, research and creative approaches. I congratulate BRI on its successful grant application which will enhance loon rehabilitation capacity here in Massachusetts,” said Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game Commissioner Ron Amidon. “BRI and DFG’s Division of Fisheries and Wildlife are currently involved in an innovative and promising loon chick translocation project. The multi-year project is supported by a separate grant of Bouchard oil spill settlement funds. Last summer, BRI’s groundbreaking restoration methods yielded the first loon chick hatch in southeastern Massachusetts in over a century. These newly funded projects, building on past successes, will benefit loons throughout New England and New York.”

The B-120 Trustee Council is composed of representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, representing the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration representing the Department of Commerce; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representing the U.S. Department of the Interior.
The ultimate goal of the B-120 natural resource damage assessment and restoration process is to replace, restore, rehabilitate, or acquire the equivalent of injured natural resources and resource services lost due to the release of hazardous substances at no cost to the taxpayer.