

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
PROPOSED EEL RIVER HEADWATERS RESTORATION PROJECT
PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS**

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in partnership with the Town of Plymouth and other partners, is proposing to complete the Eel River Headwaters Restoration Project in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

The purpose of the Project is to: improve the overall ecological conditions in the upper Eel River; improve fish passage; promote a healthy coldwater fishery; improve water quality; re-establish rare wetland communities; and provide the public with passive recreational and educational opportunities. The future use of the Project area is as preserved land (Eel River Headwaters Preserve), to be managed by the Town of Plymouth for passive recreational use, conservation, and educational purposes.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes the impacts of four alternatives on the human environment including the Proposed Action, a No Action Alternative, and two additional action alternatives. The Proposed Action will result in a net benefit to wetland resources and an overall increase in wetland acreage for the Eel River watershed, but will require temporary alterations to existing vegetated wetlands. The Project consists of two components: (1) restoration of seven former commercial cranberry bog cells, including the removal of agricultural-related berms and grade controls, restoration of a sinuous stream channel and reconnected floodplain, extensive native wetland plantings, removal of one culverted stream crossing, and improvements at two road crossings; and (2) reconfiguration of a downstream masonry dam (Sawmill Dam) and related stream channel improvements involving the partial removal of the dam to allow unrestricted river flow and the renovation and repair of the remainder of the historic structure which will remain in place.

Under Alternative 2, the Sawmill Dam would be reconfigured and the former commercial cranberry bogs would not be restored. Under Alternative 3, the cranberry bogs would be restored and the dam would be left undisturbed. Under the No Action, both the dam and the cranberry bogs would remain in their current condition.

The Proposed Action will have negligible, if any, impacts on air quality, soundscapes, land use, socioeconomics, energy resources, geology, lightscapes, Indian Trust resources, scenic resources, and prime and unique farmlands. Adverse effects to cultural resources, including National Register-eligible or listed cultural resources, will be addressed, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 W.S.C. 470f), through a Memorandum of Agreement between the Service, the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Office, and any consulting parties (36 CFR Part 800, and 33 CFR Part 325).

The Service finds there will be no significant impacts resulting from the proposed restoration activities of the Project. The Proposed Action provides net benefits that far outweigh its potential impacts on the natural and human environment. Therefore, the Service concludes that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) be issued for the proposed Project.



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Date

Reference:
Environmental Assessment, dated August 31, 2009