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October 31, 2013

For further information, contact  
Molly Sperduto (603) 223-2541

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Restore Migratory Fish to the Upper Quinnipiac River

Settlement funds of \$800,000 will fund two conservation projects to restore the Quinnipiac River and enhance public recreation and education on the river, the Service announced today in a final restoration plan for migratory fish and birds impacted by contamination from two Superfund sites in Southington, Conn.

The first project will restore migratory fish, such as American shad, river herring, and American eel, to the upper reaches of the Quinnipiac River watershed in Southington and Cheshire, Conn. Restoration will likely be accomplished by removing obsolete dams or by installing “ladders” to help fish travel upstream. The second project supports efforts to clear and maintain the Quinnipiac River canoe trail from Southington to Meriden and provides funds to publish an updated educational brochure about the river.

“This project will restore migratory fish to portions of the river where they haven’t existed in well over 100 years,” said Tom Chapman, supervisor of the New England Field Office. “Bringing back the fish will benefit birds, reptiles and mammals that feed on the young fish and will provide anglers with new opportunities for catch-and-release fishing. In addition, depending on the restoration approach, efforts may improve water quality and

reduce flooding.”

A number of other projects were evaluated and recommended for funding, should money remain after implementing the two priority projects. In order of preference, these include: 1) restoring migratory fish habitat on the Eightmile River, 2) protecting wildlife habitat in Southington and 3) restoring wetland habitat.

“We are excited that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will focus on getting migratory fish past two barrier dams on the Quinnipiac River,” said Steve Gephard, a fish biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. “This river has been a priority for our agency, and we have worked with partners to open up the lower seven miles of the river. This project would open up most of the rest of the watershed and its suitable habitat for fish. This would be a huge step forward in restoring runs of American shad, river herring and other species to this river.”

Funds for the restoration efforts come from natural resource damage settlements with responsible parties at the Solvents Recovery Service Site and the Old Southington Landfill.

Hazardous waste disposed at the sites, including volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and metals, as well as remedial activities required to clean up the sites, resulted in the degradation, and in some places destruction, of wetlands and impacts to the Quinnipiac River. As a result, the quality and availability of the foraging habitat for birds, fish and other wetland-dependant species was reduced.

Settlements to restore impacted natural resources were obtained through the Natural Resource and Damage Assessment Program, where tribes and federal and state agencies assess damages to natural resources and restore those resources by recovering and using funds from the parties responsible for damages. The primary benefit of the program is that injured natural resources can be restored at no cost to the American taxpayers.

To review the final plan, visit <http://www.fws.gov/newengland>. For more information or to obtain a hard copy, please contact Molly Sperduto at (603) 223-2541.

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