

For immediate release
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News media: for further information contact
Steve Stroka (FWS) 607-753-9334
Scott Schlueter (FWS) 607-753-9334
John Hart (Landowner) 585-261-8233
Frank Menapace (Landowner) 315-867-7886
Dr. John Farrell (SUNY-ESF) 315-470-6990

Landowners and partners restore Blind Bay fish habitat

Blind Bay, N.Y., landowners worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore fish habitat in the St. Lawrence Valley by reopening historic channels in September to revive northern pike spawning and nursery habitat.

An amphibious excavator operated by the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program created 3,000 feet of channels. Four culverts placed in the existing road will improve water flow through the channels.

The wetlands historically connected to the St. Lawrence River and provided fish habitat, but construction of Chippewa Point Road in the 1960s bisected the marsh, blocking water flow, allowing siltation buildup and reducing oxygen levels. The invasion of a hybrid cattail suppressed other species, hindering fish spawning and reducing water quality.

A group of landowners led by John Hart and Frank Menapace formed the Chippewa Point Road Alliance and purchased the private road right of way that bisects the marsh. The group initiated the Blind Bay Restoration Project, addressing archaeological issues with the New York State Historic Preservation Office and collaborating with all property owners within the project boundary to complete an agreement to preserve the habitat restoration for 10 years.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is an example of how local landowners and the Service can work together to improve the habitat of the Blind Bay Marsh," landowner John Hart said.

The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry is monitoring and researching the fisheries and water quality under the guidance of SUNY-ESF Associate Professor John Farrell.

The Fish Enhancement, Mitigation, and Research Fund (FEMRF) financed the project, including the amphibious excavator. FEMRF was established as part of a settlement agreement with the New York Power Authority reached in the relicensing of the St. Lawrence-Franklin D. Roosevelt Power Project.

The Service manages the fund to benefit fish resources in the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River Basin and to continue research on the American eel and other species possibly affected by the power project.

“This is a great example of a collaborative effort to restore fishery resources impaired by water level regulation in the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River system,” said David Stilwell, field supervisor for the Service’s New York Field Office in Cortland. “We look forward to undertaking many more collaborative efforts such as this.”

For additional information on the topics below, please visit:

Fish Enhancement, Mitigation, and Research Fund:

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/fwc/femrf.htm>

Partners for Fish and Wildlife:

Northeast Regional Office, <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/partners/>

New York Field Office, <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/partners/pfwdesc.htm>

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