

Southern New England-New York Bight (SNEP) Coastal Program

Fiscal Year 2008 Accomplishments

Fish Passage Activities

Carmens River Fish Ladder

The Carmens River is the longest river draining to the south shore of Long Island, New York and has one of the best protected watersheds. A fish ladder was installed at the Hards Lake Dam in South Haven County Park in March 2008. The \$200,000 initiative allows native fish to move upstream beyond a previously impassable barrier to spawn in Hards Lake in Southaven County Park. This partnership project created the first permanent fish passage installed on Long Island South Shore.

Shad Factory Pond Fish Ladder Restoration

Fishway construction was completed in December 2007 at the first impoundment on the Palmer River, a tributary to Narragansett Bay, at the 12-foot high Shad Factory Pond Dam. The existing fish ladder at the Shad Factory Dam had deteriorated and needed complete renovation to ensure continued access by diadromous fish like American shad and river herring to upstream spawning habitat. This river contains one of two extant populations of shad in the Narragansett Bay Watershed. The new fishway provides fish spawning access to five miles of riverine habitat to the 23-acre impoundment.



Construction of the Shad Factory Fish Ladder. USFWS photo

Penataquit Creek Fish Restoration

In the spring of 2008, New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) installed step pools to allow fish passage on Penataquit Creek as part of a culvert retrofit project on Montauk Highway. This was accomplished with technical assistance from SNEP and engineering consultation with our fisheries engineers. This project was funded in its entirety by the DOT through their environmental projects monies. The passage opens up approximately one mile of spawning habitat.

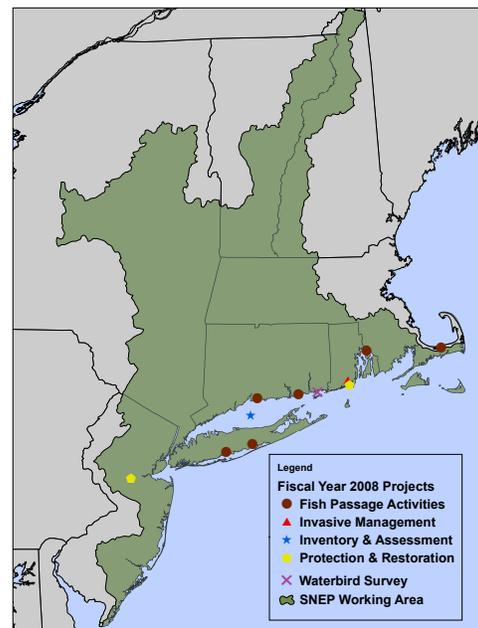
Bride Brook Habitat Restoration and Fish Access Project

Bride Brook is the second largest alewife run in the State of Connecticut (second only to the Connecticut River). The 1.7 mile river system passes through approximately 59 acres of tidal marsh habitat with hydrologic exchange to the Sound conducted through two failing culverts. In order to protect the long term health of the marsh system and provide continued fish access to the system, the culverts will be replaced with an open channel. This restoration project will restore diadromous fish populations including the catadromous American eel. Completion of the project will restore access to approximately three river miles of upstream habitat and 59 acres of important tidal wetlands and spawning habitat. Work will continue on this project in 2009.

Habitat Protection & Restoration

Six Mile Run Native Grassland Restoration

SNEP assisted with the restoration at the Six Mile Run property in Somerset County to restore approximately 94.5 acres of native grassland for foraging, resting, and nesting grassland-dependent migratory birds. The Six Mile Run property is owned by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Parks and Forestry. Several



restoration projects at the property, including the work on these 94.5 acres, are being managed through New Jersey Audubon Society.

Bass Creek

This tidal wetland restoration project on Cape Cod involved reconstruction of a tidal opening, restoring water quality conditions necessary to eliminate phragmites invasion and encourage native plant communities. This restored habitat benefits many wetland and riverine-dependent species of migratory birds and fish like Alewife. An undersized and failing four foot diameter culvert that significantly reduced tidal range to the 36-acre degraded salt marsh was replaced with a 35-foot wide open-span footbridge to restore tidal exchange but still accommodate a pedestrian trail.

East Matunuck Beach Habitat Restoration

This habitat restoration project was done cooperatively with Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to enhance 6.5 acres of beach dune and back-dune habitat for Least Tern and Piping Plover nesting at East Matunuck beach in Rhode Island. The project goal was to generate conditions normally created in beach systems from winter storms that irregularly over wash the beaches into the back-barrier salt ponds. Until

recent years this site was regularly used by nesting Least Tern. As shrubby vegetation has overtaken the area due to a lack of storm over wash, terns have not been able to use the site for nesting. Work will continue in 2009.

Habitat Inventory and Assessment

Long Island Sound Study Committees

SNEP is an important player in EPA's Long Island Sound Study (National Estuary Program), participating on the Management Committee, Implementation Team, Citizen's Advisory Committee, Science and Technical Advisory Committee, Habitat Restoration Work Group and the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative. Work on the identification and inventory of the ecological areas and development of the Inaugural Stewardship Areas has resulted in many acquisition and protection actions through supported partnerships. SNEP's involvement enables the Coastal Program and the Service to advocate for and enhance protection/restoration partnerships in the Long Island Sound watershed.

Waterbird Survey 2007-08

This project involves monitoring and assessment of breeding colonial waterbirds. This work is part of two simultaneous Sound-wide assessment projects coordinated by partners in the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. A total of 19 field sites were visited in two days of field work in the eastern end of Long Island Sound. These results were shared with conservation partners at an annual winter meeting coordinated by SNEP. Combined with data collected in previous years, the population trends of these migratory birds can be estimated and conservation work with these partners can be targeted to species and sites of highest need.



SNEP monitors waterbirds like the Great Blue Heron. Photo courtesy of Bill Majoros

SNEP Supports Partner Conservation ***Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program***

SNEP supported Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program (CWP). In 2008, the CWP monitored and protected more nesting sites in New England than any other entity, and supported approximately half of the state's breeding populations of Piping Plover and Least Tern. The state's Piping Plover population was higher than ever recorded (in recent history), with an increase of at least 14% over last year's population. The CWP protected a full 15% of the entire Atlantic coast population of this threatened species. They also monitored and protected breeding American Oystercatcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Common Tern, and an abundance of migrating shorebirds.

RI Coastal Habitat Restoration Trust Fund 2008

SNEP represents the Service on a team responsible for the implementation of the Rhode Island Coastal Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund. The Trust Fund allocates annual funding to groups for coastal habitat restoration projects through the recommendation of the Coastal Habitat Restoration Trust Fund Technical Advisory Committee. Six projects were recommended for funding in FY 2008 for a total of \$225,000 which leveraged an additional \$4 million. The projects were for habitat restoration, with a strong emphasis on fish passage, salt marsh restoration work, and mosquito abatement.

Long Island Sound Futures Fund 2008

This year was the fourth year that SNEP (USFWS), NFWF, EPA, Sea Grant, and the natural resource staffs of New York and Connecticut worked together to fund proposals. Twenty-two of the 66 reviewed grants were selected for funding to local governments and community groups. The \$877,944 Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant will be leveraged with \$1.13 million raised by the project grant recipients, providing nearly \$2 million towards on-the-ground conservation, management, stewardship and environmental education in Connecticut and New York. Since the initial grant in 2005, the program provided \$3.5 million to 94 projects in communities surrounding Long Island Sound. With grantee match of nearly \$12 million toward their projects, just under \$16 million in locally based conservation action has been developed by the grant program.

Invasive Species Management ***Long Pond, Tucker Pond and Larkin Pond Phragmites Control***

Long Pond, Tucker Pond and Larkin Pond are freshwater ponds located in forested upland within the glacial moraine in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. The ponds lack any significant input or drainage streams, have minimal human development around the shore, and support an interesting and diverse set of plants and animals, including some on the state's rare species list. A multi-year plan is in place to eradicate invasive *Phragmites* along the shores of these ponds before it becomes more extensive and costly to control. Work will continue in 2009.



Invasive plant removal. USFWS photo

For additional information or questions contact:

Sharon Marino, Project Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southern New England - New York
Bight Coastal Program
50 Bend Road
Charlestown, RI 02813
401/364-9124
401/364-0170 fax

Federal Relay Service
for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
1 800/877-8339

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>
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