



PRESS RELEASE

# Baker-Polito Administration Awards \$700,000 to Herring River Restoration Project

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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Department of Fish and Game

Division of Ecological Restoration

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**BOSTON** — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced a \$700,000 state grant to advance the Herring River Estuary restoration in Wellfleet and Truro, one of the largest ecological restoration projects in the Northeast. This grant leverages a total of \$985,034 in funding for the project in fiscal years 2017 and 2018 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center.

“Our administration is committed to continuing our support for restoring and protecting Cape Cod’s natural environment, a critical factor for the region’s economy and quality of life,” said **Governor Charlie Baker**. “Restoration projects like the Herring River Estuary are an important component of our strategy to increase Massachusetts’ resilience to the effects of climate change.”

“The Herring River Estuary restoration involves an impressive, long-term partnership of state and federal agencies, the towns of Wellfleet and Truro, the Friends of Herring River, and many others,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “We look forward to working together to restore the Herring River and its extensive coastal wetlands to benefit both native wildlife and the people of Cape Cod.”

Spanning over 1,000 acres across the Cape Cod National Seashore and the towns of Wellfleet and Truro, the Herring River Estuary hosts one of the largest river and wetland systems on Cape Cod. In 1909, a dike was built across the river’s mouth, severing its connection to Wellfleet Harbor and the life-giving tides of the Atlantic Ocean. Without that connection, the salt marshes decayed, the river turned acidic, shellfish beds were contaminated by bacteria, and multiple fish kills resulted from low dissolved oxygen. The loss of tidal flow transformed this once thriving and productive coastal ecosystem into the highly degraded landscape found there today.

“The Herring River restoration effort will improve water quality, boost recreation and tourism, and help sustain commercial and recreational fisheries,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “The recent monetary allotment, along with NOAA’s generous funding, is needed to complete the engineering design and permitting phases of this important project.”

The communities of Wellfleet and Truro are working with the National Park Service, the Department of Fish and Game’s Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) and many other partners to revive the health of the Herring River and its wetlands. The project will rebuild the main dike at the river’s mouth and make other improvements across the estuary, allowing carefully controlled restoration of tidal flow to the ecosystem while protecting low-lying roads and other structures from flooding. Reconnecting the estuary to the ocean will improve water quality, increase habitat productivity for fisheries and other wildlife, restore large areas of shellfish beds, and enhance boating, fishing, and other commercial and recreational opportunities.

“We look forward to the day when a restored Herring River estuary provides much-improved habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, river herring, white perch, and other fish and wildlife,” **said Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Ron Amidon**. “The project will also greatly enhance people’s access to the natural environment by improving opportunities for shellfish harvest, fishing, boating, and other outdoor recreation.”

The \$700,000 grant from DER will support engineering design and permitting to prepare the project for construction. The project is being managed by Friends of Herring River, a nonprofit organization based in Wellfleet.

“The Herring River project exemplifies the strong working relationship between MA DER and NOAA, and our joint commitment to restoring Massachusetts’ coastal habitat. By reconnecting the estuary to the ocean, we restore access to valuable habitats for sea-run fish like river herring, as well as for the popular recreational and commercial fish that feed on them. We appreciate the Commonwealth’s continued support on these projects,” **said John Bullard, regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region**.

“The Herring River Salt Marsh was once one of the most vibrant ecosystems in the southeastern corner of the Commonwealth. Completion of this restoration project will significantly reverse the harm caused to the

estuary over the past 100 years and support the revitalization of the river’s natural tidal flows,” **said State Senator Julian Cyr (D-Truro)**. I am encouraged by the shared commitment to support this project, and am confident that Friends of the Herring River will continue to be responsible stewards of the restoration, creating numerous benefits for residents, visitors, aquaculture, and the environment.”

“I am a strong supporter of the project as I feel it takes necessary steps to restore the health of the area by improving not only water quality, but also protecting and improving the native wildlife that depends on these resources,” **said State Representative Sarah Peake (D-Provincetown)**. “In addition, I believe that ultimately the surrounding community will significantly benefit from these improvements to the ecosystem, on which we so heavily rely for recreation, aquaculture, and a viable fishing industry.”

The mission of the Division of Ecological Restoration is to restore and protect the Commonwealth’s rivers, wetlands and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the conservation and enjoyment of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land protection and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and wildlife species, and ecological restoration of fresh water, salt water, and terrestrial habitats. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

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DER restores and protects rivers, wetlands, and watersheds in Massachusetts for the benefit of people and the environment.

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