



Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
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Local Watershed Association Awarded Funding to Restore the Pawcatuck River

The Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) has been awarded \$2,485,564 by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to create fish passage on the upper Pawcatuck River. In February 2009, NOAA received \$167 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to jumpstart the nation's economy by creating thousands of jobs through coastal habitat restoration. On June 30, NOAA announced that it had selected 50 high quality, high priority projects to support more than 5,000 jobs and restore U.S. coasts on a grand scale.

With this funding the WPWA will implement three valuable river restoration projects on the Pawcatuck River in the Village of Shannock. The historic village is located in the towns of Charlestown and Richmond, RI. WPWA will oversee the removal of Lower Shannock Falls Dam in the late summer of 2009, the construction of a fish ladder at Horseshoe Falls Dam in 2010, and the removal or modification of the Kenyon Mill Dam also in 2010. These projects will restore the migration of native sea-run fish and other species to the upper Pawcatuck River and Worden's Pond (RI's largest freshwater pond) opening up 10 miles and 1300 acres of historic spawning grounds. Many aquatic species were excluded from these spawning grounds when the dams were built in the early 1800's.

WPWA anticipates creating 134 construction and engineering jobs with the stimulus funding. WPWA ultimately hopes the projects will save commercial fishing jobs in the region based on the positive effects they will have on Rhode Island's coastal fish stocks. An increase in recreation and tourism revenue to the state is also expected as the Pawcatuck is one of the most popular rivers in RI for freshwater fishing and paddling. Previously the WPWA planned to address these dams one at a time and realize the restoration of migratory fish to Worden's Pond by 2018. With this infusion of federal funding the projects are now expected to be completed by 2011. A net gain of 7 spawning seasons for the region's aquatic species will be achieved under this funding. Further benefits of the projects include a reduction in flood liability to the local towns and an increase in the health of the Pawcatuck River through the removal of contaminated sediments behind the dams slated to be removed.

Of the awarded funding less than 2.3% will go toward WPWA's project administration. According to WPWA's Executive Director Chris Fox "keeping the oversight funds to the bare minimum made the project even more attractive to NOAA and demonstrates WPWA's dedication to improving the rivers of the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed and not the organization's coffers." WPWA has conducted other river restoration projects on the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers of which were carried out with little to no funding support for the Association.

WPWA and its project partners have also been instrumental in advocating for wetland rule and permit procedure changes within the state to support these types of ecologically beneficial projects. To date there has never been a planned and permitted dam removal in the

State of Rhode Island. WPWA would like to thank its local, state and federal partners for their ongoing support of these valuable restoration efforts. Partners in the ongoing restoration work within the watershed include The Town's of Charlestown and Richmond and their conservation commissions, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, Save the Bay, American Rivers, Trout Unlimited, NOAA's Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Team, The Natural Resource Conservation Service and The US Fish & Wildlife Service.

For additional information, contact Chris Fox at 401-539-9017, 401-569-8170 or at chris@wpwa.org.

Quotes:

“The planned removal of a dam in a controlled fashion prevents river bed sediments from mobilizing and moving downstream as they would if the dam were breached in a high water event. Both dams on the Pawcatuck eyed for removal are in dire need of repair and are at risk for a breach in the near future.”

-Chris Fox

“The projects will not only unite the fish with their native spawning grounds, but provide the opportunity to unite the community and support local industry and landowners.”

-Chris Fox

“This award represents a tremendous victory for the Pawcatuck River system and the State of Rhode Island. Had WPWA not requested this funding, the funds would have been allocated to another state and fundraising for these projects would have continued to only trickle in.”

-Chris Fox

“I am very pleased to oversee this historic restoration, the long hours of work that will be required to ensure the project's successful implementation is a small investment by comparison to the long term benefits to the river and the people who live and recreate on it”.

-Chris Fox

**** Pictures included on attached pages ****



Lower Shannock Falls Dam

C.Fox



Lower Shannock Falls Dam

C.Fox



Horseshoe Falls Dam

C. Fox



Horseshoe Falls Dam

C. Fox



Kenyon Mill Dam

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Kenyon Mill Dam

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