



TOWN OF WELLFLEET

300 MAIN STREET WELLFLEET MASSACHUSETTS 02667
Tel (508) 349-0300 www.wellfleet-ma.gov

MEDIA RELEASE

Issue Date: 04/03/2023

Location: Wellfleet, MA

Contacts: Richard Waldo

508-349-0300

Richard.waldo@wellfleet-ma.gov

Officials and Community Celebrate Start of Herring River Restoration Project

Federal and state officials joined approximately 100 community leaders on Friday to mark the start of construction of the Chequessett Neck bridge, the first and largest infrastructure component of the Herring River Restoration Project. The new bridge with sluice gates will replace a portion of earthen dike built across the mouth of Herring River more than a century ago. The return of tidal flow will improve water quality, restore native salt marsh habitat, increase resilience of the floodplain, and revive the river's ability to sequester heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

Wellfleet Town Administrator, Richard Waldo, welcomed the crowd gathered at landing next to the existing dike. "Seeing the bridge construction get underway is very rewarding for the Town, the Cape Cod National Seashore and our other state and federal partners who have worked for more than two decades to reach this point," Richard Waldo said.

Cape Cod National Seashore **Superintendent Brian Carlstrom** reinforced the importance of partnership in the project's success. "Collaboration and dedicated citizens support is what created Cape Cod National Seashore and that same spirit of collaboration and citizen support enabled today's groundbreaking of the Chequessett Neck Bridge possible," Carlstrom said. "We look forward to the bridge's completion, which will bring needed renewal to the marshland, providing improved water quality for the ecosystem and new recreation access for visitor enjoyment."

"Today's groundbreaking is the culmination of years and years of work by many people – and it stands as a true testament to the benefits of a strong local, state, and federal partnership," said **Congressman Bill Keating**. "This historic investment into 1,100 acres of tidal saltmarsh will reverse the ecological degradation of the past century and revive what was once the most productive saltmarsh system in the northeast through the region's largest ever tidal restoration project. I am incredibly proud to stand with the Town of Wellfleet, our partners in the Commonwealth, at the National Park Service, and the

Friends of the Herring River as we break ground on this project that will pay dividends for generations to come.”

Representatives of Senators Elizabeth Warren (Regional Director Caleb White) and Edward Markey (State Director Jim Cantwell) offered comments on their behalf.

“Today’s groundbreaking of the Herring River Restoration Project demonstrates the amazing progress we can accomplish with partnership across all levels of government and our community,” **said Senator Elizabeth Warren.** “I, alongside Senator Markey, and Congressman Keating, worked hard to secure federal funding for this vital ecological project that will spur economic activity, promote recreational opportunities and enhance coastal resiliency. I will keep fighting for federal investments like this to support Wellfleet, Truro and communities across Massachusetts.”

“The Herring River Restoration Project will bring untold benefits for Cape Cod’s inhabitants – from herring to humans. The project will restore critical ecosystems, advance community health by improving water quality and reducing mosquito breeding, and promote coastal resiliency and recreational activities in Wellfleet.” **said U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey.** “The success of this project is a testament to grassroots efforts led by the Friends of the Herring River and the powerful partnerships across the Town of Wellfleet, the County, the National Park Service, and state and federal agencies. I am proud to have partnered with Senator Warren and Congressman Keating to deliver federal funding for this project, including \$29 million from the USDA. I will continue to fight for federal funding to restore and protect all of Cape Cod’s waterways.”

Senator Julian Cyr and Rep. Sarah Peake also were on hand.

“The Herring River Restoration project embodies the goals of resiliency, stewardship, and partnership. Healthy tidal marshes play a key role in mitigating the climate crisis, and this rigorously designed project exemplifies the utilization of management techniques, infrastructure, and modeling. It has been an honor to support funding opportunities and see this project come to fruition,” **said State Senator Julian Cyr.**

“The Herring River Restoration is an example of the powerful progress that results from collaboration. Local, county, state and federal partners have all contributed to the project’s success, enabling access to vast technical resources and knowledge as well as needed funding. A State Representative for the Lower and Outer Cape, I have had the privilege of supporting many programs and projects that benefit our local fisheries and coastal environment. The Herring River Restoration Project stands out as one of the most consequential projects in our region, and a model that could benefit other communities on Cape Cod and beyond,” **said State Representative Sarah Peake**

State agency partners were represented by Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper.

“The Herring River Estuary Restoration Project is a tremendous example of federal, state, and local organizations and agencies working together to combat climate change and increase resilience,” **said Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary**

Rebecca Tepper. “The Healey-Driscoll Administration is excited to see this project come to fruition and is eager to continue this successful partnership that will improve water quality and passage for wildlife and restore critical habitats. Governor Healey’s budget builds on these efforts, making significant investments in projects that protect our rivers, wetlands, and watersheds for decades to come.”

Federal agency partners were represented by Dan Wright of NRCS, Carrie Robinson of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Wendi Webber of USFWS.

“Water quality is a major concern on Cape Cod, particularly its effect on salt marsh ecosystems and aquaculture,” said **Dan Wright, NRCS State Conservationist** for Massachusetts. “It is exciting to see phase one of this project started as part of the NRCS Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project, locally led by federal, state and local agencies and organizations to benefit the local ecosystem and downstream aquaculture.”

“NOAA is excited to be celebrating this incredible milestone for the Herring River Restoration Project alongside our partners. We have been engaged in this effort for two decades, and we are proud to recognize the dedicated work of our partners that has helped move this ambitious project forward,” said **Carrie Selberg Robinson, director of the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation.** “Salt marsh habitats provide valuable benefits, and this project highlights the power of collaboration in restoring these ecosystems and building the resilience of coastal communities.”

"We're thrilled to be a partner in restoring the Herring River to a naturally functioning tidal marsh that is more resilient to climate change and supports wildlife and people," said **Wendi Weber, Deputy Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.** “This conservation project is a great example of the type of durable, nature-based solution that results from locally driven efforts and is needed up and down the coast.”

Christa Drew, Executive Director of the non-profit Friends of Herring River, spoke to the community’s commitment to the project

“Friends of Herring River has worked diligently since 2009 to support this project through community engagement, research, planning, and grant administration. As local residents, neighbors, and community leaders we are grateful for these many opportunities and join in appreciation for all the partners and resources supporting work to restore the vitality of a beloved ecosystem,” Christa Drew said.

The Town of Wellfleet and Cape Cod National Seashore have been working in partnership for two decades to plan the Herring River Restoration Project, with support from the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the local non-profit Friends of Herring River. Representatives of these partners were on hand to celebrate the significant milestone represented by the construction start. To date, nearly \$30 million in federal funding from US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and \$23 million from the MA

Division of Ecological Restoration has been pledged toward project implementation, with additional grants pending.

Last year the Town and Seashore secured environmental permits and state and federal funding to initiate Phase 1 project construction to restore 570 acres of degraded salt marsh. Phase 1 includes all water control infrastructure needed for full tidal restoration of the 890-acre estuary, most of which is in the Cape Cod National Seashore.

The \$31 million bridge with sluice gates and public water access features will replace a portion of a tide-restricting Chequessett Neck Road dike. Construction is being undertaken by the Town and its contractor, MIG Corporation, Inc of Acton, MA.

The project has been recognized as a nationally significant model for using science and smart investments in infrastructure to repair environmental damage, increase community resilience, and support the local economy.

Photos and captions attached.

###

Photo Captions

Photo 1 (photo credit Laurie Warner)

Congressman Bill Keating addresses state and federal officials and community leaders at the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Herring River Restoration Project.

Photo 2 (photo credit Laurie Warner)

Officials gather to celebrate the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Herring River Restoration Project. (L to R) Ryan Curley, Chair, Wellfleet Selectboard; Congressman Bill Keating; Barbara Carboni, Wellfleet Selectboard; Jim Cantwell, State Director for Senator Edward Markey; Caleb White, Regional Director for Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

Photo 3 (photo credit Laurie Warner)

Officials listen to speakers at the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Herring River Restoration Project. (L to R) Richard Waldo, Wellfleet Town Administrator; Jim Cantwell, State Director for Senator Edward Markey; Brian Carlstrom, Superintendent of the Cape Cod National Seashore; Rep. Sarah Peake.