

News Release

USDA invests \$42.5 million in the Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project

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AMHERST, Mass., April 27, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest \$42.5 million to restore and protect water quality on Cape Cod. Some 21 individual projects will receive funding as part of the watershed-wide Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project, which will include seven fish passage installations, 10 stormwater remediation projects and four salt marsh restoration projects.

The funding is provided through the federal [Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program](#). NRCS worked with the project sponsors – the Cape Cod Conservation District, the Barnstable County Commissioners, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and all 15 Cape Cod towns – to identify project sites.

Up to \$29 million of the funding will go toward the Herring River Salt Marsh Restoration Project in the Town of Wellfleet. This project will restore tidal flow to over 800 acres of salt marsh by replacing three existing culverts with a bridge and installing other structural and vegetative measures. When tidal flows are restored and salinities are increased, much of the area will no longer produce methane, resulting in substantial climate benefit.

The full list of projects with project summaries is available on the [NRCS Massachusetts website](#). NRCS funding will cover 75 percent of the construction costs while also providing funding for design and project administration. The remaining 25 percent of construction cost is the responsibility of the town and must

come from a non-federal source. Work on several of the sites is expected to begin in the fall of 2022. Completion of all 21 projects is expected by 2027.

“Water quality is a major concern on Cape Cod, particularly its effect on salt marshes, shellfish beds and herring runs,” said **Dan Wright**, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts. “The Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project is a strong, locally led partnership of federal, state and local agencies. This funding will result in significant long-term benefits Cape-wide.”

The Cape Cod Water Resources Project watershed plan and environmental impact statement was authorized in 2009 and included 76 projects across Cape Cod. The project’s goals would restore 1,500 acres of salt marsh, protect 7,200 acres of shellfish beds through improved stormwater management and improve and reestablish fish passages that will provide anadromous fish with access to 4,200 acres of spawning habitat. Thirty-one of the projects originally identified in the Cape Cod Water Resources Project Watershed Plan were completed between 2010 and 2021.

In 2019, NRCS asked the Cape Cod Conservation District (CCCD) to review the CCWRRP Plan/EIS to verify that it was still valid and to identify needed updates. The CCCD and NRCS evaluated approximately 96 restricted salt marsh sites, 148 restricted fish passage sites, and 129 stormwater sites, emphasizing the projects providing the most benefits. Based on this evaluation, the CCCD recommended to NRCS that 98 priority projects (consisting of original and new sites) receive funding to achieve the plan’s acre goals. Additional funding requests will be made in future years.

In addition to the project sponsors, the following are cooperating agencies: Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Mass. Department of Fish and Game’s Division of Ecological Restoration and Division of Marine Fisheries, Mass. Department of Environmental Protection, Mass. Highway Department, Mass. Office of Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NRCS serves as the primary technical adviser to project sponsors because of its engineering and environmental expertise and ability to deliver science-based technology and knowledge about the watershed's natural resources and ecosystem.

Since 1947, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program has helped communities address critical needs on flood control, water management, watershed protection and development. This strong federal, state and local partnership has resulted in the construction of more than 2,000 watershed projects that help communities in every state in the nation and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.