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Windswept Cranberry Bog Restoration Project Awarded \$1 Million USFWS Grant

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game's Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), in partnership with the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, has been awarded \$1 million from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the Windswept Bog Wetland Restoration Project, which will restore and enhance a 231-acre property containing 39 acres of former cranberry bog and 111 acres of natural wetlands.

As part of the USFWS's efforts to conserve and restore coastal wetlands, the Service awarded \$10.8 million to support 12 projects in seven coastal states to protect, restore, or enhance over 2,000 acres of coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program.

"Thank you to the USFWS for this transformative investment in watershed-scale ecological restoration in Nantucket—this project will provide immense benefits for people and nature as this former cranberry bog is brought back to life," said Department of Fish & Game Commissioner Tom O'Shea. "Support from our federal partners is critical for accelerating state and local efforts to build climate resilience and restore biodiversity, and we are glad to be part of a nationwide effort right here in Massachusetts."

"The Windswept Bog Wetland Restoration Project benefits both people and nature. The project offers public access for the community and the healthy, self-sustaining wetlands will be home to native plants and wildlife," said Division of Ecological Restoration Director Beth Lambert. "We applaud the Nantucket Conservation Foundation for their leadership of this regionally significant restoration project and are thankful to the USFWS for this grant award, which helps us get shovels on the ground for construction. We appreciate their investment in restoration and climate resilience."

The Windswept Bog Wetland Restoration Project will preserve and enhance habitat for inland freshwater species and in the long term, potentially support salt marsh migration as sea levels rise. The activities funded by this award will focus on restoring natural hydrology, eliminating barriers to fish and wildlife movement, enhancing habitat, and providing opportunities for scientific research, public education, and outdoor recreation.

Since 2019, the Division of Ecological Restoration has worked with the Nantucket Conservation Foundation to plan this watershed-scale wetland restoration project. This project would not be possible without strong partners—additional project partners include the Environmental Protection Agency's Southern New England Estuary Program (SNEP), and Richard King Mellon Foundation, as well as project engineer Fuss & O'Neill and SumCo Eco-Contracting as the construction contractor.



“We are so grateful to have been chosen as a recipient of this generous funding opportunity in support of our Windswept Bog Wetland Restoration Project,” said Karen Beattie, Vice President of Science and Stewardship at the Nantucket Conservation Foundation (NCF). “This critically important restoration has been a true partnership with the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) since planning began over four years ago. This grant will enable significant forward progress on this project, which will both fulfill NCF’s habitat restoration goals and serve as a model for similar DER projects across southeastern New England.”

“Nantucket’s wetlands serve as a critical habitat for plants and animals and play a key role in maintaining a healthy environment. This \$1 million in funding granted to the Division of Ecological Restoration and the Nantucket Conservation Foundation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is an example of strong federal, state, and local partnership that champions effective environmental stewardship,” said State Senator Julian Cyr (D-Cape and Islands). “In the face of rising sea levels and the climate crisis, it is essential that we invest in and promote projects that preserve and restore wetlands so wildlife and people and can continue to thrive in their coastal homes for years to come.”

“This project marks a major milestone in the conservation and revitalization of Nantucket’s vital wetland ecosystems,” said State Representative Dylan Fernandes (D-Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket). “We extend our sincere gratitude to USFWS and DER for their invaluable partnership, and to Nantucket Conservation Foundation for their dedicated stewardship of these critical habitats. This grant will play a crucial role in enhancing natural habitats, ultimately leading to tangible benefits for our local communities.

This award supports the construction phase of this important project. The Division of Ecological Restoration has previously awarded nearly \$1 million to support pre-construction activities as well as the start of construction services.

About the Nantucket Conservation Foundation: Founded in 1963, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation owns, protects, and stewards over 9,000 acres of land and coastal shoreline, conserves Nantucket’s rare and significant natural resources, and engages in impactful ecological research to inform resource management and further our knowledge of Nantucket’s unique ecosystems and species. We share our environmental expertise with the wider community and provide educational and recreational opportunities to encourage respectful enjoyment and appreciation of our properties.

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