



MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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State and Federal Officials Approve Final Restoration Plan for 2003 Bouchard Barge-120 Oil Spill into Buzzards Bay

BOSTON – The Natural Resource Damages Trustee Council for the Bouchard Barge-120 oil spill today released its final programmatic restoration plan (PRP) and environmental assessment (EA) for shoreline, aquatic and recreational use resources impacted or lost due to the 2003 spill in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The Final PRP/EA is the second of three anticipated plans to restore natural resources injured and uses affected by the 98,000-gallon spill that oiled roughly 100 miles of shoreline in Buzzards Bay in April 2003. A \$6 million natural resource damages settlement with the Bouchard Transportation Co., Inc. is funding development and implementation of restoration, with \$4,255,248 awarded to restore shoreline and aquatic resources and lost recreational uses.

The final plan selects 19 projects throughout the Buzzards Bay environment in Massachusetts and Rhode Island to restore resources in the following categories of injuries resulting from the spill:

- Shoreline resources, including tidal marshes, sand beaches, rocky coast, and gravel and boulder shorelines;
- Aquatic resources, including benthic organisms such as American lobster, bivalves, and their habitats, and finfish such as river herring and their habitats; and
- Lost uses, including public coastal access, recreational shell-fishing and recreational boating.

Shoreline and aquatic habitats will be restored at Round Hill Marsh and Allens Pond Marsh in Dartmouth, as well as in the Weweantic River in Wareham. Populations of shellfish, including quahog, bay scallop and oyster, will be enhanced or restored through transplanting and seeding programs in numerous towns and multiple locations. These designated shellfish restoration areas are expected to help improve recreational shell-fishing opportunities.

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MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Public access opportunities will be created through a variety of projects, including acquisition of a large land tract in Fairhaven and Mattapoiset to increase the Nasketucket Bay State Reservation, trail improvements at several coastal parks, amenities for access for persons with physical disabilities, and a handicapped-accessible fishing platform in Fairhaven. New and improved public boat ramps will also be installed in Clarks Cove in Dartmouth and Onset Harbor in Wareham.

The plan also identifies secondary Tier 2 preferred projects that may be funded, if settlement funds remain following the implementation of the primary Tier 1 projects.

“I’m thrilled to begin working with our partners and the public to improve the quality of Buzzards Bay and surrounding natural areas,” said Tom Chapman, the New England Field Office Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “These exciting projects will boost the opportunities for residents and visitors around the Bay to enjoy the outdoors through new trails, upgraded boat launches and improved shell-fishing.”

“As a lifelong resident of New Bedford, I have enjoyed many days on this bay and estuary, so I take a personal interest in seeing it restored,” said John Bullard, Regional Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries. “Today, we took another step forward in restoring the salt marsh and eel grass habitats that are home to river herring, shellfish and other species, which support jobs and recreational opportunities for this area.”

“The Patrick Administration is committed to continuing partnerships with municipalities, non-profits and other stakeholders to restore impacted resources,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Maeve Vallely Bartlett, who serves as Massachusetts’ Trustee for natural resources. “The Commonwealth has a rich maritime history and our citizens enjoy the economic, recreational and environmental benefits of Buzzards Bay, making it an important shoreline area to protect and restore.”

The first of the three restoration plans for the Bouchard Barge-120 oil spill was finalized in 2012 to restore threatened piping plover populations (http://www.fws.gov/newengland/pdfs/FinalBouchardRPEAipingplover_%20122012.pdf), and a third plan will be developed to restore other birds and shoreline injuries on Ram Island. A hardcopy of the second restoration plan – the final PRP/EA for shoreline, aquatic and recreational use resources – is available in the Fall River, New Bedford and Bourne public libraries. An electronic version of the document, offering greater details for the selected restoration projects, is available at the following web sites:

<http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/northeast/buzzard/pdf/B-120-Final-PRP-EA-and-FONSI-09-30-14.pdf>

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MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/cleanup/nrd/>

The Bouchard B-120 Trustee Council is composed of representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, representing the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, representing the U.S Department of Interior; and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, representing the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The oil spill also affected tribal resources of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, which previously settled separately with Bouchard.

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