



PARTNERING TO RESTORE A COASTAL POND



On September 21, 2007, salt water from Mount Hope Bay flowed into Town Pond, a historic coastal pond on Narragansett Bay, for the first time in 53 years. The area had been filled as a disposal site for dredged material around 1950, completely destroying its value as a marine and estuarine habitat. The restoration will provide habitat for a rich variety of fish and wildlife, from oysters and blue crabs to flounder and great blue herons.

THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM IN ACTION

The 2007 restoration marked the culmination of more than seven years of planning, engineering, and construction, achieved through a partnership of Federal, state, local, and non-governmental organizations.

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) played an active role throughout the restoration process: working with the community to build support, convening technical experts to design the restoration, and working with governmental and non-governmental organizations to secure nearly six million dollars for construction of the largest wetland restoration project

ever undertaken on Narragansett Bay.

Until 1950, Town Pond was a 40-acre tidal pond with salt marshes along its edges, connected to the salt waters of Mount Hope Bay by a large tidal channel. During

dredging operations for the Fall River, Mass., shipping channel, the pond was filled with mud dredged from the bottom of the Bay. The fill operation prevented tidal exchange to the interior of the marsh by raising the area above high tide, and over the



Photo: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

next several decades, the former pond evolved from a mudflat to a 40-acre monoculture of the invasive reed *Phragmites*.

In the late 1990's, the late Sen. John Chafee authorized the R.I. Ecosystem Restoration Study at the request of NBEP. The effort was undertaken by the Corps, NBEP and other partners to identify coastal restoration opportunities throughout Rhode Island's coastal areas. One such opportunity identified was Town Pond. Under Section 1135 of the Federal Water Resources Development Act, the Corps is funded to restore coastal sites damaged by past navigational projects. The

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Federal government provides 75 percent of the cost of these projects; local partners must pay the remainder. The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, R.I. Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and the Corps worked with Federal, state and local partners through the R.I. Habitat Restoration Team to develop a restoration plan for Town Pond.

The project restores more than 20 acres of historic salt pond habitat as well as fringing wetlands, coastal grassland habitat, and public access to the shoreline. In so doing, it is intended to restore spawning habitat

EFFECTIVE



EFFICIENT



ADAPTIVE



COLLABORATIVE

for winter flounder and critical habitat for a variety of valuable estuarine plants and animals, including oysters, blue crabs, menhaden, and waterfowl such as brant. The project will also protect nearby freshwater resources, allow continued maintenance access to existing electric transmission lines, and provide for public access and viewing of the restored habitat. The Town of Portsmouth is strongly supportive of the project and has been a consistent partner. Much of the non-Federal funding for the project was provided through state sources such as RIDEM and the R.I. Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Trust Fund, which is administered by the R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council. Additional funding was provided by the R.I. Corporate Wetlands Partnership, Ducks Unlimited, and Aquidneck Island Land Trust. Roger Williams

University provided significant in-kind contribution through real estate easements, and is now leading a project to restore oysters in the pond.

Visit **www.nbep.org** to learn more about this and other NBEP efforts.

EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) is a unique and successful coastal watershed-based program established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act Amendments. The NEP involves the public and collaborates with partners to protect, restore, and maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries of national significance located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico.

For more information about the NEP go to www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries.