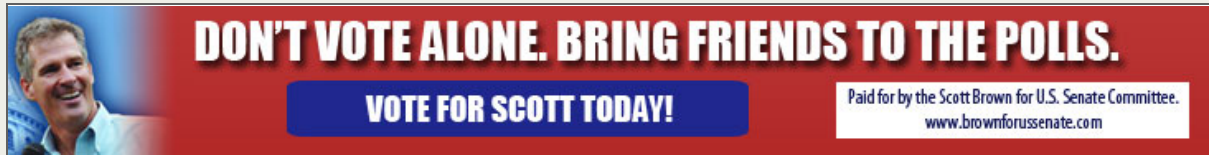


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## News

### Cape to get \$30m for habitat restoration

By Rich Eldred

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CAPE COD -

The brass was out and polished for the announcement that Cape Cod towns will receive \$30,000,000 from the federal government for salt marsh, herring run and shellfish restoration over the next 10 years.

Seventy-six projects were prioritized (out of 400 possibilities) three years ago and which of those will get the money is still unknown. Some, such as Brewster's culvert replacement at Stony Brook, have found other funding in the interim, but the benefits will flow up and down the Cape coastlines. The plan is to restore 7,300 acres of shellfish habitat, 4,200 acres of migratory fish runs and 1,500 acres of salt marsh. It will provide around 500 jobs over time.

"This is a day of celebration for the watershed project," said Maggie Geist, director of Association to Preserve Cape Cod.

"Here on the Cape, the environment is the economy," said Congressman William Delahunt. "So this is about our economy as well as protecting our environment."

Packed like pickles in a jar, inside the tiny room at APCC headquarters, were U.S. Sen. Paul Kirk, Delahunt, state Sen. Robert O'Leary, state Reps. Sarah Peake, Matt Patrick, Cleon Turner and Senate president Therese Murray and other state and local officials.

Despite the heavily Democratic crowd, Geist dared to quote Newt Gingrich: "Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you did."

And indeed this project was many years from conception to realization. Geist made sure to thank the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, an early proponent of The Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project.

"All we needed was the money and we worked and we worked and we worked," Geist said. "Years went by."

The project was finally jump-started by Delahunt and Kennedy.

"So today we can rejoice," Geist declared. "Safeguarding these waters is both our responsibility and our privilege."

The project could fix 26 storm water discharge sites, 24 culverts or dams at restricted salt marshes and 24 fish passages. The federal contribution is \$23,960,000 while \$5,990,000 will come from other sources.

Culverts will be enlarged restoring tidal flow, fish ladders will aid herring runs and dry wells and sand filters will protect shellfish beds from runoff.



Wicked Local photo by Barry Donahue

The marsh at Paines Creek in Brewster. Federal monies will be used to enlarge culverts, restoring tidal flow; install fish ladders at some herring runs and dry wells and sand filters to protect shellfish beds from runoff.

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"It's been a long and winding road. It started here, went to Washington and now we're back," said Delahunt. "This is a really unique and creative use of existing legislation. This is clearly a dramatic departure from the thinking of the past."

The money is actually being appropriated under the authority of an old federal act that was designed for dam construction.

"This is really cutting edge," explained Christine Clark of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (which is the lead agency of the project). "Taking a federal program that many people thought did not have applicability today and using it to restore natural systems and habitat – lots of folks across the nation are watching this program."

"Today represents that we discovered, in time, that it is important to address even the small issues," Delahunt said. "This is going to translate into a healthy economy for the Cape. It translates into 500 jobs. But I dare say there is a multiplier to that. This is about job creation and about our future."

"From local to county to state to federal, everyone is working together," Kirk observed.

There are dozens upon dozens of organizations involved, from the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe to the Powderhorn gun shop, from the Friends of Pleasant Bay to National Park Service, Mass Highway, Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies and Ducks Unlimited.

Kirk worked with Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas to push the bill through. He noted that now that the funds are authorized, they still need to be appropriated.

"The Agriculture Department has granted \$5 million to begin the program immediately," Kirk said. "That's a down payment, an investment. They're not going to waste \$5 million and not do the rest."

Projects that are "shovel or clam-rake ready" will go first.

"Small things together add up to an enormous impact," O'Leary said as he noted that jobs would come in construction, environmental monitoring, the shellfish industry and fishing.

"This is one of the largest habitat restoration projects ever undertaken in Massachusetts," noted Mary Griffin, commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game.

"This will have a tremendous economic benefit both directly and indirectly for this area," said Murray.

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