



Gulf of Maine
Council on the
Marine Environment

Gulf of Maine Council

Press Release

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Gulf of Maine Council/NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership Announces Restoration Work at Drakes Island Marsh, Wells, Maine

Augusta, Maine – The Gulf of Maine Council/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Habitat Restoration Partnership announces the beginning of restoration work at Drakes Island Marsh in Wells, Maine. Restoration will improve tidal exchange to a 77 acre tidal marsh located in the beach community of Wells, Maine. The project will enhance the ecosystem while protecting neighboring development from flooding through replacement of an undersized culvert and installation of a self-regulating tidal gate.

Installation of a new 4 x 5 foot box culvert will improve marsh habitat by improving tidal exchange and drainage and also allow for a more natural tidal pattern. Additionally, the installation of a Self Regulating Tidal Gate (SRT) will allow for management of high water levels to protect nearby development and the recovering, subsided, vegetated marsh areas.

Modeling of vegetative response to the new culvert predicts that the improved tidal exchange will significantly reduce the spread of invasive *Phragmites* and *Typha* and increase high marsh habitat. Water levels will also be managed to enhance nesting of endangered Sharp-tailed Saltmarsh Sparrow. The project has been designed to accommodate both environmental and community concerns and will be monitored to ensure that it is managed to best achieve its goals.

Partners in this project include the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Town of Wells, The Gulf of Maine Council/NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership, the Conservation Law Foundation, Restore America's Estuaries, the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, and the Maine Coastal Program.

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Approximately \$390,000 in grants and other support has been committed to this project since inception in late 2000. Volunteers have contributed hundreds of hours planning and developing the project, with their contributions valued at approximately \$17,000.

The marsh is part of the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), established in 1986, which encompasses 1600 acres of tidal marsh and adjacent upland in the Little and Webhannet River watersheds. About 1,100 acres of the Reserve are within the boundary of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve is the coordinator of the project and worked with all partners to develop and design the project. The culvert will be owned and operated by the Town of Wells. Erno Bonebakker, the Restoration Coordinator at the Wells Reserve and the Project Manager noted, “Wells Reserve is delighted to have this project under construction after many years of study and planning. We look forward to continuing to work with the neighborhood, the Town of Wells, The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and our other partners to insure the success of this restoration.”

The Gulf of Maine Council/NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership provides funding and builds community support for restoration of coastal and estuarine habitats including salt marshes, native diadromous fish runs, subtidal eelgrass and shellfish as well as other habitats found with the Gulf of Maine. The Partnership has funded 39 projects for a total of \$913,535, with roughly \$3.6 million contributed from other sources. The Partnership has been an effective method of restoring regionally significant habitat in the Gulf of Maine. For more information or to view the Partnership’s Habitat Restoration Strategy, visit, www.gulfofmaine.org/habitatrestoration/

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The mission of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment is to maintain and enhance environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine to allow for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations. For more information visit the Council’s website at www.gulfofmaine.org

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