

# **Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Team Portal Demonstration Workshop Report**

**4808 TOWER HILL ROAD  
WAKEFIELD, RHODE ISLAND**

PREPARED FOR

RI Coastal Resources Management Council  
and RI Habitat Restoration Team  
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Project No. R310-000.4

December 23, 2003

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Figure 1 Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Sites

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1998 Rhode Island Coastal Habitat Restoration Charrette, the Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Team (RIHRT) has worked towards developing a framework for providing resources and technical support to complete habitat restoration projects in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The competitive grant awarded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center and the technical assistance provided by the Center's Landscape Characterization and Restoration program has enabled the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) and RIHRT to develop the Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Portal (Portal) and three restoration site selection tools. The Portal currently provides a central database of projects identified state-wide and in Massachusetts for seagrass, riverine, and salt marsh habitat restoration (Figure 1).

In addition to the efforts of the RIHRT, the Rhode Island Legislature passed legislation in 2002 establishing *The Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund* (Program and Trust Fund) (RIGL §46-23.1). The purposes of the Program and Trust Fund are to provide restoration planning and technical expertise and to implement measures to restore coastal and estuary habitats. The legislation specified nine factors to be taken into account by a technical team of advisors to the CRMC for the purposes of determining the eligibility of habitat restoration projects for funding. As mandated by the legislation, these factors have been incorporated into the State Estuary and Coastal Habitat Restoration Strategy (Strategy) that establishes the process for proposing and selecting projects that receive funding from the Trust Fund. The Program and Trust Fund are currently the only state authorized mechanisms for funding and selecting projects. Restoration projects are also funded by other grant programs; however, some of these projects are not prioritized based on the factors of the Strategy by the RIHRT. Funding for the Program and Trust Fund was appropriated in FY2003 in the amount of \$250,000 from the Oil Spill Prevention, Administration and Response Fund (OSPAR). Efforts to reinstate the funding in perpetuity have failed; yet members of the General Assembly continue to lobby in order to secure future funding. For more information on the Trust Fund and Strategy please refer to Appendix A.

As a means to communicate the tools and benefits of the restoration Portal to the public and to gain consensus on a method to prioritize restoration projects in the state, the RIHRT through the CRMC, hired ESS Group, Inc. (ESS) through a competitive bid process to coordinate and facilitate four habitat restoration outreach workshops in the Fall of 2003. ESS worked with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a subset of the RIHRT, to design and implement the workshops. The Portal demonstration workshops were intended to demonstrate the Portal capabilities, including the restoration site selection tools, engage stakeholders and the public in identifying the priorities for protecting, improving, and restoring habitats at identified sites, and establish a framework for obtaining public input on priority habitat restoration projects for future funding initiatives.

Following is an overview of the workshops, recommendations based on input from stakeholders for restoration priority setting, and technical revisions for the website.

## **2.0 TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The TAC was composed of the following members:

- Helen Cottrell, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
- Megan Higgins, CRMC
- Fred Presley, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) Sustainable Watersheds
- Susan Ely, RIDEM Freshwater Wetlands
- Jennifer McCann, University of Rhode Island (URI) Coastal Resources Center
- Andy Lipsky, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Wenley Ferguson, Save The Bay
- Gisele Magnusson, URI Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
- Peter Holmes, United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region 1
- Margherita Pryor, USEPA-Region 1
- Linda Rowe, NOAA Coastal Services Center
- Robert McGuinn, NOAA Coastal Services Center

ESS met with the RIHRT TAC four times to coordinate the project work plan and discuss project logistics. The meetings included a kick-off meeting (June 4, 2003) to determine workshop participants, locations, venues, schedules and other information to conduct the workshops, and three additional meetings (June 17, July 29, and October 7, 2003) to review the summaries of workshop proceedings and to plan the statewide priority-setting workshop. ESS also held a work session for interested TAC members to demonstrate the salt marsh site selection tool.

Initially, the TAC decided that the overall objective of the workshops should be to demonstrate the portal site selection tools and get feedback from the participants on the parameters used in the tools to prioritize restoration projects, the importance of certain parameters over others (a weighing factor), and ultimately to use this input to develop a "high, medium, low" ranking of the projects in the database. Based on input from surveys distributed at the first two workshops, it became clear that using the site selection tools to prioritize all of the projects into a list of "high, medium, low" was not appropriate. Workshop participants were not completely supportive of using the criteria to prioritize projects through the tools. (See Section 6.0, Recommendations from Workshop Participants)

The TAC presented the site selection tools as a PowerPoint presentation with a pre-selected set of parameters which demonstrated the function of the tools. The TAC created a survey for each restoration tool in order to get feedback from the workshop participants regarding important parameters for prioritizing restoration projects. The survey addressed social and economic criteria of the Anadromous Fish Site Selection Tool, and social, economic, and ecological criteria for the Salt Marsh Restoration Site Selection Tool. (See Appendix B).

The TAC did not demonstrate the Seagrass Site Selection Tool because the parameters used in the tool, based mostly on physical factors, are "set", and include few recreational, social, and economic parameters. Minutes from the TAC meetings are included in Appendix C.

### **3.0 REGIONAL WORKSHOPS**

The purpose of the regional workshops was to present the RIHRT's Portal website, anadromous fish passage and salt marsh restoration site selection tools, and obtain feedback from workshop participants through a survey on the socioeconomic and ecological parameters used in the tool.

ESS organized and conducted three regional workshops in Providence, South County, and the East Bay/Mount Hope Bay area in accordance with the TAC objectives to solicit input from stakeholders in key geographic areas. A summary from each workshop is included in Appendix D. In order to involve representative stakeholder organizations, ESS contacted the following groups in each region:

- South County: Salt Ponds Coalition, Wood-Pawcatuck River Watershed Council, Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition and Narrow River Preservation Association.
- Providence Region: Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Friends of the Moshassuck, Pawtuxet River Watershed Council, the Blackstone River Watershed Council, and Save the Bay.
- East Bay/Mount Hope Bay: Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, Save the Bay, Kickemuit River Watershed Council, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP), and the Massachusetts Wetlands Restoration Program.
- Statewide: RIHRT, Rhode Island Rivers Council, Rhode Island Association of Conservation Commissions, Statewide Planning Newsletter, NARRBAY.ORG, RIMAF.NET.
- Massachusetts: MA Wetlands Restoration Program, USEPA-Region 1.

#### **Workshop Overview**

**The South County Habitat Restoration Portal Workshop** was held on September 16, 2003 at the Cross-Mills Library in Charlestown, Rhode Island. This workshop focused on the anadromous fish passage restoration site selection tool, and workshop participants were asked to fill out a survey on the socioeconomic parameters used in the tool. There were representatives from the Salt Ponds Coalition, Wood-Pawcatuck River Watershed Association, NBEP, CRMC, RIDEM Sustainable Watersheds Office, USEPA-Region 1, NRCS, URI Coastal Resources Center and other individuals from the community.

**The Narragansett Bay Regional Habitat Restoration Portal Workshop** was held on October 1, 2003 at the Narragansett Bay Commission in Providence, Rhode Island. This workshop also focused on the anadromous fish passage restoration site selection tool, and workshop participants were asked to fill out a survey on the socioeconomic parameters used in the tool. There were representatives from the Pawtuxet River Watershed Council, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Save the Bay, NBEP, CRMC, USEPA-Region 1, NRCS, Blackstone – Woonasquatucket American Heritage Rivers, Narragansett Bay Commission, The Nature Conservancy and other individuals from the community.

**The Narragansett Bay Regional Habitat Restoration Portal Workshop** for the East Bay/Mount Hope Bay area and Massachusetts was held on October 8, 2003 at the Audubon Society Environmental Education Center in Bristol, Rhode Island. This workshop focused on the salt marsh restoration site selection tool, and workshop participants were asked to fill out a survey on the socioeconomic and ecological parameters used in the tool. There were representatives from the Norman Bird Sanctuary, Allin's Cove Neighborhood Association, Kickemuit River Watershed Council, NBEP, CRMC, USEPA-Region 1, MA Wetlands Restoration Program, NOAA Coastal Services Center, and other individuals from the community.

The workshops were conducted as follows:

1. Introduction by CRMC providing an overview of habitat restoration planning in the state to date and relationship of various planning efforts, including the Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Anadromous Fishes to Rhode Island Coastal Streams, Blackstone River Fisheries Restoration Plan, the Wetland Restoration Plan for the Woonasquatucket River Watershed, the State Estuary and Coastal Habitat Restoration Strategy, and the RIHRT's Portal website.
2. Background on Portal website development including input from the public and technical advisory committees to date.
3. Overview of the website features including the project inventory, interactive mapping, data products, funding and regulatory resources.
4. Discuss website utility and receive feedback.
5. Presentation of the Portal's site selection methodology for prioritizing restoration projects including the criteria chosen for considering sites (i.e., environmental and socioeconomic), method for weighing individual criteria (i.e., very low to very high) and relative importance of factors (i.e., environmental weighing with respect to socioeconomic).
6. Demonstration of habitat site selection tools by example.
  - Discussion of tool criteria for consideration in selecting priority projects.
7. State Estuary and Coastal Habitat Restoration Strategy and current framework for habitat restoration funding and project selection.
  - Discussion of the potential for using tools and data to designate priority sites.
  - Discussion of a permanent mechanism for soliciting and considering stakeholder priorities for restoration.

#### **4.0 FINAL WORKSHOP**

The final Habitat Restoration Portal Workshop was held on October 15, 2003 at the Coastal Institute, URI Bay Campus in Narragansett, Rhode Island. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss Rhode Island and Massachusetts restoration programs, present the Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Portal website, present the results of the regional workshops and surveys, review existing funding opportunities, present restoration statistics developed from the portal website and site selection tools and discuss opportunities and methods for prioritizing restoration projects in the state. There were representatives from the NBEP, RIDEM, Senator Lincoln Chafee's Office, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, NRCS, CRMC,

USEPA-Region 1, USEPA-Region 1 MA Wetlands Restoration Program, NOAA Coastal Services Center, US Fish and Wildlife Service, RIDEM Fish and Wildlife, Brown University, Save The Bay, URI Environmental Data Center, US Army Corps of Engineers, the Blackstone–Woonasquatucket American Heritage Rivers Program, Southern Rhode Island Conservation District, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, and other individuals from the community. A summary of the workshop is included in Appendix E.

Major agenda items from the final workshop are listed below:

- RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Anadromous Fishes to Rhode Island Coastal Streams
- RIDEM Woonasquatucket River Freshwater Wetland Restoration Plan
- CRMC Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund
- Massachusetts Restoration Programs and Funding Opportunities
- Funding Opportunities
- Restoration Statistics for Anadromous Fish Habitats in RI watersheds
- Restoration Statistics for Salt Marsh Habitats in RI watersheds
- Habitat Restoration Priority Setting Regional Workshop Results

## **5.0 SURVEY RESULTS**

The TAC conducted a survey of workshop participants as a means to identify which criteria used in the site selection tools (criteria that have state-wide Geographic Information System (GIS) coverages available) should be a priority when selecting restoration projects. Survey participants were asked if each criteria should be included (yes or no), and if yes, what priority that criteria should be given on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being the highest.

Survey results for the Anadromous Fish Site Selection Tool included a total of 12 respondents. The highest priority criteria included population centers, public water access, and proximity to public lands. Survey results from the salt marsh restoration site selection tool included a total of eight respondents with the highest priority criteria including proximity to a pollutant source, the presence of critical habitat, and the presence of invasive species. A summary of survey responses are also included as Appendix B.

Further recommendations from the survey responses included the following:

- Projects with a sponsor and strong “willingness to proceed” should get higher consideration.
- Public access should be given strong consideration for Anadromous Fish projects.
- Restoration priorities for Anadromous Fish are already known from work on the Blackstone River and RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Anadromous Fishes to Rhode Island Coastal Streams.
- Other criteria to include: potential cost of a project, existing funding, previous/ongoing activities of the sponsoring group and site, and agreement of landowner if not public lands.

- Provide information and incentive for groups to enter sites into inventory.
- Utilize restoration site selection tools to identify down stream restrictions, acres of habitat to be restored, and the number of restoration projects in state.
- Provide contacts on the website for inexperienced people interested in taking on a restoration project – CRMC, RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife and Freshwater Wetlands, NBEP, NRCS, NOAA etc.
- State should provide a priority list so watershed groups that do not have their own list have a reference.

## **6.0 WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS AND PARTICIPANT INPUT**

The RIHRT's goal for the workshops included obtaining input from stakeholders on technical revisions to the Portal website and site selection tools including an analysis (based on the workshops) of Portal user-friendliness, accessibility, and helpfulness in facilitating prioritization; a clear set of restoration priorities, including those for specific sites and/or habitats; and recommendations for a continuing process to receive and consider stakeholder input on restoration priorities and new restoration sites. The following are recommendations identified from workshop participant comments and suggestions.

### **Technical Revisions to Website**

#### Recommendations

- The best use of the website is to use the tools in conjunction with the legislation; keep it evolving and up to date. Socio-economic information will be beneficial for the next funding cycle.
- Provide contacts on the website for people interested in a restoration project but who don't know how to get started – CRMC, RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife and Freshwater Wetlands, NBEP, NRCS, NOAA etc.
- Provide information and incentive for groups to enter sites into the inventory.
- Clarify on the website what happens once someone recommends a site over the website.
- Provide a page that lists all of the different listserves having to do with restoration in the state and how to subscribe to the RIHRT listserv.
- Incorporate fresh water restoration opportunities in the state into the Portal. These linkages are very important.
- Keep the data current on the website – there should be some link with the Rhode Island GIS and the coverages on the website. The site should explain how it is updated and kept current with new RIGIS data.
- The criteria used by *The Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund* to select restoration projects should be indicated on the website so people have the ability to know which projects will get funding.

- The website should be set up for people who are unfamiliar with the process. For example, if someone already has a restoration site in mind, they will be able to obtain more information on that site by using the inventory, map identification tool, etc.
- Clarify when the RIHRT meets and notification about the meetings.
- Clarify what species of herring is considered in the site selection tool and in the inventory.
- Include existing town parcel data for identifying abutting landowners.
- The database or internet map server should take into account impacted/problem areas such as superfund sites. Some impacted areas are being managed by state and federal agencies that have the legal authority to conduct restoration and there may be potential funding sources. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System (CERCLIS) database should be brought in as a coverage to be mapped using ArcView. Remediation managers should be informed somehow of restoration efforts going on which could potentially provide support for higher standards of clean-up.
- The recent work completed on the Blackstone River by the NBEP and Rhode Island Sea Grant, and recent work by the Army Corps of Engineers on the Woonasquatucket River should be incorporated into the website.
- We should identify the Massachusetts restoration efforts so that they are included in the inventory and recognized for the overall benefit to anadromous fish in Rhode Island. The agency/person responsible for coordinating data in Massachusetts should be indicated on the website.
- Information on restoration sites in the database needs to be updated and kept current.

## Site Selection Tool Usefulness

### Recommendations

- The site selection tools should be used to support the prioritization process with additional information, but should not be used to determine priority projects. Prioritization has been completed for some habitats, by other state initiatives and priorities are known. For example, on the Wood-Pawcatuck, Blackstone, Woonasquatucket and Pawtuxet Rivers. In other cases, the criteria in the site selection tools is not complete enough, i.e., not enough ecological data, and in certain cases some criteria can actually be a hindrance to restoration projects (i.e., proximity to public access, schools etc.).
- The best use of the website is to use the site selection tools in conjunction with the legislation; keep it evolving and up to date. Socio-economic information will be beneficial for the next funding cycle.
- Utilize restoration site selection tools to identify down stream restrictions, acres of habitat to be restored, and the number of restoration projects in the state.
- How do the criteria in the tool relate to the legislation? It seems like there should be some similarity between sites prioritized with the tool and the Trust Fund priorities when it comes to funding.
- Clarify which projects would have the greatest benefit for achieving the state's restoration goals.

- The site selection tool should indicate the critical factors that need to be evaluated before social/economic criteria are evaluated (biological, funding, logistical).
- More information on water quality should be included in the website.
- The site selection tool should indicate whether risk management is used in assessment of anadromous fish restoration projects, for example can you tell if dams are in need of repair? Often the physical stability and construction of the dam can make a fish passage project impossible or prohibitive in cost.
- There should be an explanation that the site selection tool does not focus on the biological benefit or impact on the fish population if you restore the fish run.
- The user should be able to refer back to the criteria selected to run the site selection tool once you have your results.
- The highest priority restoration sites from ongoing efforts on the Blackstone River should be included in the site selection tool or recognized formerly by the state for restoration funding prioritization.

## **Restoration Priority Setting**

### Recommendations

- The RIHRT should consider how to integrate the website's tools into the planning framework for the state. The RIHRT should inform people how the state is going to use the website tools as part of the planning process.
- Projects with a sponsor and strong "willingness to proceed" should get higher consideration.
- The best use of the website is to use the tools in conjunction with the legislation; keep it evolving and up to date. Socio-economic information will be beneficial for the next funding cycle.
- Public access as a priority for selecting restoration projects – some places may not be accessible by the public but the site may still have critical habitat. These areas shouldn't be given less consideration.
- Other criteria to include: potential cost of a project, existing funding, previous/ongoing activities of the sponsoring group and site, and agreement of landowner if not public lands.
- The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council has an opportunity at Riverside Mills to look at a dam but there are other dams downstream. How do they move up on the existing CRMC priority list given the present opportunity? How do they get state support?
- Public Access should be given strong consideration for anadromous fish projects.
- Restoration priorities for anadromous fish are already known from work on the Blackstone River and RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife's Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Anadromous Fishes to Rhode Island Coastal Streams.
- Provide information and incentive for groups to enter sites into inventory.
- State should provide a priority list so watershed groups that do not have their own list have a reference.

- The criteria pursuant to *The Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund* to select restoration projects should be indicated on the website, as an example of how projects are selected for funding. Clarify how the criteria in the legislation is going to be used in the future to select restoration projects and how the results of the workshops are going to be integrated with the criteria used by the Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund.
- Clarify what happens when restoration sites are recommended - are they added to the CRMC's working list or the general inventory?
- Clarify how CRMC and other state and federal agencies coordinate with regard to completing and prioritizing projects.
- Highest priority restoration sites from ongoing efforts on the Blackstone River should be built into the site selection tool, or recognized formerly by the state for restoration funding prioritization.

## **7.0 RESTORATION STATISTICS**

### **Anadromous Fish Restoration**

Within the State of Rhode Island a total number of 53 sites (5,472.45 acres) have been identified for potential anadromous fish habitat restoration. The Pawcatuck River Watershed has the highest number of identified potential fish habitat restoration opportunities (12 sites with a total of 2,347.35 acres); sites have also been identified in eight (8) other watersheds throughout the state including:

- Wood River (6 sites, 202.77 acres)
- Ten Mile (2 sites, 269 acres)
- Southwest Coastal (12 sites, 706.96 acres)
- Rhode Island Sound (1 site, 396.28 acres)
- Pawtuxet River (2 sites, 261.14 acres)
- Palmer River (2 sites, 14.3 acres)
- Narragansett Bay (11 sites, 935.18 acres)
- Blackstone River (5 sites, 339.47 acres)

### **Salt Marsh Restoration**

The Narragansett Bay estuary encompasses almost 230,000 acres of tidal and subtidal saltwater-influenced habitats (Tiner et al., 2003). In 1998, the NBEP, in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Save The Bay, the University of Massachusetts, and the URI undertook a study with the objective of identifying and classifying potential wetland restoration sites within the Narragansett Bay estuary. The study was preformed using photointerpretation techniques and field investigations. Results from the study indicated that potential estuarine restoration opportunities within the Narragansett Bay estuary include 819 sites with a total of 4,020.6 acres.

Type 1 wetlands, filled wetlands that may be restorable, make up 888.2 acres with a total of 178 sites. Most of the Type 1 sites represent freshwater wetlands and waterbodies that were once estuarine habitats. Roughly half of this acreage is now open fresh water, and 43% is freshwater

wetland. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the Type 1 wetlands are small (less than an acre), while about one-third (34%) are in the range of 1-5 acres (Tiner et al., 2003).

Type 2 wetlands, possibly degraded wetlands that may be restorable, make up the majority of salt marsh restoration opportunities at 3,132.4 acres (641 sites). Type 2 wetlands represent approximately 65% of the existing vegetated coastal wetland acreage in the study area. Ditching and tidal restrictions were the primary disturbances to Type 2 wetlands (Tiner et al., 2003).

The study area consisted of 18 municipalities in Rhode Island and 8 in Massachusetts. Towns with the greatest number of salt marsh sites or highest acreage of restoration opportunities are as follows:

- Swansea, MA with 142 sites at 546.06 acres
- Barrington, RI with 113 sites at 405.28 acres
- Portsmouth, RI with 93 sites at 375.71 acres
- Middletown, RI with 20 sites at 286.11 acres

### **Freshwater Wetland Restoration**

For information on freshwater wetland resources, please refer to the RIDEM website on the Woonasquatucket Wetland Restoration Project:

<http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/benviron/water/wetlands/wetplan.htm>.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Restoration project prioritization has been occurring in Rhode Island largely on an organization by organization and program by program basis. Some watershed groups are more focused on restoration and have prioritized lists, and others are just starting. The RIHRT has had an informal list of priority projects to focus resources for state funds. Now, however, the CRMC, through the Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund, has developed a strategy to select projects pursuant to the criteria presented in the legislation, with the assistance of the Program's Technical Advisory Committee.

The regional workshops indicate that there is a need for the state to provide guidance regarding how projects make it onto the priority habitat restoration project list, and how they are selected for funding. Many participants felt that the website's site selection tools were too rigid and/or lacked the necessary ecological data to effectively prioritize the projects existing in the Portal's inventory. Yet, the workshop participants also felt that having the inventory is an effective way of keeping track of the projects and monitoring what has been completed and what remains to be addressed statewide – as long as the information is kept current. One other suggestion indicated that if freshwater and other types of restoration projects can be included in the inventory it will be easier for the state to keep track of how much money is being spent and how many projects are happening (good information when applying to larger grant programs).

There was strong support from the workshop participants regarding the state's professional biologists' and engineers' ability to make recommendations about important restoration projects to pursue. In some

cases, participants were asking to be provided a list for their watershed or region so they could focus on projects that were consistent with the state's priorities and could be adopted by their organization. Other organizations already had priority lists and wanted to find out how their top projects could be considered for funding and/or make the state's existing priority list. Since the state is small, and there are a variety of organizations advocating for restoration, the focus should be on taking the information from the inventory and transferring it to those organizations which are interested in restoration. Once organizations are informed about the potential (and in some cases on-going) projects, they may utilize the Portal or contact appropriate state and federal experts for pertinent information. For organizations that already have priority projects, the state can consider including those projects on its priority list for funding. An emerging point was raised throughout the workshop process: different groups and different regions of the state have different social and economic concerns. In other words, what may interest a group working on the south shore of the state may not be a priority for another in a more urban area. Consequently, participants felt that the most beneficial use of the portal was the tools which provide additional information rather than making use of the portal to prioritize projects statewide (through the site selection tools).

Although the results of the workshops do not show overwhelming support for certain criteria over others in prioritizing restoration projects, a few criteria did stand out as being of interest statewide:

- Projects with a sponsor and strong "willingness to proceed" should get higher consideration.
- Public access should be given strong consideration; however, because a project does not have a public access element should not make it less of a priority (since it may have ecological value).
- Criteria that should receive strong consideration consist of: potential cost of a project, existing funding, previous/ongoing activities of the sponsoring group and site, and agreement of landowner (if property is not public).

#### **Recommended Next Steps:**

- Develop lists of projects that are directed at organizations – watershed, specific waterbody etc.
- Provide assistance to help these groups understand which projects would benefit which resources.
- Make the public more aware of what the selection criteria are for various funding programs. Use the website to inform organizations about funding and technical assistance programs – what are the selection criteria for funding projects at the NRCS, CRMC, RIDEM Clean Water Act 319 program? Perhaps have a newsflash through the listserve or on the website that a particular program is accepting proposals and a reminder about what the selection criteria are for funding. Clarify how a group can get on an organization's priority list or at least receive consideration.
- Use the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife's Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Anadromous Fishes to Rhode Island Coastal Streams to indicate priority projects and include on the website.
- Include priorities on the Blackstone River on the website from the Blackstone River Fisheries Restoration Plan developed by the NBEP. Coordinate with the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council to add restoration sites to the project inventory and include text on the website.
- Provide an avenue for watershed groups to get their priority projects on the states list.

- Assign an agency/staff to further coordinate with MA Wetlands Restoration Program (at MA Coastal Zone Management) to get projects into inventory that are within Narragansett Bay Watershed and continue to share information.
- Research and secure additional funding for planning, coordination, analyses, outreach, technical assistance, GIS, and other services.
- Summarize the results of the workshops and final report in a fact sheet for public distribution (e.g. legislators, agencies, organizations, etc.).
- Post Restoration Workshop Final Report on the Portal website.
- If needed, schedule additional TAC/RIHRT follow-up meetings to determine what agency or organization should be responsible for carrying out recommendations.

## **9.0 REFERENCES**

Erkan, Dennis E. December 2002. Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Anadromous Fishes to Rhode Island Coastal Streams. Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Project F-55-R.

Tiner, Ralph, Irene J. Huber, Todd Nuerminger, and Aimee L. Mandeville. 2003. An Inventory of Coastal Wetlands, Potential Restoration Sites, Wetland Buffers, and Hardened Shorelines for the Narragansett Bay Estuary.

The Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund, RIGL §46-23.1.

**Figure**

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## **Appendix A**

# **State Estuary and Coastal Habitat Restoration Strategy and The Coastal and Estuary Habitat Restoration Program and Trust Fund**

## **Appendix B**

### **Restoration Project Priority Setting Surveys**

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## **Appendix C**

### **Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

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## **Appendix D**

### **Regional Workshop Meeting Summaries**

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## **Appendix E**

### **Final Workshop Meeting Summary**

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