

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Role in Utilizing Oil Spill Fines

Conserving Important Habitats in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts

On April 27, 2003, a tanker operated by Bouchard Transportation Company (BTC) spilled an estimated 98,000 gallons of number 6 fuel into Buzzards Bay, a federally-designated Estuary of National Significance and a state-designated Ocean Sanctuary. The spill eventually polluted 93 miles of coastline, killed a recorded 461 birds, and shut down thousands of acres of shellfish beds to harvest. The oil spill reduced the habitat quality of Buzzards Bay for migratory and resident birds, marine mammals, coastal vegetation, and coastal invertebrates.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of Law Enforcement worked with the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, and the prosecuting Assistant United States Attorney to recommend to the court that criminal fines from the transportation company's violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act be deposited in the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (NAWCF). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Atlantic Coast Joint Venture staff provided information on the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant program and the benefits of placing criminal fine monies in the NAWCF. On November 18, 2004, the judge sentenced BTC to pay a fine of \$10 million and ordered them to comply with several remedial measures designed to



The spill in Buzzards Bay eventually polluted 93 miles of coastline, killed a recorded 461 birds, and shut down thousands of acres of shellfish beds to harvest. USFWS photos



prevent future spills. In her sentencing order, the judge endorsed the U.S. Attorney's Office recommendation that \$7 million of the fine be placed in the NAWCF and used for eligible wetlands conservation projects in the Buzzards Bay Watershed area of Massachusetts.

From 2004-2006, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture staff worked with a broad coalition of partners led by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay to put together eligible projects that could use the designated funds in the NAWCF. U.S. Fish and



Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon Society

Wildlife Service Coastal Ecosystems program staff also assisted partners with development of grant applications. Nine projects in the Buzzards Bay watershed were ultimately selected for funding under the NAWCA program (see table and map). Projects were funded in every coastal town in the Buzzards Bay watershed of Massachusetts (except for urban coastline in the City of New Bedford). These \$6.7 million in criminal fines that were placed in the NAWCF and awarded to the selected



USCG photo



projects will leverage more than \$16.4 million in matching partner funds, and will result in the protection and restoration of 1,773 acres of important coastal habitats in the Buzzards Bay watershed. The selected projects will conserve headwater swamps, tidal rivers, salt and brackish marshes, beaches, and coastal ponds that support the birds, other wildlife, and fish species most impacted by the oil spill.

Coordinated efforts by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs, including the Office of Law Enforcement, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture and Coastal Ecosystems Program working with partners after the oil spill resulted in significant habitat conservation that would not have been possible without their efforts.



Repairing culverts to restore tidal flow. Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon Society

Buzzards Bay Watershed NAWCA Projects, 2004-2006

<u>PROJECT NAME</u>	<u>GRANT</u>	<u>MATCH</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>CYCLE</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
Inner Bay Restoration & Acquisition Bourne, Falmouth, Mattapoisett, Plymouth, Wareham	\$800,000	\$1,679,210	192	FY07	BBNEP, CBB, DU, towns	Protection/ Restoration
Slocums River Dartmouth	\$300,000	\$900,000	93	FY07	CBB, DNRT	Protection.
Dike Creek Dartmouth	\$1,000,000	\$1,887,000	267	FY07	BCMC, CBB, TTOR	Protection
Tiverton Great Swamp Tiverton, Rhode Island	\$300,000	\$1,007,687	150	FY07	CBB, RI DEM, TNC	Protection
Nasketucket Bay II Fairhaven, Mattapoisett	\$1,000,000	\$2,210,000	176	FY06	CBB, FALPT, MLT, MET, private	Protection
Westport River Westport	\$1,000,000	\$2,335,000	207	FY06	CBB, WLCT, TTOR, MET	Protection
Nasketucket Bay Vivieros Fairhaven	\$1,000,000	\$3,118,000	254	FY05	CBB, TTOR, WLCT, SLT, FALPT, MET	Protection
Chapin White Westport	\$1,000,000	\$2,044,700	321	FY05	CBB, TTOR, WLCT, MET	Protection
Nasketucket Bay Field & Marsh Mattapoisett	\$285,000	\$1,196,853	113	FY05	CBB, FALT, MET, MCWRP, MACZM, town	Protection/ Restoration

Partner Abbreviation		
BBNEP: Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program	FALPT: Fairhaven Acushnet Land Preservation Trust	RI DEM: RI Dept. Env. Management
BCMC: Bristol County Mosquito Control	MACZM: Mass. Office of Coastal Zone Management	SLT: Sippican Land Trust
CBB: Coalition for Buzzards Bay	MCWRP: Mass. Corporate Wetlands Restoration Program	TNC: The Nature Conservancy
DNRT: Dartmouth Natural Resource Trust	MET: Massachusetts Environmental Trust	TTOR: Trustees of Reservations
DU: Ducks Unlimited	MLT: Mattapoisett Land Trust	WLCT: Westport Land Conservation Trust

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Northeast Region
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035
<http://northeast.fws.gov/>**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>**

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Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon Society.



Atlantic Coast Joint Venture



North American Wetlands Conservation Fund - Buzzards Bay Projects

