



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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State and Federal Environmental Officials Solicit Habitat Restoration Proposals for the Housatonic River Watershed

BOSTON – Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles today announced that his office and the US Fish & Wildlife Service – together comprising the Massachusetts SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees – are soliciting a second round of proposals to restore wildlife habitat in the Berkshires as part of the Massachusetts Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program. The Massachusetts SubCouncil will fund \$1 million in projects financed through a Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlement with General Electric.

The settlement, filed as a consent decree in 2000, provided over \$15 million to compensate Massachusetts and Connecticut for natural resource damages caused by release of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the company's Pittsfield facility. PCB pollution affected aquatic wildlife and habitats, as well as waterfowl and predators that consume contaminated organisms. Roughly half of the settlement total was awarded to each state, and Secretary Bowles serves as the Commonwealth's Trustee. Trustees awarded the first round of \$4 million last year for restoration projects ranging from invasive species control and restoring river flow to implementing an environmental literacy program.

In this Round 2 Request for Responses (RFR), available online as of January 23 through the Commonwealth's Procurement Access & Solicitation System (Comm-PASS [<http://www.comm-pass.com/>]), the Massachusetts SubCouncil is seeking proposals focused primarily on habitat restoration. Technical assistance in using the Comm-PASS system is available through the Comm-PASS "Help Desk" by calling 1-888-MA-STATE. In addition, hard copies of application materials are on hand at the Lenox Library and several other public libraries in the Housatonic River watershed including Great Barrington Mason Library, Lee Public Library, Berkshire Athenaeum, Bushell-Sage Library, and Stockbridge Library.

The SubCouncil will issue a separate solicitation for Round 2 land acquisition and protection proposals later this year. Two Restoration Plans/Supplemental Environmental Assessments will be prepared during Round 2, under dual timelines: one each for habitat restoration projects and land acquisition/protection projects.

“This round of funding for habitat restoration efforts brings the Commonwealth another step closer to fixing years of environmental damage in the Housatonic River Watershed,” Secretary Bowles said. “This more than 500-square-mile watershed supports 150 rare plants and animals and I look forward to receiving an array of proposals for projects aimed at returning their habitat to its full health and potential.”

An Applicant Conference to answer questions about the Round 2 solicitation for habitat restoration proposals process will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, February 25, at Lenox Town Hall, 6 Walker Street in Lenox. Written comments and/or questions regarding the Round 2 solicitation for habitat restoration will be accepted until March 11, and proposals will be accepted through April 23.

Information about the Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Project in Massachusetts is available online at www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Todd Chadwell of Stantec Consulting Services Inc. at todd.chadwell@stantec.com or (207) 729-1199.

Restoration of the Housatonic River Watershed is being achieved through the cooperative efforts of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Programs of EEA and the USFWS, in conjunction with the public and affected communities in the watershed. Trustee representatives responsible for administering the funds received from General Electric to restore the Massachusetts portion of the Housatonic watershed are EEA NRD Program Director Dale Young and USFWS NRD Specialist Veronica Varela.

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