



# MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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## **Officials Release Draft Restoration Plan for Third Round of Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program**

*Public Invited to Comment on Plan and Attend Meeting August 23 in Lenox Town Hall*

BOSTON – State and federal environmental authorities today released the draft restoration plan and supplemental environmental assessment for the third round of funding from the General Electric/Housatonic River Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration case settled in 2000.

The Massachusetts SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees, comprising the Executive Office of Energy and Environment Affairs (EEA), represented by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) invites the public to comment on the draft documents and to attend a public meeting on Thursday, August 23, 2012, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., at Lenox Town Hall, 6 Walker Street.

“Over the past four years, the Patrick-Murray Administration has conserved 100,000 acres of land across the state,” said EEA Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr. “This next round of funding for land protection and habitat conservation will provide key funding to a watershed that supports some of the rarest plants, animals, and natural communities in the state.”

“We look forward to receiving an array of innovative project proposals that will protect habitats that contribute to the Housatonic River’s full health and potential,” said MassDEP Commissioner Kenneth Kimmell.

“The third round of funding will allow us to focus on protecting land and habitat in Massachusetts, both of which are important to the future of a healthy Housatonic River,” said USFWS New England Field Office Supervisor Tom Chapman. “From its headwaters in the Berkshires to where it flows into Connecticut, the Housatonic provides a special place for wildlife and people in the Commonwealth, and this settlement funds the work of residents and officials to make sure it continues to be that way.”

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The draft plan outlines the Massachusetts SubCouncil's proposed approach for the third round of the restoration program to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured natural resources or the services provided by those resources. The projects could include compensatory restoration through land acquisition or land protection measures.

Unlike the first two rounds, the third round plan will be finalized before the SubCouncil requests site-specific restoration project proposals. At the August public meeting, the SubCouncil will present the draft plan and the proposed approach for soliciting, evaluating and selecting round three projects. Round three of the Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program will distribute about \$2 million for land acquisition and habitat conservation projects from \$7.75 million received as part of the settlement.

In round one, the SubCouncil awarded \$4 million in 2008 for restoration projects ranging from invasive species control and restoring river flow to implementing an environmental literacy program. In round two, the SubCouncil awarded \$1.3 million to five projects addressing habitat continuity restoration, wildlife resources protection, riparian buffer and floodplain forest restoration, invasive species control, and educational programming.

The SubCouncil representatives that administer settlement funds for Massachusetts are MassDEP Natural Resource Damages (NRD) Coordinator Karen Pelto and USFWS NRD/Environmental Contaminants Biologist Kenneth Munney.

The plan, entitled *Draft Round 3 Restoration Plan and Supplemental Environmental Assessment (RP/SEA) for Land Protection and Habitat Conservation*, is subject to a 47-day public comment period. Comments will be accepted now until Monday, September 17 at 5 p.m. Written public comments can be sent to: Housatonic Draft Round 3 RP/SEA, Stantec Consulting Inc., 30 Park Drive, Topsham, ME 04086.

The SubCouncil will also accept public comments during the August 23 public meeting in Lenox.

The draft plan is available online at: [www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org](http://www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org), and hard copies are available at the Lenox Library and other public libraries in the Housatonic River watershed.

Information about the Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program in Massachusetts is available online at: [www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org](http://www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org). Additional information can be obtained by contacting Robin MacEwan of Stantec Consulting Inc., at [robin.macewan@stantec.com](mailto:robin.macewan@stantec.com) or by calling 413-584-4776.

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