



MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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Officials Approve Final Restoration Plan for Third Round of Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program

Public Invited to Pre-Request for Responses Information Session Aug. 5 in Lenox Library

BOSTON – State and federal environmental authorities invite community members to share potential ideas and understand the project selection process for the third round of funding from the General Electric/Housatonic River Natural Resource Damage (NRD) Assessment and Restoration case settled in 2000.

The Massachusetts SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resource Trustees, comprising the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), represented by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), will host an information session on Monday, August 5, 2013, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., at Lenox Library, 18 Main Street. The session will discuss potential land acquisition projects before the Housatonic River NRD Land Protection for Habitat Conservation Request for Responses (RFR) is expected to be issued in August 2013.

“The Housatonic River watershed is one of the most diverse and natural areas in the Commonwealth,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan. “This next round of funding for land protection and habitat conservation will add to the more than 100,000 acres already conserved by the Patrick-Murray Administration.”

“As we work to preserve, protect and rehabilitate the damaged Housatonic River and its watershed, a key component will be the projects that focus directly on repairing and restoring the natural resources throughout the waterway,” said MassDEP Commissioner Kenneth Kimmell.

“This funding allows us to focus on protecting water, land and habitat in Massachusetts, all of which will benefit the future of a healthy Housatonic River,” said USFWS New England Field Office Supervisor Tom Chapman. “From its headwaters in the Berkshires south to Connecticut, the Housatonic supports an abundant amount of wildlife and many special species for the people of the Commonwealth, and this settlement funds the work of residents and officials to ensure that for our future.”

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The final Round 3 Restoration Plan outlines the Massachusetts SubCouncil's 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.

At the August public meeting, the SubCouncil will present the final plan and the approach for soliciting, evaluating and selecting Round 3 projects. Round 3 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. As the Commonwealth's procurement rules prohibit MassDEP or any other RFR issuer from consulting with potential applicants to develop project ideas once an RFR is issued, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to attend the meeting to refine project ideas and obtain feedback.

In Round 1, the SubCouncil awarded \$4 million for restoration projects ranging from invasive species control and restoring river flow to implementing an environmental literacy program. In Round 2, 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 NRD Coordinator Karen Pelto and USFWS NRD/Environmental Contaminants Biologist Kenneth Munney.

The final plan is available online at: 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. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Robin MacEwan of Stantec Consulting Inc., at robin.macewan@stantec.com or by calling 413-584-4776.

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