

HABITAT RESTORATION



NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

The NOAA Restoration Center, in the Office of Habitat Conservation, is a part of NOAA's Fisheries Service that works to restore habitat for fish and other living marine species. The Restoration Center achieves its mission by working with many community partners to foster stewardship of ecosystems, restore degraded habitats, advance the science of coastal habitat restoration, and to provide technical advice and technology to the private sector, the public and other government agencies.

Habitat restoration is the process of reestablishing a self-sustaining habitat that closely resembles a natural condition in terms of structure and function. For America's living marine resources, "restoration" means returning a polluted or degraded environment as closely as possible to a successful, self-sustaining ecosystem with both clean water and healthy habitats. These habitats support fish and wildlife, and human uses such as swimming, diving, boating, and recreational and commercial fishing. Restoration usually does not focus on a single species but strives to replicate the original natural processes to support numerous species. The goal is to expedite natural processes in rebuilding a healthy, functioning natural ecosystem that works like it did before it was polluted or destroyed.

Restoring our nation's living marine resource habitats will:

- **Maintain vital food supplies.** Healthy coastal habitats produce more food per acre than the richest



The Henniker Dam was breached to allow American eels and other migratory fish to reach habitat that had been blocked for nearly 100 years by this dam on Contoocook River in New Hampshire.

Midwestern farmland. Estuaries are home to nearly all major fishery species and support millions of anglers.

- **Protect nature's bounty.** Beyond providing food for our consumption, coastal habitats are the home of thousands of species of fish, birds, plants, and animals that depend on healthy environment for their survival.
- **Build coastal resilience.** Intact, functioning habitats mitigate the effects of hazardous storms on coastal communities and increase the health of fishery resources that communities rely on.
- **Maintain biodiversity.** The coastal and marine environment is the second major source of biodiversity on our planet. Restoring a variety of coastal and marine habitats provides for healthy communities of plants and animals, including endangered and threatened species, to maintain ecological balance within our natural systems.
- **Create jobs.** There are 28 million jobs in the fishing, tourism and recreational boating industries — all of which depend on healthy coastal habitats for their products and customers. Indeed, estuaries and coastal waters provide essential habitat for 75 percent of America's commercial fish catch and 80 to 90 percent of the recreational fish catch.
- **Preserve a way of life.** Healthy estuaries and coastal resources support unique, centuries-old cultures and traditions that depend on the marine environment for everything from jobs to storytelling. For the more than 155 million Americans who live near coastal habitats, the scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, bounty and abundance of life is essential to their quality of life. Habitat restoration helps maintain these ways of life—and the heritage they embody—for the benefit of future generations.
- **Expand our enjoyment.** More than 200 million Americans—approximately 70 percent of the entire population—visit coastal habitat annually for vacations, recreation, sport, or sightseeing. They enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, diving, wildlife viewing, hunting, hiking, and learning. Coastal habitats that support living marine resources are matchless educational resources that must be maintained as living laboratories of life. The more we do to restore coastal habitats such as estuaries, the more Americans and foreign visitors will be able to experience their amazing bounty. 🐟