

**Project #33: Wetland Restoration on the Lower Housatonic River Project Annual
Summary Report**

Prepared for the Trustee SubCouncil for the Geographic Area of Connecticut

Reporting Period: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

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The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Wildlife Division, Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management (WHAMM) program was awarded funding to restore wetlands within the lower Housatonic River that have been degraded by the non-native invasive form of the plant Phragmites (*Phragmites australis americanus*). Restoration is to be accomplished by herbiciding and mowing plants over a three-year period, thereby increasing the habitat quality of this ecosystem and the survival and fitness of fish and wildlife using these habitats.

A summary of accomplishments during the time period July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015, is as follows:

Outreach and Project Preparation

The WHAMM Program has continued to talk with property owners about the three-year project. We continued to talk to municipal leaders, conservation commissions and property owners about project and what the expectations were for native plant growth. Several areas started to get native plants growing in the mowed portions of the marshes

Implementation

Vendors were hired to implement the Phragmites control work. There was a new Phragmites control contract with two new vendors: Innovative Mosquito Management was the vendor to do Phragmites herbiciding and they worked on the Milford side and the Stratford side. Snowy Egret Wetlands Services was the vendor to do Phragmites mowing in both Milford and Stratford. The fourth phase included herbiciding and mowing the Phragmites in both communities; herbiciding was done in the summer months (July- September), mowing was done in the winter months. The WHAMM program worked with the two conservation commissions from the town of Stratford and the City of Milford and the mayor's office of Stratford and Milford to inform the public that this work was being implemented and completed. Less than fifty acres were herbicide and mowed.

Equipment

The WHAMM Program's Marsh Master II vehicle with sprayer, mower and trailer was use to do Phragmites control. The two vendors have an assortment of low ground pressure vehicles including Marsh Master II and ARGO with tag along mower.

Personnel

The WHAMM Program's two durational positions assisted in this Phragmites mowing in the winter of 2014-15, but these positions ended on May 15, 2015 (3 years durational).

Monitoring

The WHAMM Program monitored bird and vegetation in several areas of the Housatonic River Phragmites control project site. Four sites were used on the river from the mouth to the northern area past the Route 15 Bridge. In 2014, the post-treatment bird surveys indicated several rails using all four sites as some native vegetation is growing in the mowed down Phragmites areas. No post treatment bird surveys were done in summer of 2015.

Photos of work:



Snowy Egret Wetlands Service mowing in Milford in the fall of 2015



Phragmites spraying was completed with Innovative Mosquito Management and the DEEP Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program in Great Marsh in North east Milford.

Aerial photo in April 2015 of the west side of Housatonic River in Stratford, note track lines on island were Phragmites was sprayed.

