



# ON-THE-GROUND PROJECTS

## Spotlight on Eelgrass restoration with Conservation Moorings in Buzzards Bay

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) meadows support complex trophic food webs and provide habitat for the forage, shelter and juvenile development of fisheries species. However, this habitat is declining in part due to damage from boating infrastructure. Traditional mooring chains drag on the seafloor, causing direct scour of eelgrass plants and degradation to the quality and function of eelgrass beds through increased turbidity. The project restored eelgrass (*Zostera marina*), by replacing traditional moorings with elastic conservation moorings that minimize impacts to the seafloor by preventing chain drag.

The project site is located in West Falmouth, Massachusetts. Through the replacement of traditional moorings with conservation moorings (that include flexible rodes and helical anchors) in concert with direct eelgrass planting, eelgrass was restored in 7 mooring scars, totaling 0.2 acres of impact. This project provided needed data for identifying a long-term solution to mooring impacts to eelgrass. Within two weeks of the mooring replacement, eelgrass seedlings were growing in the scar zone.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership with conservation dollars to fund numerous components of the project, including coordination, equipment, monitoring, and permitting. On-the-ground, local level efforts, like the Eelgrass Restoration with Conservation Moorings in Buzzards Bay project, helped to address regional habitat priorities and coastwide conservation objectives identified by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership.

Please note, the mooring of boats and the establishment of mooring fields in seagrass beds is generally recognized as a significant source of damage to these important ecological communities across their range. As such, the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership only provided support to specific remediation actions at this and other designated project sites, which address historic damage caused by the scouring effects of traditional chain and block-anchor mooring systems.



**Traditional mooring chain drag creating a scar**

### Project Partners

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

Town of Falmouth

Light Hawk Aerial Photography

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

Majority of project text provided by Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries and USFWS. Photo credit: T. Evans, 2010.



For more information on the Partnership visit us at:  
[www.atlanticfishhabitat.org](http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org)