



ON-THE-GROUND PROJECTS

Spotlight on Cotton Gin Mill Dam Removal and Fish Passage Project

Project Partners

The Nature Conservancy

Massachusetts Division
of Ecological
Restoration

US Fish and Wildlife
Service

Atlantic Coastal Fish
Habitat Partnership


A lack of clean, hard substrate has been noted as a limiting factor for the restoration of many anadromous species in the James River. The loss of this ideal spawning habitat is due to dredging and excess sediment entering the river from erosion. This project promoted the population of Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) and other anadromous fishes of the Chesapeake Bay through the restoration of spawning and nursery habitat.

The project site is located in a tidal freshwater section of the James River where the dominate substrate is currently a fine sediment and where there is sufficient current to prevent excessive siltation. Many anadromous species, including Atlantic sturgeon, American shad, herring, and striped bass frequent this area.

A 70' x 300' x 2' high artificial spawning reef was constructed using approximately 2,500 tons of broken granite. Following construction, the site was extensively monitored for spawning activity and outreach was conducted via education signs, brochures, and sturgeon-watching trips.

The objective of the project was to increase the spawning activity of Atlantic sturgeon and other anadromous fish in the James River by providing suitable clean hard spawning habitat. This project also highlights the need to reduce sediment entering the river from soil erosion.

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 reef construction, monitoring, and outreach. On-the-ground, local level efforts, like the James River Atlantic Sturgeon Habitat Restoration project, are helping to address regional habitat priorities and coastwide conservation objectives identified by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership.

Project text and photo provided by 

For more information on the Partnership visit us at: www.atlanticfishhabitat.org

