

Prioritizing River Herring Restoration Needs in the Narrow River Watershed Webinar Summary

January 26, 2015

2:00 pm

Hosted by: Caroly Shumway, Cheri Patterson, Lisa Havel, Alison Bowden

In attendance: Suzanne Paton (USFWS), Phil Edwards (RIDFW), Gary Casabona (NRCS), Elizabeth Herron (URI Watershed Watch Volunteer Monitoring Program), Craig Wood (NRPA), John Lake (RIDFW), Jim Turek (NOAA RC), Todd Randall (USACE), Pat McGee, Charlie Vandemoer (USFWS), Rachel Calabro (STB), Veronica Berounsky (URI and NRPA), Larry Oliver (USACE), Julie Sharpe (Narrow River Land Trust), John O'Brien (TNC)

Purpose

This webinar was hosted by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and The Nature Conservancy to prioritize the river herring habitat restoration needs on the Gilbert Stuart/Narrow River watershed with stakeholders, via a grant provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Questions posed and stakeholder prioritized responses for river herring habitat restoration needs in the Narrow River watershed:

1. From your perspective what are the obstacles to river herring restoration in the Narrow River watershed?

1. Inefficient fish passage at Shady Lea Mill Dam
2. Inefficient fish ladder at Gilbert Stuart Dam
3. Ocean by-catch in the Atlantic herring fishery
4. Restoration costs
5. Water quality concerns

Most important obstacle: spawning habitat access (fish passage facilities, dam removals, improved culverts/road crossings, etc.)

2. Please rank your focused strategies for river herring restoration projects in the Narrow River watershed for the next 10 years (Note: #1 is highest priority).

1. Improve fish passage, particularly at Shady Lea Mill.
2. Evaluate Rt. 1 and 138 culverts for efficiency; also look at untested/unknown culverts.
3. Improve water quality (including DO, temperature, and base flow)
4. Reduce sedimentation /depth issues.
5. Prepare for climate change concerns.

6. Assess feasibility and cost/benefit of fish passage for Silver Spring Lake after Shady Lea dam is removed.

*note: ocean by-catch was a concern, but is difficult to manage as stakeholders and probably an issue better suited for the New England Fishery Management Council or other federal agency managing ocean fisheries.

3. From your perspective what are the information gaps and/or research needs to best determine restoration potential for river herring in the Narrow River watershed?

1. Conduct a study of fish passage after the Shady Lea Mill Dam removal project.
2. Analyze base flow data.
3. Evaluate the feasibility of fish passage for Silver Spring Dam.
4. Determine the impact of water quality due to “turnover events.”
5. Evaluate the efficiency and improve the fish ladder at the Gilbert Stuart Dam.
6. Manage stormwater and sedimentation off Rt. 1.
7. Evaluate Rt. 1 and Rt. 138 culverts, along with unknown culverts for fish passage effectiveness.
8. Maintain cold temperatures and limit stormwater pollution.
9. Identify the significance of the watershed’s drainage basin.

4. Do you have any further comments pertaining to river herring restoration potential in Rhode Island?

- Evaluate Mumford Brook road crossing at the end of Pettaquamscutt Cove.
- Carr Pond (North Kingston) water withdrawals (wells) should be closely monitored for the impact on fishery resources in Carr Pond.
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management should draft an updated Anadromous Fisheries Management Plan.
- The existing river herring runs should be studied to see where barriers can be removed that may currently have fish ladders.
- Conduct fish ladder efficiency studies and work with those that don’t pass fish.
- Conduct culvert surveys in coastal systems.
- Continue to support or increase state restoration funding.