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PRESS RELEASE

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Workshop on Counting River Herring To Be Held in March

**Sponsored by the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC),
the Massachusetts Bays Program, Cape Cod Region and the Town of Brewster**

Have you ever watched your local herring run in spring and wondered how many herring make it to their spawning areas? On Monday, March 12, from 9:30 am to noon, there will be a training workshop for volunteers and others interested in learning how to count river herring during the spring herring run. The workshop will be held at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster. This will be the first time on Cape Cod that a herring count training workshop has been offered.

The goal of this workshop is to train volunteers and interested citizens on how to obtain good counts of river herring. Volunteers working together can get population estimates of migrating river herring for a specific river. This information is useful for determining the health and stability of a local fishery and helps fisheries managers protect and restore herring runs.

This workshop is being provided by the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC), the Massachusetts Bays Program, Cape Cod region, and the Town of Brewster, in partnership with the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History. APCC is the host organization for the Cape Cod region of the Massachusetts Bays Program, which is one of 28 National Estuary Programs nationwide. The mission of the Massachusetts Bays Program is to protect and restore the coastal ecosystems and coastal heritage of Cape Cod Bay and Massachusetts Bay.

“We hope that this workshop will encourage people to become stewards of our herring runs,” says Dr. Jo Ann Muramoto, APCC Senior Scientist and Massachusetts Bays Program Regional Coordinator for Cape Cod. “We want to encourage interested citizens and Herring Wardens from other towns to set up herring count programs in their towns.”

APCC is also seeking volunteers to count herring along the Stony Brook run in Brewster. The organization succeeded in getting a grant from the Gulf of Maine Council / NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership program to help the Brewster Conservation Commission and Alewives Committee explore the feasibility of restoring salt marsh along Stony Brook.

“One of our tasks for the restoration feasibility assessment is to start a herring count program along Stony Brook,” explained Muramoto. “We’re also planning to try videomonitoring to help count the herring along the

Stony Brook run. We'll be working closely with Dana Condit, the Alewives Committee Chairman, and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries.”

APCC has been fortunate in receiving a grant from the Mary-Louise Eddy and Ruth N. Eddy Foundation for the herring videomonitoring.

The workshop trainer will be Tim Purinton, a River Restoration Planner for the Department of Fish and Game, Riverways Program, who will provide training in monitoring migrating river herring using a simple, standardized method. Purinton has trained volunteers and watershed association staff up and down the coast. Other speakers will be Phil Brady, Anadromous Fish Specialist of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, who will speak about the status of herring populations state-wide. Dr. Martha Mather and Dr. John Finn, both from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, will speak about their research on herring movements and videomonitoring methods for counting fish. Following the workshop, participants will walk to nearby Stony Brook to practice the methods they have just learned.

Why are good counts of river herring necessary? “Once upon a time, the Cape’s rivers and estuaries in spring were filled with herring making their annual upstream spawning run. Recently, however, river herring populations throughout the Northeast have been declining,” said Muramoto. In November 2005 the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries enacted a 3-year state-wide ban on the harvest, possession or sale of river herring due to recent drastic declines in many river herring spawning runs.

On Cape Cod, however, there are few if any herring runs where actual fish counts have been obtained. Good counts are needed in order to help fisheries managers understand the reasons for herring decline and make plans for restoring and protecting the herring fishery.

The causes of river herring decline are not well understood, but fisheries managers and scientists are looking into ecological changes, water quality, water management, periodic population changes, poaching, and over-fishing as possible causes.

Meanwhile, the decline in river herring spells trouble for other animals that feed upon herring. River herring are an important food item for a huge number of the Cape’s native wildlife and fish species, including osprey, great blue heron, bald eagles, gulls, terns, cormorants, other seabirds, seals, dolphins, otters, fishers, fox, raccoons, turtles, striped bass, brook trout, cod, haddock, bass, perch, and others.

“River herring” is the term commonly applied to two closely related species, alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*). Like salmon, river herring are anadromous, meaning they spend most of their life in the ocean but spawn in fresh water. Alewives favor still water, such as ponds and lakes, for spawning, while bluebacks prefer to spawn in running water in streams and rivers.

The arrival of the herring is a harbinger of spring on Cape Cod. In colonial times, herring were an important food source (eaten fresh, salted, pickled, or smoked). Today, river herring are mainly caught for bait, particularly for striped bass fishing.

The workshop is being supported by the Massachusetts Bays Program and by grants from the Mary-Louise Eddy and Ruth N. Eddy Foundation and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Environment / NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership Program.

The workshop is free but advance registration is requested. To register electronically, visit www.apcc.org or contact APCC at info@apcc.org or call toll-free at 1-877-955-4142. Contact Dr. Jo Ann Muramoto, Massachusetts Bays Program Regional Coordinator for Cape Cod and APCC Senior Scientist, at APCC for more information.

Workshop on

Volunteer Counts of River Herring: Building Stewardship and Promoting Restoration Through Citizen Science

Cape Cod Museum of Natural History
869 Route 6A (Main Street)
Brewster, MA 02631

Monday, March 12, at 9:30 AM

Sponsors: Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC),
Massachusetts Bays Program, Cape Cod Region,
Town of Brewster and
Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, Brewster, MA

Workshop Agenda

- 9:30 AM** Welcome and Introduction
Dr. Jo Ann Muramoto, APCC Senior Scientist and Mass Bays Program Regional Coordinator, Cape Cod, and
Dana Condit, Chairman of the Brewster Alewives Committee
- 9:40 AM** The Status of River Herring in Massachusetts
Phillips Brady, Anadromous Fish Specialist, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
- 10:10 AM** Herring Migrations in Time and Space
Dr. Martha Mather, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- 10:40 AM** An Eye on the Run – Using Videocameras to Monitor Herring
Dr. Jack Finn, University of Massachusetts, Amherst:
- 11:10 AM** Volunteer Counts of River Herring: Building Stewardship and Promoting Restoration Through Citizen Science
Tim Purinton, Massachusetts Riverways Program
- 12:00 noon** Visit nearby herring run along Stony Brook

For more information or to register, please visit our website at www.apcc.org or info@apcc.org or contact the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) at (508) 362-4226 or toll-free at 1-877-955-4142. Please RSVP.