



Division of Ecological Restoration 2025 Annual Report

Restoration in Action for People & Nature



DIVISION OF ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION
DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME • COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Maura T. Healey, Governor • Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor
Rebecca Tepper, Secretary • Tom O'Shea, Commissioner
Beth Lambert, Director • Hunt Durey, Deputy Director • Alyssa Sciuto, Assistant Director

Letter from Leadership

Dear friends and colleagues,

The Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) had its biggest restoration impact ever in 2025. With 21 projects under construction, five dams removed, six culverts replaced, and over 620 river miles reconnected, DER and our partners reached every corner of the Commonwealth. We are proud of our staff, grateful to all our municipal, private, and non-profit partners, and appreciative of the Healey-Driscoll Administration and federal support that made this possible.

The Healey-Driscoll Administration set big restoration goals in 2025. These goals set a bold path for river and wetland restoration in the Commonwealth. In March, Governor Healey announced \$200 million for culvert upgrades. In June, the Governor announced the MassReady Act, an environmental bond bill with an emphasis on restoration and nature-based solutions to climate change. And finally, in August, the Administration announced nation-leading biodiversity goals—with restoration as a core pillar of the plan. Read more about these efforts and how DER is helping to advance them in this report.

DER is looking forward to all of the exciting things to come in 2026. With the completion of many long-planned restoration projects in 2025, we'll be preparing to take on new projects this year. We'll also be expanding our Regional Restoration Partnerships Program to provide support to additional restoration partnerships. We invite you to sign up for our **DER Notices newsletter** to be kept informed of grant and other opportunities. We look forward to another year of restoration progress with our partners, friends, and colleagues.

We'll see you on the river,



Beth Lambert, *Director*



Hunt Durey, *Deputy Director*



Alyssa Sciuto, *Assistant Director*



Tom O'Shea, *Commissioner*





About Us

The Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) restores and protects rivers, wetlands, and watersheds in Massachusetts for the benefit of people and the environment.

DER was established in 2009 when the Riverways and Wetlands Restoration Programs combined to form a nonregulatory, science-based division—the Division of Ecological Restoration (DER). Leaders in the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) created our division to bring greater statewide attention, momentum, and capacity to river and wetland restoration. With an emphasis on strong partnerships, DER advances restoration in the Commonwealth through dam removal, culvert replacement, restoration of wetlands and retired cranberry bogs, and building capacity of restoration partners throughout the state. Ecological restoration restores healthy habitat while also helping communities increase climate resilience, prevent storm damage, improve opportunities for outdoor recreation, and address aging infrastructure and public safety concerns. DER celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2024 and looks forward to continuing its work with partners across the state for many years to come.

Visit our website: mass.gov/der



Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration



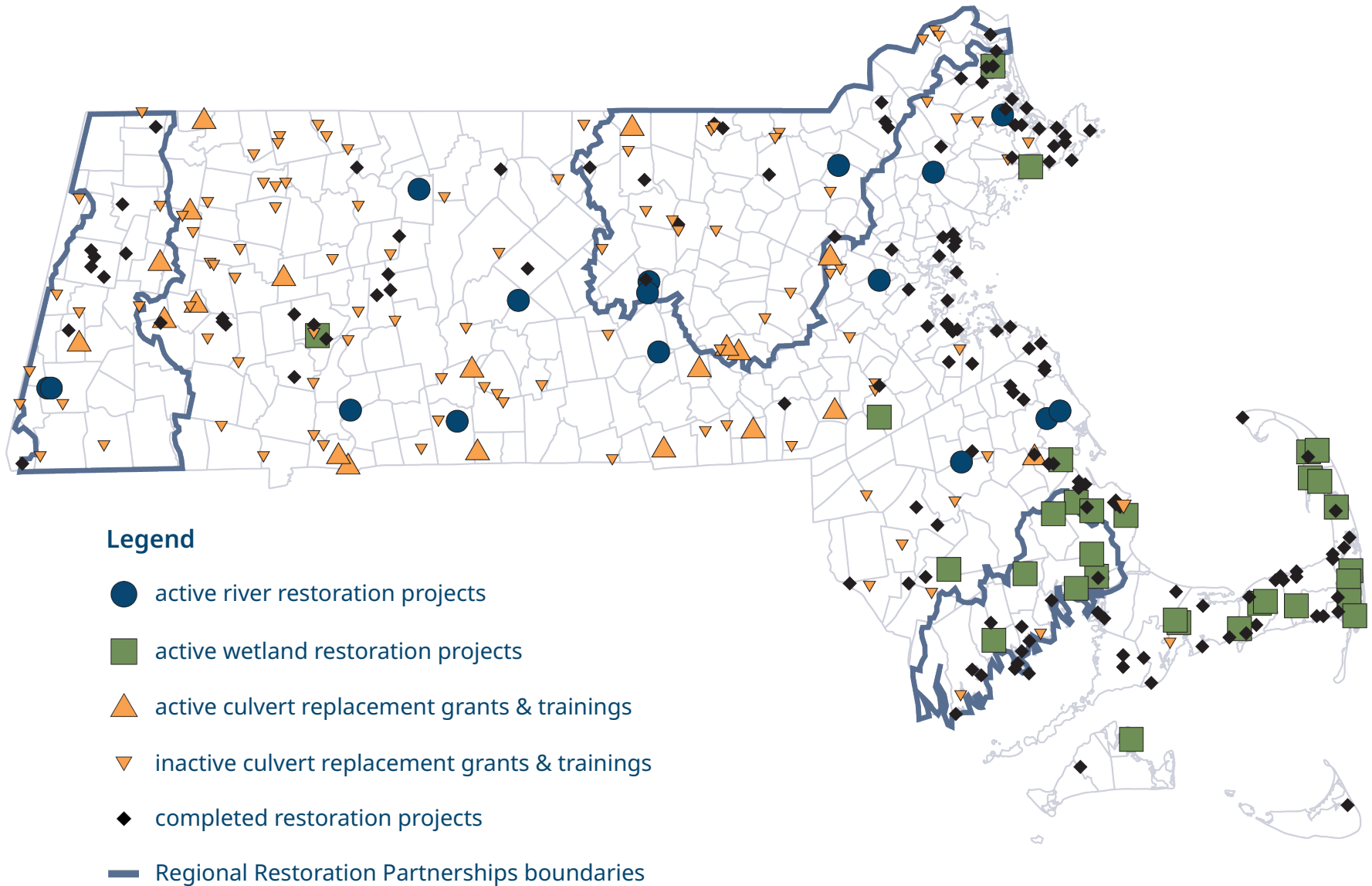
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Where We Work

DER advances restoration throughout Massachusetts. See the map below for where we work, and find a project near you by visiting [DER's interactive project map](#).



2025 By the Numbers



21 projects under construction, including **8** dam removals, **4** cranberry bog restorations, **7** culvert replacements, and **2** wetland restoration projects



86 acres of freshwater wetland habitat restored



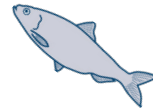
8 projects completed, including **5** dam removals, **2** cranberry bog restorations, and **1** wetland restoration project.



over 620 river miles reconnected



47 Priority Projects in planning, design, permitting, or construction



172 newly accessible acres of river herring spawning habitat



over 1,700 people reached through outreach efforts about DER and restoration



\$2,824,280 awarded to **21** cities and towns for culvert replacement projects.



5 dams removed to restore rivers



\$2,871,488 awarded to **17** Priority Projects in **17** cities and towns.



6 culverts replaced to boost climate resilience



\$851,300 awarded to support **3** partnerships through DER's Regional Restoration Partnerships Program



888 culverts assessed and published to the publicly-accessible NAACC database



\$6,947,068 awarded to support restoration in **45** cities and towns in 2025

Expanding Restoration Statewide

DER builds the capacity of regional organizations, municipalities, non-profits, and others throughout the state to advance ecological restoration.

DER's Regional Restoration Partnerships Program:

Launched in 2021, this program supports regional organizations and planning agencies as they work with municipalities and other local partners to lead and support watershed-scale ecological restoration within their regions. The program currently supports three partnerships in the Buzzards Bay, Merrimack River, and Hoosic, Housatonic, and Farmington River watersheds. DER plans to expand the program in 2026.

2025 By the Numbers:

- 56 priority restoration projects advancing, half of which are in environmental justice communities
- 2 projects under construction
- 366 culverts assessed
- 217 volunteers at planting events to increase biodiversity
- 912 participants at outreach events

Dam Busters:

The Dam Busters Series, led by Mass Rivers Alliance, the Charles River Watershed Association, and DER, provides hands-on training for municipal and NGO project managers, covering the technical, financial, ecological, and community engagement aspects of dam removal. Its aim is to advance the practice of dam removal in Massachusetts.

2025 By the Numbers:

- 10 webinars on technical topics
- 2 dam removal site tours
- 1 in-person workshop on community engagement and 1 international live stream event
- Over 700 registered participants

Culvert Replacement Trainings:

Through DER's Culvert Replacement Training Site Initiative, DER has established culvert replacement sites across the state that serve as case studies and provide training opportunities for local road managers. This results in a network of road managers with advanced experience implementing culvert replacements that meet the Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards.

2025 By the Numbers:

- 7 DER-led culvert replacement trainings in Hopkinton, Hanover, Longmeadow, Middlefield, Palmer, and Weston
- 105 training participants, including representatives from 60 towns



2025 Accomplishments: Digging into the Details

- DER joined the Town of Falmouth and partners in January for a groundbreaking celebration, followed by a ribbon cutting event in September to **celebrate the completion of the Upper Coonamessett River Restoration** in Falmouth. This project restored 20 acres of former cranberry bogs into healthy wetlands to improve stream health, enhance fish passage, and provide recreational opportunities along the upper portion of the Coonamessett River Watershed. It also completes the last step in a series of projects to restore the Coonamessett River from headwaters to mouth, involving cranberry bog restoration, dam removal, culvert replacement, monitoring work, and trail development and signage.
- In May, with DER support, Edgwood Bogs, LLC **began construction on the South Meadow Wetland Reserve Easement Restoration** in Carver. This project is restoring nearly a half mile of stream and 34 acres of retired commercial cranberry farmland to natural wetlands. After nearly 100 years of farming on the property, the landowner chose to retire these bogs to focus agriculture on other more productive bogs and has taken the lead in construction to restore the site to a rejuvenated wetland-stream complex. Construction is expected to finish in the spring. Project partners include DER, Edgwood Bogs LLC (the landowner), and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- The Berkshire Clean, Cold, Connected Partnership, part of DER's Regional Restoration Partnerships Program, achieved a significant milestone when the **Konkapot River Restoration Project in New Marlborough started construction** in July. This project, led by Trout Unlimited in collaboration with the Partnership, is working to reduce flood risk, prevent public safety issues, and improve habitat for important species by restabilizing the eroded riverbank and reconnecting the river to part of its abandoned floodplain.





- DER continued to work with Friends of Herring River, the Town of Wellfleet, National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, NOAA, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and many other partners as the **first phase of construction for the Herring River Estuary Restoration project** progressed in Wellfleet and Truro. Work focused on constructing the permanent Chequessett Neck Road bridge. Over two decades in the making, this project is the largest tidal estuary restoration ever undertaken in Massachusetts and the northeastern United States. With many benefits for both people and the environment, it will restore up to 890 acres of salt marsh and other estuarine habitats.
- **Construction wrapped up on the Kinne Brook Restoration project** in Chester this fall. DER, Trout Unlimited, and other project partners replaced a culvert on Kinnebrook Road on an unnamed tributary to Kinne Brook and removed a collapsed stone box culvert upstream on the same tributary. This work built upon a broader effort on the Kinne Brook system that began over a decade ago, including a dam removal on Kinne Brook in 2014 and culvert replacement on the Skunk Brook tributary in 2020. This project reconnected 10 miles of important coldwater stream habitat and will provide resilience to eastern brook trout and other coldwater species as the climate warms.
- DER and partners **replaced six culverts** in 2025. DER supported municipal efforts to replace culverts on rivers and streams in Windsor, Norfolk, Agawam, Colrain, Westborough, and South Hadley, which were all replaced with new structures that better meet the Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards. This work reconnected over 200 river miles for fish passage, improved public safety, and increased climate resilience.



- DER **removed five dams** in 2025, including the Old Swamp River Dam in Weymouth, the Whitney Pond Dam in Ashburnham, the Becker Pond Dam in Mount Washington, the Larkin Mills Dam in Newbury, and the Quinapoxet Dam in West Boylston. These projects improved water quality, restored passage and important habitat for native species such as river herring, American eel, and eastern brook trout, and increased community resilience to climate change.



- DER joined the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and other partners at a ribbon cutting event in September to **celebrate the removal of the Quinapoxet Dam** in West Boylston. Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca Tepper and Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Tom O'Shea discussed the benefits of the project, the partnerships that made it happen, and how the dam removal aligns with Commonwealth goals. The Quinapoxet Dam removal, led by MWRA with support from DER, DCR, and others, reconnected 35 miles of river to restore fish passage for species such as brook trout and salmon and improved public access by installing an ADA-compliant path and platform on the riverbank as well as interpretive signage to help educate visitors about the site.



- DER **published a new report on salt marsh tidal restoration monitoring**, in partnership with Salem Sound Coastwatch. The report, titled Monitoring and Analysis of Five Salt Marsh Tidal Restoration Projects on the North Shore, Massachusetts, details the results of pre- and post-restoration monitoring at five salt marsh restoration sites across the North Shore, where tidal restrictions were addressed between 2000 and 2017 to allow for the return of natural tidal flow. Monitoring evaluates how these systems are responding to restoration.

Culvert Replacements for Resilience & Biodiversity

There are approximately 25,000 culverts and small bridges in Massachusetts, the majority of which are undersized and/or deteriorating, creating barriers to fish and wildlife movement and causing flood hazards for communities.

With increased rainfall, storm events, and temperatures brought on by climate change, flooding and habitat impacts are exacerbated, bringing a spotlight to the importance of replacing undersized culverts with larger, safer structures that reduce flooding and restore habitat. DER has worked with cities and towns for over 15 years to assess culverts and help towns upgrade them. Now, **DER's Stream Continuity Program** works with municipalities throughout the state to assist them in replacing culverts with funding, hands-on technical assistance, and training.



In 2025, DER also assessed over 1,200 culverts throughout Massachusetts, providing municipalities with information about which culverts should be prioritized for replacement to benefit biodiversity and road safety.

The Administration is ramping up efforts to upgrade culverts in recognition of habitat and resilience benefits, and DER is part of that growth. DER will continue to support culvert replacement projects through the **Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grants**, now hosted through EEA's new ECO One Stop platform. In addition, in March, Governor Healey announced a proposal for \$200 million in Fair Share Revenue to be dedicated to upgrading culverts and small bridges throughout the state. DER worked with MassDOT and EEA to design and stand up this new Community Culvert Grant Program. The program, now in its first year, will support culvert replacement projects that will improve public safety, climate resilience, and biodiversity.



Restoration & Biodiversity

In August, Governor Healey announced the **Biodiversity Conservation Goals for the Commonwealth**, a 25-year plan to protect and restore nature across Massachusetts. The plan sets four key goals—Protect, Restore, Sustain, and Connect—each with specific strategies for action, timelines for implementation, core commitments, and foundations for success. The plan sets out a strong role for agency leadership while also calling for citizens, communities, and organizations across the state to join in this important work.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of all life on Earth, including the species, habitats, and complex interactions that make up the natural world. Biodiversity is a solution to climate change, plays a vital part in the economy, and is ultimately the foundation for life—anchoring history, heritage, and culture, supporting health, well-being, food security, and overall enriching lives.

As a leader in ecological restoration in Massachusetts, DER's work supports the Restore goal, which calls for the restoration of 75% of critical habitats by 2050. For example:

- DER removes dams throughout the state, contributing to the plan's goal of removing 10% of the Commonwealth's dams by 2050.
- DER provides incentive grants and technical assistance to communities seeking to upgrade undersized and failing culverts, supporting the plan's target of 2,500 culvert upgrades by 2050.
- DER's salt marsh restoration work restores wetlands and salt marshes to improve water quality and support important habitats, aligned with the plan's call to restore essential marine habitats and salt marshes, and to restore 75% of the most important habitats to good health by 2050.



In addition to leading river and wetland restoration projects, DER also helps others gain the skills and capacity to restore rivers and wetlands for biodiversity. Building the capacity of others scales up restoration to more quickly advance the state's biodiversity goals. Examples include **DER's Regional Restoration Partnerships Program** and educational programs such as the **Dam Busters Series** (learn more on page six).

Ecological restoration can return fish, birds, insects, amphibians, and other species to places where they have been absent for centuries. Not only is this crucial work that builds toward the Commonwealth's Biodiversity Conservation Goals, but the benefits of restoration last in perpetuity. DER is expanding its river and wetland restoration work to meet the crises of biodiversity and climate change.



Eel River Headwaters Restoration, Plymouth

The Town of Plymouth, DER, and partners restored approximately 60 acres of former cranberry bogs at the headwaters of the Eel River in Plymouth. Completed in 2013, this restoration project included stream channel and floodplain reconstruction, multiple dam removals and culvert replacements, and extensive plantings including 20,000 Atlantic white cedar trees. Today, those plantings stand 20 feet high and have established a globally rare and native Atlantic white cedar swamp habitat.

Project Partners: Town of Plymouth, USFWS, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, American Rivers, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Program



Monatiquot River Restoration, Braintree

DER, the Town of Braintree, and partners removed two dams and installed a fishway at a third barrier, opening 36 river miles and strengthening climate resilience and water quality. This restoration, completed in 2025, resulted in river herring—an important component of the local ecosystem—to travel upstream to spawning habitat for the first time in over 200 years.

Project Partners: Division of Marine Fisheries, Town of Braintree, Fore River Watershed Association, NOAA Restoration Center, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program, Dam and Seawall Repair or Removal Program, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and a private dam owner



Restoration in the Spotlight

The spotlight continues to shine on ecological restoration as the benefits of this important work continue to be more broadly recognized. This attention helps to build support for restoration at the community, state, and national levels in many ways.

In 2025, Governor Healey made restoration a priority through several high-profile announcement events:

- [Governor Healey Promotes Culvert Upgrades, Rural Roads and Bridges Funding in Berkshires](#)
- [Governor Healey Files Mass Ready Act to Strengthen Infrastructure and Prepare for Disasters](#)
- [Healey-Driscoll Administration Launches Nation-Leading Plan to Protect Nature and Wildlife](#)



In addition, DER was featured in over 25 media news stories in 2025. Here is just a sample:

- [The Associated Press: Massachusetts cranberry bogs are being given a second life as vibrant wetlands](#)
- [CBS Evening News: Massachusetts cranberry farmers choosing to restore their bogs into wetlands amid economic headwinds](#)
- [Fox News: Rising production costs push cranberry farmers to retire bogs](#)
- [The New Bedford Light: Why more cranberry farmers are selling to conservationists, not developers](#)
- [Boston 25 News: Converting old cranberry bogs into wetlands- State says program helps farmers and the environment](#)
- [Inside Climate News: Cranberry Farmers Consider Turning Bogs Into Wetlands as Temperatures Rise](#)

Looking to the Future

In the coming year, DER anticipates:

- Breaking ground on over ten additional river and wetland restoration projects
- Completing about eight restoration projects
- Continuing to oversee almost 50 priority restoration projects including advancing engineering, design, and construction, and awarding grants as funding allows
- Adding new priority restoration projects to the Priority Projects Program
- Welcoming new partnerships to the Regional Restoration Partnerships Program
- Supporting new culvert replacement projects through the Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grants, hosted through EEA's new ECO One Stop platform.
- Leading additional free culvert replacement trainings for cities and towns
- Working with partners in the Department of Fish and Game and throughout the state to advance the Commonwealth's Biodiversity Conservation Goals
- Continuing to raise support and awareness of the benefits of ecological restoration through news media, social media, and direct engagement with stakeholders



Photo Captions & Credits

Cover

top: Crews remove the Larkin Mill Dam in Newbury in October 2025. (Credit: DER)

bottom: A lesser yellowlegs feeds at low tide in Belle Isle Salt Marsh. (Credit: Julia Hopkins, DFG)

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top: The site of the Eel River Headwaters Restoration is now a lush, flourishing wetland after the restoration project completed in 2013. (Credit: DER)

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top: DER staff pose for a photo in October 2025. (Credit: DER)

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top: The Berkshire Clean, Cold, Connected Partnership, part of DER's Regional Restoration Partnerships Program, talks to a group of people about restoration in October 2024. (Credit: Berkshire Clean, Cold, Connected Partnership)

middle: The Dam Busters webinar series hosts an in-person workshop in September 2025. (Credit: DER)

bottom: DER and partners hold a culvert replacement training in Middlefield in May 2025 as part of DER's Culvert Replacement Training Initiative. (Credit: DER)

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top: Crews remove the Whitney Pond Dam in Ashburnham in July 2025. (Credit: DER)

bottom right: Construction equipment at the South Meadow Wetland Reserve Easement Restoration project site in Carver work to restore retired cranberry farmland to natural wetlands. (Credit: DER)

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top: The first phase of construction at the Herring River Estuary Restoration project progresses in Wellfleet and Truro. (Credit: DER)

bottom right: A perched and degraded culvert in Windsor is replaced with a new culvert that better meets the Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards. (Credit: DER)

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top right: The Becker Pond Dam in Mount Washington is removed in November 2025. (Credit: DER)

bottom left: DER Director Beth Lambert joins EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper, DFG Commissioner Tom O'Shea, MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey, DCR Commissioner Nicole LaChapelle, and other state and local officials in September 2025 at a ribbon cutting event in West Boylston to celebrate the completion of the Quinapoxet Dam Removal. (Credit: EEA)

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top right: DER staff join Governor Maura Healey, DFG Commissioner Tom O'Shea, and other state and local officials in March at a culvert in Becket as part of an event during which the Governor announced \$200 million for culvert and small bridge replacements. (Credit: Josh Qualls, Office of Governor Healey)

bottom left: A member of the National Rural Watershed Association assesses a culvert in May with DER as part of an effort to assess culverts throughout the Commonwealth. (Credit: NRWA)

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top: A spangled skimmer rests on a branch at the site of the Upper Coonamessett River Restoration in Falmouth. (Credit: Mike Tucker)

bottom: River herring travel upstream at the site of the Monatiquot River Restoration in Braintree, which included the removal of two dams, for the first time in over 200 years. (Credit: Julia Hopkins, DFG)

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top: The site of the Eel River Headwaters Restoration in Plymouth is now a lush and flourishing wetland after restoration completed in 2013. (Credit: DER)

bottom: The site of the Monatiquot River Restoration in Braintree now includes a viewing platform and unobstructed flow of water following the removal of two dams. (Credit: Julia Hopkins, DFG)

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bottom left: DER Director Beth Lambert is interviewed by CBS News at the site of the Eel River Headwaters Restoration project in Plymouth in September 2025. (Credit: DER)

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right: DER's Coastal Wetlands Restoration Specialist Liz Gorrill stands on the Gladfelter Overlook and gazes out at the site of the Coonamessett River Restoration project in Falmouth. (Credit: DER)