



TOWN OF EASTON
Conservation Commission
Department of Planning & Community
Development
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Case Study - EASTON

Municipality/Nonprofit Organization: Town of Easton

Project Title: Easton Wetland Restoration – Removal of Abandoned Structures

Grant Award: \$177,620.00

Match: \$ 77,590.52

Match Source: In-kind contributions from Town of Easton staff

One or Two Year Project: Two

Municipal Department Leading Project: Conservation

Project Website URL:

<https://tinyurl.com/SamWrightFieldMVP>

<https://tinyurl.com/CanoeRiverResiliency>

Community Overview:

The Town of Easton is a residential and rural town of 18,842 acres or 29.44 square miles, located approximately 25 miles southwest of Boston, 45 miles west of Cape Cod and 30 miles north of Providence. Easton is bordered by the towns of Sharon, Stoughton, West Bridgewater, Raynham, Norton, Mansfield, and the cities of Brockton and Taunton. There is one Environmental Justice area in Easton that appears to be based upon income. The town's commitment to preserving and protecting its historical assets, open space, and natural resources is one reason Easton attracts many people to remain in, return to, or re-locate to the town. Over forty years ago Easton residents began actively supporting protection of the Town's important wild areas and open space when it acquired the first parcels of land that would comprise the now over 1200-acre Wheaton Farm Conservation Area. Now there are nearly 4,000 acres designated as permanently protected open space, making Easton a leader in the region for land protection.

Project Description and Goals:

This project took place at the Sam Wright Field, 445 Bay Rd, Easton. Sam Wright Field is a portion of the larger Wheaton Farm Conservation Area. This area is within the Canoe River Aquifer, which provides Easton, Norton, Mansfield, Sharon and Foxborough with their primary source of drinking water. This area was designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and as an EPA-designated Sole Source Aquifer. The recreation of 23,000 sf of wetland and floodplain primarily addressed the climate change impacts of the Flood-Drought Cycle, as identified by participants through the MVP Planning process and the additional hazards of Wind from Extreme Storms and Extreme Temperatures.

The specific goal for the project was to provide additional flood storage at Mulberry Meadow Brook within the Canoe River ACEC to mitigate for the increased potential for flooding and to restore a historic wetland area previously filled as part of a farming operation.

The main tasks were to remove old farm structures, impervious cover and fill to recreate the wetland and floodplain associated with Mulberry Meadow Brook. The restoration area will control flashiness entering the Brook, and woody vegetation plantings will further slow and dampen peak flood volumes. The restored floodplain will provide native vegetation for local wildlife. The overall goal was to restore ecosystem services to the river system.

This project met our goals by employing a nature-based solution, namely the removal of fill and regrading/recreation of flood storage area and wetland. Although this project was not within the Environmental Justice area of Easton, the project will provide relief to downstream residents who may have encountered flooding issues in the past.

Regionally, this project fits within the Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee's goals of a wildlife and recreation corridors. Improvements made in the upper watershed will be realized downstream as well and may serve as a demonstration pilot project for the other four communities. The public engagement portion of the project has been impressive, with the diverse set of partners and volunteers. The SNEP network and the Canoe River Resiliency Project as well as local residents have all been involved in the project. SNEP network and Canoe River Resiliency Project have provided technical assistance. The Nature Conservancy provided cash match and local residents have provided in-kind services through the invasive plant monitoring project. Despite COVID restrictions and staff changes the Town of Easton has been able to complete the project one time.

Results and Deliverables:

The original goal of restoring approximately 100,000 sf of wetland/floodplain was substantially more ambitious than the anticipated budget would allow. The first public bid of the project yielded bids that far exceeded the grant amount and total available project funds. In 2022, the project had to be rebid and substantially reduced to 23,000 sf to ensure that a portion of the project could move forward with the available funding and time left in the grant terms. In the spring of 2022, the area was excavated and the full 23,000 sf of recreation of floodplain was completed and stabilized.

Project documents can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/SamWrightFieldMVP>. The property does contain an informational sign describing the project and next steps so residents can understand why the project was undertaken, what the project entailed, and where we intend to bring the project in the future.

The deliverable was the removal of fill and recreation of the floodplain/wetland area. We included a copy of the information sign and the invasive plant monitoring protocol document.

Lessons Learned:

Through this project, we learned that construction cost estimates are difficult to predict and may require adjusting the overall project to accommodate the available funds. Our project experienced delays due to lack of documentation of compliance with Uniform Procurement Laws and the need to rebid the project; rebidding the project a second time when bids exceeded available funding; COVID; and Staffing changes that, temporarily, impacted the fluidity of the project. We learned that a more detailed accounting of in-kind contributions was important and yielded much a higher match than anticipated. Also, preparation of monthly reports was made simpler by starting the next month's report at the same time as finishing the current month's report and highlighting items that should be completed within that timeframe.

Other communities can learn from this project by visiting our project folder at <https://tinyurl.com/SamWrightFieldMVP>. Communities can also view the story map at <https://tinyurl.com/CanoeRiverResiliency>.

Partners and Other Support:

Easton Department of Public Works - Grading, removal of buildings
Easton Planning Department – staff support, grant administration
The Nature Conservancy – Financial and technical support
SNEP Network – Technical support

Project Photos:

attached