

Restoring Natural Resources in Great Harbor, Woods Hole Impacted by the M/V Ocean King Oil Release



Background

In January 2018, oil was released from the M/V Ocean King into the waters of Great Harbor in Woods Hole in Falmouth, Massachusetts. The release injured migratory birds (including common eider, white winged scoter, and long-tailed duck), recreational shellfishing, and shoreline resources in Great Harbor.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

When oil enters the environment, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources can be injured. States, American Indian Tribes and the Federal government act as “trustee” for these resources on behalf of the American people. Trustees seek to identify the natural resources injured and determine the extent of the injuries. Trustees then work with the responsible parties to carry out restoration activities or recover funds from responsible parties to restore natural resources. These damage assessment and restoration efforts are authorized under provisions of the Oil Pollution act of 1990 (OPA) and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (Chapter 21E).

The Trustees

The Trustees in this case are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, represented by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). The Trustees received a \$100,000 settlement for past assessment costs, and to plan, oversee and restore ecological resources that were injured by the release of oil from the M/V Ocean King. An additional \$285,000 is available from the Department of the Interior’s Natural Resource Damages Assessment and Restoration Program.

Available Restoration Funds

- \$370,000 for ecological restoration



Shoreline of Great Harbor, Woods Hole, MA, 01/21/2018

Developing a Restoration Plan with Partners

Trustees are beginning to work with the public and other partners to develop a plan that identifies projects to restore ecological resources. Local community members can assist the Trustees in developing a Draft and Final Restoration Plan by participating in public meetings, providing restoration project ideas, and commenting on the Restoration Plans.

Projects To Be Considered

A wide range of projects will be considered that benefit migratory birds, shoreline habitat, and shellfish. Potential project types include wetland and salt marsh restoration, shellfish and eelgrass restoration, and land protection projects. When evaluating projects, Trustees consider proximity to the injured resources along with a variety of other factors such as cost effectiveness, feasibility, and sustainability. The Trustees intend to fund projects in Falmouth, MA.

Timeline

Trustees are planning to hold a public information meeting on November 13th. Trustees will solicit and explore project ideas during Winter/Spring 2025 and publish a Draft Restoration Plan for public comment in Fall 2025. Based upon comments received, a Final Restoration Plan will be published in Spring 2026. This timeline is approximate and subject to change.

Stay Updated

To stay updated on the restoration planning process and upcoming meetings, visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/natural-resource-damages-program-restoration-funds>.



Common Eider females and ducklings 07/11/2019

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