

# **Harwich Conservation Trust Gets Key Eco-Restoration Grant**

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**By William F. Galvin**

HARWICH – The Harwich Conservation Trust has received a \$146,700 grant to begin the Hinckleys Pond-Herring River Headwaters Eco-Restoration Project, which strives to restore water quality in the watershed. The Southeast New England Project (SNEP) grant was announced last week by Congressman Bill Keating. Grant selections were made by Restore America’s Estuaries and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The trust’s grant will fund data collection, design, and permitting to restore the watershed, including the Jenkins cranberry bogs, 500 feet of pond shoreline, public trails and student learning opportunities.

The grant requires a 33 percent match, and Lach said an HCT donors has contributed \$50,000 toward the eco-restoration project.

“We’re grateful for this forward-thinking grant and excited to start the eco-restoration planning process for the two retired bogs bracketing Hinckleys Pond,” said HCT Executive Director Michael Lach. “The 174-acre pond is the primary surface source water for the Herring River, the second longest river system on the Cape and one of New England’s most significant river herring migration routes.”

“These projects are critical to the overall improvement of the health and water quality of our communities, estuaries and embayments,” Keating said in a press release. “The research and hands-on experience generated by SNEP projects have advanced water quality science and have further cemented this region as the nation’s laboratory for water quality.”

The trust is currently pursuing the purchase of the 30-acre Jenkins property on the east end of Hinckleys Pond, including 18 acres of cranberry bogs formerly operated by the Jenkins family. The property was purchased by the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts and is being held for HCT’s acquisition, if the trust can meet the fund-raising goal by the end of December (see related story).

Lach said the trust is also working on preservation efforts with the Brown family, owners of 22 acres on the west side of the pond, including an 11-acre cranberry bog. The Brown land will remain privately owned, Lach said, but the family has agreed to partner with HCT in the eco-restoration effort. The plan is to retire the bog and restore it.

“The proposed ecological restoration of the bog would protect another key part of the Herring River watershed, restore natural habitat, provide educational opportunities, and extend public access to this wonderful property,” said Melissa Bride, daughter of Jake and Barbara Brown, owners of the west side bog, when speaking at the Hinckleys Pond Association’s annual meeting this summer. “We need to protect Hinckleys Pond and the watershed.”

Phase one of the eco-restoration will determine the scope of work for phase two, which will eventually provide multiple community benefits, including restoring 30 acres of healthy, functioning natural wetland habitat; restoring shoreline on a herring spawning pond; exponentially increasing the biodiversity within the restored wetland habitat; enhancing the overall health of Hinckleys Pond and by extension the Herring River; creating walking trail access; and saving scenic vistas for the bicyclists, joggers, and walkers who use the Cape Cod Rail Trail bike path, which is bordered on both sides by the Jenkins bogs.

“Our educational operation is to work with students at the Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, which is located across the street from the Jenkins bogs,” Lach said. “We would like to offer ‘outdoor classroom’ opportunities for students to learn about environmental science, water quality and the benefits of innovative eco-restoration.”

This year SNEP issued 14 watershed grants in Massachusetts and Rhode Island totaling \$1.75 million, among them a \$148,871 grant to the Association to Preserve Cape Cod for stormwater management at public boat ramps. APCC will conduct a regional assessment of boat ramps to identify and prioritize sites for green infrastructure stormwater management. Concept designs will be developed for 20 top-ranked sites with 25 and 75 percent design plans to be developed for five of them.