

# SAVE THE BAY®

NARRAGANSETT BAY

To: Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns  
From: Curt Spalding, Executive Director, Save The Bay  
Re: USDA Farm Bill Forum  
Date: 10/15/05

Through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), NRCS has become a leader in habitat restoration and conservation in Rhode Island. WHIP and WRP have provided local NRCS staff and project partners the necessary funding to design and construct restoration projects throughout Narragansett Bay and the watershed. These two innovative restoration programs are a model for other federally-funded programs. The flexibility of each of these programs enables NRCS staff to work with a variety of land owners including municipalities, suburban landowners, golf courses, commercial and industrial property owners, and farmers. Through these programs, NRCS staff and the local project partners are actively working to meet regional habitat restoration goals.

Save The Bay has partnered with NRCS for nine years setting restoration priorities for the WHIP program as well as identifying potential restoration projects and partners for WHIP and WRP. The workable match requirements allow Save The Bay to raise the match for these projects through in-kind contributions from volunteers, professional staff, the Rhode Island Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, and the Rhode Island state habitat restoration fund. NRCS funds have also been leveraged against funds from the national partnership between the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program and Restore America's Estuaries.

NRCS has been involved in almost every significant restoration project in Narragansett Bay including the restoration of salt marshes, coastal buffers, anadromous fish runs and eelgrass beds.

At Big Mussachuck Creek in Barrington, RI, NRCS is working with a golf course to restore a regionally significant salt marsh and fish run. NRCS staff is providing design, engineering and construction funding to restore this tidally restricted salt marsh.

In Stillhouse Cove in Cranston, RI, NRCS worked with the city, Save The Bay and other project partners to treat stormwater runoff that was impacting a salt marsh located within a highly urbanized watershed.

THE BAY CENTER  
100 Save The Bay Drive  
Providence, RI 02905  
phone: 401-272-3540  
fax: 401-273-7153  
email: [savebay@savebay.org](mailto:savebay@savebay.org)  
[www.savebay.org](http://www.savebay.org)

☼  
BAYSTATION  
Bowen's Wharf  
18 Market Street  
Newport, RI 02840  
phone: 401-324-6020  
fax: 401-324-6022

This summer at Walker Farm in Barrington, RI, NRCS just completed a salt marsh restoration project funded through the WRP in conjunction with the local municipality, NOAA, Save The Bay and Ducks Unlimited. Staff provided crucial construction oversight to ensure that this complicated restoration effort was completed as designed.

Through its partnership with Save The Bay, NRCS has been a leader in supporting efforts to restore eelgrass in Narragansett Bay. Eelgrass, a vital marine habitat, once flourished throughout Narragansett Bay but today only covers a mere 100 acres. This NRCS funded initiative is a model for seagrass restoration efforts both regionally and nationally.

NRCS has also taken a leadership role in looking for opportunities to restore degraded urban waterfronts including Save The Bay's salt marsh and coastal buffer along a Brownfields site in Providence. Currently, we are working in conjunction with NRCS staff to identify additional opportunities to restore these highly impacted habitats.

NRCS has been proactive in prioritizing sites for anadromous fish restoration in Rhode Island. Their NRCS counterparts in Massachusetts have also been actively involved in funding the restoration of one of the last remaining American shad runs in Narragansett Bay on the Palmer River.

Through each of these projects, NRCS staff have demonstrated the professionalism, expertise and common sense to navigate the competing interests of the project partners to ensure a successful restoration. WHIP and WRP have become the foundation for habitat restoration efforts throughout Narragansett Bay.