



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region

FACT SHEET

Nearly \$1 million in Recovery Act Funding to Restore Beaches for Wildlife and Recreation on Long Beach West, Stratford, Connecticut

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received \$909,000 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) to remove abandoned cottages and restore beach and dune habitat on 35 acres of municipal property on Long Beach West in Stratford, CT. The 41 unoccupied, deteriorating cottages on Long Beach West are the remnants of a former summer community.

“This funding under the President’s Recovery Act will provide an economic boost to local communities as it supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's ongoing efforts to conserve threatened and endangered species, native wildlife, and quality outdoor experiences for future generations,” said Sharon Marino, project leader for the Service’s Southern New England - New York Bight Coastal Program, who will oversee the Long Beach West project.

The Long Beach West Restoration Project is a high priority for the Service. The area along the Connecticut coast is recognized as one of 17 Inaugural Long Island Sound Stewardship sites in Connecticut in the 2006 Stewardship Atlas. In addition, it is listed as an Audubon Important Bird Area, part of a global network of places essential to the survival of priority bird species. Long Beach West is one of the most important remaining beach-nesting areas for the federally threatened piping plover. Restoring natural conditions will benefit a wide variety of migratory birds, including species of concern such as the least tern, American oystercatcher, clapper rail and black duck. This site also supports five species of state-listed rare plants and nesting diamondback terrapins.

Long Beach West is located within the approved acquisition boundary for the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. Stratford residents last year voted in favor of negotiating the sale of the property to the Service, providing that funding becomes available for the acquisition and the area remains available for public access. If acquired, the Service would manage the land as part of the Stewart B. McKinney Refuge, which currently includes 11 coastal and island units along the Connecticut coast and within the Long Island Sound.

"The restoration of the site that is presently occupied by the cottages to barrier beach habitat, in conjunction with the recent 38 acre saltmarsh restoration within the Great Meadows unit, will make this barrier beach and coastal wetland complex even more productive and beneficial to plants, fish, wildlife, and people," said Richard Potvin, Refuge Manager, Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

“At long last, we will finally be able to not only demolish and clean up the cottages on Long Beach West, but we will also be able to begin to restore this habitat. With no access for fire fighters and other first responders, these cottages have been a threat to public safety and a liability for Stratford,” said Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, in an April 28, 2009 news release.

“We applaud the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for making cottage demolition at Long Beach West their highest regional priority,” said Sandy Breslin, Director of governmental affairs at Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society that undertakes conservation efforts statewide. “This project demonstrates the Service’s strong commitment to restoring and enhancing Long Beach West for use by wildlife and by people. The demolition will provide jobs, remove what has sadly become an unattractive nuisance, and offer area residents an opportunity to experience the wonders of nature just minutes from I-95 and downtown Stratford. We look forward to working with the Service, the town, and other partners on this exciting project,” said Breslin.

Long Beach Restoration Project partners include the Town of Stratford and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, along with Audubon Connecticut, the Trust for Public Land, SoundKeeper, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Connecticut Audubon Society, Connecticut Ornithological Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Protect Your Environment, CFE/Save the Sound, the Stratford Conservation Commission, and The Nature Conservancy.

The Service received \$50 million in Recovery Act funding for habitat restoration projects on public and private lands throughout the nation. The projects include demolition of structures preventing fish from accessing spawning and feeding areas; reforestation projects; decreasing the impact of Service buildings on the surrounding environment; and removal of invasive plants. The vast majority of the projects will occur on private lands, where landowners committed to managing their property for the benefit of native fish and wildlife have turned to the Service for financial and technical assistance.

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Web sites of interest: www.recovery.doi.gov
<http://www.fws.gov/r5snep>

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