



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Massachusetts

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

A River Flows Through It

Celebrating the protection of Plymouth cranberry land and restoration of the Eel River

Some 95 acres of cranberry land in Plymouth, Massachusetts, will remain as open space thanks to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and a partnership of landowners, local and federal agencies and non-profit organizations. NRCS contributed more than \$300,000 toward conservation easements, construction for the restoration of the stream and surrounding wetlands, and other associated costs through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).



The Eel River flows through cranberry bogs in Plymouth.

Partners included two landowners, the Town of Plymouth, The Nature Conservancy, The Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts, the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, the Hornblower Foundation, the Sheehan Family Foundation and local residents.

The project ensures the permanent protection of the source waters of the Eel River, and will help restore populations of brook trout in the future. The property is contiguous to other town conservation land, which will help maintain a healthy, functioning landscape.

“This project shows the real power and creativity that partnerships can bring to conservation,” said Mark Primack, Executive Director of the Wildlands Trust. “We had a landowner willing to be innovative, two organizations working together from the first instant, a strong municipal partner, and an engaged federal component.”



After NRCS purchased WRP easements on former commercial cranberry bogs owned by the Phoenix Cranberry Corporation and cranberry grower Ashley Holmes, Plymouth’s Community Preservation Committee purchased the bogs and surrounding uplands. The area, now known as the Eel River Preserve, will be open to the public. An Earth Day 2006 dedication ceremony was held at the new trailhead parking area, which will provide public access to the protected area.

The Eel River Headwaters Preserve will be part of the northern link in the “Wishbone” trail system, two swaths of green space starting at Miles Standish State Forest resembling a wishbone. The southern arm will lead from the state forest to Ellenville

451 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002
413-253-4350
fax 413-253-4375
www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov

Harbor; the northern arm will lead from the forest to downtown Plymouth and Plymouth Harbor.

“Protection of this property preserves more than brook trout habitat and community character,” said Wayne Klockner, Massachusetts State Director for The Nature Conservancy. “Keeping natural areas intact will also help Plymouth’s drinking water stay clean and in good supply.”

A conservation restriction on the upland portions of the property will be held by The Wildlands Trust, with the NRCS holding a WRP easement on the bogs and streamside areas.



The cranberry bogs in the Eel River Preserve will be restored to a natural wetland.

this important resource,” said Cecil B. Currin, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts.

“We’re pleased that our Plymouth property will be protected in perpetuity,” said Jane Wadsworth, who’s father Ed Bartholomew owns Phoenix Cranberry Company. “By selling this low producing bog we will be able to enhance our other cranberry farms in Carver and Wareham. We plan to continue our family heritage of being environmentally sound cranberry growers.”



Cranberry grower Ashley Holmes (front) and grandson Bradley at the dedication ceremony along with growers Dick and Jane Wadsworth (standing) and Jeff LaFleur, Director of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association (rear).

Conservation restrictions permanently protect a property’s natural assets by limiting certain uses, such as the right to subdivide or develop, and the WRP easement forever preserves all wetland areas on the land from alteration or disturbance.

Through WRP, NRCS also provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their restoration efforts. To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable, suitable for wildlife benefits, and must have had an agricultural history.

“I’m very pleased to see this project come to fruition. With the help of the CCCGA, we were able to use a national farm program to protect and restore