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For Immediate Release

Buzzards Bay Project announces grants to Rochester, Mattapoissett to improve herring migration in Mattapoissett River

The Buzzards Bay Project announced that it had awarded \$25,000 in grants to help improve herring migration to the Mattapoissett River. The town of Rochester will receive \$20,000 to reconstruct culverts under Snipatuit Rd. The small diameter and poor condition of the culverts is believed to be impeding herring migration into Snipatuit Pond and the upper reaches of the Mattapoissett River. Joe Shmoe of the Rochester DPW will be overseeing the project for the town. The town of Mattapoissett will also receive \$5,000 toward the reconstruction of the Rt. 6 herring ladder and dam that is largely being funded through another state grant. The award to Mattapoissett from the Buzzards Bay Project is being used to match these state funds which were announced during ceremonies in Mattapoissett in November(?).

According to Joseph Costa, Executive Director of the Buzzards Bay Project, the Mattapoissett River herring run is perhaps the largest herring runs in Buzzards Bay, with the Agawam River in Wareham nearly equal in size. Costa noted, "At the turn of the century state biologists estimated that at least 200,000 herring migrated up the Mattapoissett River and that the River had a capacity of more than a million. In recent years, our best estimates are that only 50,000 to 70,000 now migrate up the river. Unfortunately this decline is not unique. Herring populations in many rivers in the region are a fraction of what they once were decades ago because of increased obstructions in rivers, disrepair of fish ladders, poor management of water levels, and declining water quality and habitat loss."

Herring are a so-called "anadromous" fish, one that lives its life in the ocean, but migrates up rivers to lay eggs, much like Salmon. Herring is an important food fish for many species including both fresh and saltwater recreational fish like trout, bass, bluefish, and striped bass, many waterbirds, and even whales. Juvenile herring are also an important food source for the endangered Roseate Tern where the largest breeding colony in North America is just a mile and half from the Mattapoissett River. Herring has also been commercially and recreationally harvested, both as a bait fish for lobsterers and recreational fisherman, and as a food source. Each spring, when the herring migrate up ladders, herring are caught and stripped of their eggs which are called "roe", and eaten like caviar or cooked in other dishes.

During the past decade, 50-200 bushels of herring have been harvested out of the Mattapoissett River each year. These herring are collected at the Rt 6 Dam in Mattapoissett. Because of the location of the Mattapoissett River and changing town boundaries during the 1800's, today the Mattapoissett River Herring Run is now jointly managed by the towns of Mattapoissett, Rochester, and Marion.

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[Note to editor: The Buzzards Bay Project, a National Estuary Program and unit of Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management is often confused with two non-profit corporations: the Buzzards Bay Action Committee (BBAC- a lobbying organization composed of municipal officials), and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay (a citizens group). The Coalition is most widely recognized for its "Report Card" on Buzzards Bay municipalities, its "Town Watch" program, and a citizen-based water quality monitoring program conducted in partnership with the Buzzards Bay Project. All three organizations are working together to implement the Buzzards Bay Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.]

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