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New England District**

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*Contractors remove the dirt plug so that tidal water can flood Town Pond in Rhode Island.*

*Photo by Dave Larsen*

## District's environmental project takes major step towards completion

New England District officials joined their environmental restoration partners in Portsmouth, R.I., to mark an important step in the transformation of a dredged material disposal site into a high value salt marsh and salt pond habitat.

When the final 50-foot plug was removed from the new channel at Mount Hope Bay, tidal water began to flow into the basin of the nearly finished Town Pond Restoration Project. It was the first incoming tide the pond had experienced in nearly 60 years.

Flooding Town Pond is one part of the \$4 million restoration project that is scheduled to be completed this fall. "With this first incoming tide, we have begun to restore over 20 acres of estuarine habitat. The restoration will transform this area to one of vastly improved environmental quality and productivity," said Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander.

Over time, the restored Town Pond will resemble its historic condition from the 1930's and will provide habitat for coastal fish and wildlife such as shell-

fish, finfish, herons, egrets and waterfowl, restoring the productivity and ecological value to the area.

Town Pond, which is located next to Mount Hope Bay, was a tidally-influenced salt pond and salt marsh prior to a New England District navigation improvement project that placed dredged material in the area in the 1950s. At the time, Town Pond was considered an acceptable disposal area for dredged material. Filling the pond with dredged material increased its el-

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# Town Pond takes major step towards completion

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evaluation above that of regular tidal flooding and degraded it to a lower value, non-tidal habitat dominated by the reed species *Phragmites australis*.

The project partners recognized the potential environmental importance of the site and decided to restore it under Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, a Corps Program to modify projects to improve the environment.

Northern Construction Services, LLC, of Weymouth, Mass., is the contractor for the project. The project restored intertidal elevations within the pond and provided a new channel connecting Town Pond to Mount Hope Bay. In addition to restoring flooding to Town Pond, work on the project included excavating approximately 126,000 cubic yards of dredged material and removing approximately 18 acres of *Phragmites* to restore salt marsh and salt pond estuarine habitats; constructing a concrete culvert to replace an older, smaller one; constructing a concrete weir to regu-



*Aerial view of Town Pond circa 1939. View of the project taken in 1990.*

late a permanent pool where the entrance channel meets the interior marsh; and constructing a water control berm to prevent flooding of nearby freshwater resources.

"An open water and salt marsh alternative was selected as the best overall plan for habitat restoration, aesthetic acceptability and affordability," said Project Manager Dave Larsen.

Lt. Col. Andrew Nelson, New England District Deputy Commander, represented the agency at the event.

John Kennelly, Dave Larsen and Larry Oliver of Engineering/Planning and Christopher Turek of Construction/Operations also attended on behalf of the District.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management is the project's non-federal sponsor. Other partners included the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, the Aquidneck Land Trust, the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, Ducks Unlimited, National Grid, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program and the town of Portsmouth.

## District celebrates Hispanic Heritage with fiesta

The Hispanic Employment Program (HEP), in partnership with the Equal Employment Opportunity Office, held a fiesta in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The fiesta was held Sept. 19 in the Concord Park Courtyard. This year's theme was "Hispanic Americans: Making a Positive Impact on American Society."

The HEP wanted to do an activity other than the usual speaker format this year, according to Barbara Blumeris, Program Manager. "We thought it would be fun and educational to have an event to honor and celebrate Hispanic Americans that had the potential to involve a lot of the employees at the District," she said.

Balloons, a piñata, a colorful display of cultural items, and traditional Hispanic music helped to create a light, celebratory atmosphere. The beautiful September day and the scents of various Hispanic dishes wafting through the open courtyard completed the mood.

Crowds of New England District employees and members of the Community Based Health Case organization lined up to taste food items such as rice, beans, chili with corn bread, nachos, mini tacos, enchiladas, three bean salad, taco dip, chips, salsa and dessert made by New England District employees.



*People line up to taste Hispanic cuisine during the Fiesta.*

Photo by Brian Murphy