

September Opening Set For New HCT Trail

HARWICH – With work progressing rapidly at the Hinckleys Pond-Herring River headwaters eco-restoration project, folks can begin to think about returning to one of the Harwich Conservation Trust's (HCT) most popular trails. Contingent on continued federal funding needed to finish the restoration work, the new accessible trail at the site is expected to open in September.

Work has begun on the final phase of trail construction, installing a stabilized stone dust surface that will offer a smooth and level trail experience for users. The nearly one-mile trail will be wheelchair accessible, suitable for families with youngsters in strollers, and a great way for people of all abilities to enjoy nature.

The Hinckleys Pond-Herring River headwaters eco-restoration project includes the restoration of two retired cranberry bogs that bookend the 174-acre Hinckleys Pond, located at the headwaters of the Herring River estuary. Hinckleys Pond is also connected by streams to river herring spawning habitat in Long Pond and Seymour Pond.

The retired bog areas are now bursting with new native plant life. During the first phase of work, layers of sand that had been applied during decades of commercial agriculture were removed from the former

bog areas. Then the ground was turned over in a process called microtopography. This liberated a long-dormant native seed bank to bask in sunlight and soak up moisture, perfect conditions for germination and growth.

Approximately 1,000 other plants, including Atlantic white cedar trees, were planted around the site as part of the project. Plant growth will continue through the summer and fall, adding to the already dramatic greening of the project area.

Most of the 15 benches planned for the project have been installed around the perimeter of the recently restored wetland habitat. The benches will serve as excellent vantage points along the trail and provide resting areas for folks who would like to sit, relax and take in the views.

The benches were built by SumCo Eco-Contracting based on a HCT design developed by Colin Leonard, a member of HCT's board of trustees for 34 years. The eco-restoration project is funded by HCT donors, the Brown family, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Watershed grant, EPA National Estuary Program Coastal Watershed grant under cooperative agreement with Restore America's Estuaries, Massachusetts Department of Conser-



New benches have been installed at the Harwich Conservation Trust's Hinckleys Pond-Herring River headwaters eco-restoration project. HARWICH CONSERVATION TRUST PHOTO

vation and Recreation MassTrails grant, foundation funds through the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, and a Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal

Resilience grant through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

For more information on the project, go to harwichconservationtrust.org.