



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **\$1 million Federal Grant Approved for Conservation and Restoration of Great Marsh Parcels**

ESSEX and NEWBURY, MA – Essex County Greenbelt recently received word that its application for \$1 million in funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Council has been approved. The NAWCA program provides matching grants that support public-private partnerships involving long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated upland habitats for the benefit of wetlands-associated migratory birds.

This grant will allow Greenbelt to complete a high priority conservation project in Essex and our partner, the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, to complete an important habitat restoration project in Newbury.

In Essex, Greenbelt will use funds from the grant towards the conservation of a key 70-acre parcel along Route 133 (John Wise Avenue). The property, owned by the Lane family, is part of a region considered to be one of the best remaining examples of a colonial landscape in all of New England, and is noted as a “priority heritage landscape” in the Essex County Landscape Inventory. In addition, the property contains coastal salt marsh, a tidally-influenced pond, a freshwater pond and associated wetlands, and upland grassland and forest that all provide critical habitat, most notably for migratory birds. In particular, this property provides important nesting areas for Mallard, Spotted Sandpiper, American Woodcock and Marsh Wren, and feeding, resting, and staging areas for other priority shorebirds and waterfowl.

Greenbelt has been working with David Lane and his family for several years on a plan to conserve the property. The Lane family has generously offered to sell Greenbelt their development rights through a perpetual conservation restriction at below market value. The land will remain in private ownership.

According to Greenbelt's Executive Director Ed Becker, "We were thrilled to learn of the grant approval. This, in combination with the generous bargain sale by the Lane family, will make it possible for Greenbelt to leverage additional private funds to permanently protect this important and beautiful property."

Landowner David Lane says, "We were approached by developers who offered to buy the land to build several single family homes or many more condominium units. Although financially tempting, as a family we decided that too much open space is being devoured by development and since we controlled some beautiful open space we would do our part to preserve it in perpetuity. Four generations of our family have continued the farm operations that have been ongoing since colonial days, and thus preserved open space."

"Wetlands perform one of the most important functions in the natural world. They keep our water clean, support the economy of local communities, and provide a safe haven for countless wildlife species," said Senator John F. Kerry. "I am incredibly grateful for the diligence of the Essex County Greenbelt Association. Their efforts have had a profound impact on the environmental and economic well being of the region."

In Newbury, the NAWCA funding will contribute towards the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management's restoration of 33 acres of intertidal wetlands. The property, owned by the Trustees of Reservations and part of the Little River Salt Marsh, has been degraded due to an inadequate culvert that has caused erosion and lack of tidal flushing, leading to direct loss of vegetated salt marsh habitat.

This wetlands restoration project will restore natural tidal flow to 33 acres of salt marsh, improving the quality of the habitat, primarily for waterfowl and other bird species. "Wetland habitats such as the North Shore areas that will benefit from this matching grant are among the Commonwealth's signature natural environments," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles, whose office includes CZM. "We are pleased to partner with Essex County Greenbelt on these important protection and restoration projects."

"I join my government colleagues in congratulating all of the stakeholders for securing these funds for conservation and restoration of the Great Marsh. As one of the remaining examples of colonial coastline, this area is a refuge for many of our wildlife. This prized habitat and all of its resources can continue to thrive with the support of this ambitious project," said Congressman John F. Tierney.

Both properties are included within what is known as the Great Marsh. The Great Marsh is the largest salt marsh in New England covering over 25,000 acres. It functions as a major shellfish and fin fish nursery and is a critically important foraging and resting area for migrating birds along the Atlantic Flyway. Nationwide, vast areas of salt marsh have been destroyed by filling, dredging and developing upland areas. The "Great Marsh" has escaped much of this destruction, but has been affected by polluted runoff and mosquito control ditches built in the 1930's and by road and rail crossings which restrict tidal flows to upstream marshes. Protecting the Great Marsh and the ecological, cultural and scenic values it contains is a high priority for our region's land conservation community.

Greenbelt would like to offer special thanks to following for their support of this project: the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, Town of Newbury, the City of Newburyport, the Town of Ipswich, the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Parker River Clean Water Association, the Trustees of Reservations, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation ACEC Program, Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services, NOAA/Gulf of Maine Council, the Fields Pond Foundation, The George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund, the Davis Conservation Foundation, and The William P. Wharton Trust.

*Essex County Greenbelt is a member-supported, nonprofit land trust dedicated to conserving land of ecological, agricultural or scenic significance in Essex County, with an emphasis on protecting open space corridors. Greenbelt conserves open space through direct acquisition of land through gift or purchase, the holding of conservation restrictions on privately owned land, and by providing technical assistance on conservation projects to other organizations, agencies and municipalities. Greenbelt owned land is open to the public for hiking, cross-country skiing and nature observation. For further information or to join as a member, please call 978-768-7241 or visit [www.ecga.org](http://www.ecga.org).*

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