

***Town of Weymouth
Massachusetts***

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Press Release

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Work to begin on Fish Gate in Weymouth's Stephen Rennie Park

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Weymouth, MA – Weymouth's Jackson Square is home to Stephen Rennie Park, which sees the annual migration of thousands of river herring as they swim through Herring Run Brook, up several fish ladders, and into Whitman's Pond where they spawn.

The Weymouth Back River, which is fed by Herring Run Brook, supports one of the largest river herring runs in Massachusetts. In the upper portion of the watershed, a flood control conduit bypasses Herring Brook storm flows, discharging them in a rectangular concrete channel adjacent to the base of the fish ladder in Stephen Rennie Park. An existing metal fish diversion swing gate at the tunnel outlet is nearing the end of its useful life and has been ineffective at preventing upstream migrating river herring from entering the conduit, where they may become trapped and perish. The goals of this project



are to 1) replace the existing fish diversion gate at the tunnel outlet with a more effective design that will prevent fish from entering the tunnel, 2) reestablish

substrate suitable for smelt spawning on the concrete pad downstream of the tunnel outlet and fish ladder, 3) restore a resting pool for river herring immediately downstream of the concrete pad, and 4) regrade an unauthorized rock weir downstream of the concrete channel to restore flow depths and velocities suitable for smelt spawning.

The Town DPW's Engineering Division is overseeing the project. The Town has engaged with Gomez and Sullivan Engineers, DPC to serve as project designers and managers. SumCo Eco-Contracting, LLC was awarded the construction contract for the project.

"This project has been in the works for several years, dating back to the early 2000s," **said Mayor Hedlund**. "Thanks to the efforts of the Engineering Division and funding assistance from the State we will be able to improve the herring's habitat and ability to swim upstream to Whitman's Pond as well as make repairs to the surrounding channel for smelt spawning."

"The Weymouth Herring Run is one of the biggest in the state and is an important part of our ecosystem," **stated Representative James Murphy**. "It has served as one of the centerpieces of our community. All must be done to preserve and protect it and I look forward to the completion of this very important project," **added Representative Murphy**.

The project is slated to begin near the end of June and take approximately 3 months to be substantially complete. The awarded contractor will replace the swing gate with a concrete wall (or weir) to prevent upstream migration of herring into the flood control conduit where they would become trapped, as well as improve habitat for both herring and smelt. The work will include reestablishing a channel substrate that is suitable for smelt spawning downstream from the proposed wall and fish ladder, restoration of a former herring resting pool downstream, and regrading of the downstream channel to enhance conditions for smelt spawning.

Site work will begin at the end of June with in-water work beginning in early July. Demolition and excavation at the existing site will occur in mid-July and concrete work will begin at the end of July and extend through the end of August. A low-level outlet gate in the new concrete diversion weir will be installed in early September. Final grading, removal of water controls, and site restoration will occur throughout September with a planned substantial completion date of late September.

The in-water work is scheduled for summer and fall to avoid the spring herring migration season (March 1 through June 30) and take advantage of low flows in the stream. A water control and bypass system will be established to safely bypass any downstream-migrating juvenile herring through the work area.

"Oftentimes the hard work is done behind the scenes – I'm proud to have partnered with the Town of Weymouth and my colleagues at the state level to have secured funding over the years for this project," **said Senator Patrick O'Connor (R-Weymouth)**. "Ultimately, this plan will preserve and improve the herring's habitat and I'm looking forward to seeing the finished result in just a few months."

The Town received funding from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries through its budget over multiple fiscal years, amounting to an appropriation of \$350,000 toward the project. Additional capital funding has been provided through free cash, to fund the total project cost of \$650,000.

Map of Project Area

