

Wingaersheek Beach Restoration & Education Project – City of Gloucester

General Information

Project Description:

This would be a multifaceted project that includes dune restoration, invasive species removal, native species restoration and increased education materials.

The first aspect of this project would focus on dune restoration. The dunes at Wingaersheek Beach have suffered considerable erosion due to severe storms and human interactions including people walking and climbing on them and using them as restrooms. Planting native vegetation on the beach side of the dunes and in unmarked footpaths and adding educational signage would encourage the use of official footpaths only. It would be beneficial to fence off or create some sort of barrier to discourage further damage due to the public often playing in and walking on the dunes.

The project would also include the restoration of some native species. There are few areas around Gloucester that have robust eelgrass beds. One of these areas is Lighthouse Beach located directly across the channel from Wingaersheek Beach. Planting more eelgrass in the subtidal sandbar near the Wingaersheek Beach/Coffins beach swim areas or planting eel grass sub-tidally across the way near the mouth of Mill River or Goose Cove would benefit a number of species. The addition of eel grass beds would provide habitat, food, nurseries and protection for a multitude of species that directly impact Gloucester's ecosystems and economy. Along with eelgrass restoration, adding shellfish restoration into this area would be immensely positive to the community in Gloucester. Purchasing, distributing and netting softshell clam, quahog or surf clam seed in the Wingaersheek area would be highly beneficial to the surrounding environment and the clamming industry. The shellfish restoration projects could be concentrated in one specific shellfish area or could be split between several shellfish flats in the area. Clams, especially softshell clams (*Mya arenaria*) in Gloucester have seen declines in population due to environmental impacts like invasive green crabs, disease and pollution. This reseeded would be a huge help in restoring populations and bolstering the commercial and recreational clamming industry in Gloucester. There is potential to work with MIT Sea Grant, schools and non-profits to get students engaged and working hands-on for aspects of the shellfish restoration project.

The third aspect of this project proposal includes the removal of invasive phragmites from the former dredging project dump site behind the Wingaersheek Beach parking. This would promote native plant growth and diversify the vegetation. This aspect of the project could include the construction of a raised boardwalk to allow the public to view the marsh safely. A board walk would offer a viewing platform for observing wildlife, bird watching and shellfish harvesting. A boardwalk would be constructed in a way that minimizes the impact to the land and promotes education. Along the boardwalk there would be kiosks and other forms of signage promoting education about the beach, dunes, intertidal ecosystem, birding, shell fishing, etc. The idea behind this boardwalk is to promote education and provide a viewing platform for birders and members of the public who are interested in the shell fishing industry and viewing clambers dig. If a boardwalk is not within the scope of work, an osprey nest could be added with a nest live cam like the one in the marsh behind Rust Island. Educational kiosks could be added to the Wingaersheek beach turnaround area or on the walkways leading to the beach. These kiosks could provide information about the numerous

species of birds that call the marshes and dunes home, the importance of dunes and marshes, shellfish species and Gloucester's shellfish industry, tide pool species, eel grass ecosystem services, animal tracks that can be seen on the beach, importance of the Great Marsh ecosystem and more!

Organization Name: City of Gloucester - Community Development, Shellfish Department and Public Works

Activity(s):

- Education
- Maintenance/Management
- Protection
- Restoration

Habitat(s):

- Beach/Dune
- Marine/Estuarine Wetlands
- Subtidal (Nearshore/Offshore)