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Final Stages of Construction Are Underway at Wreck Pond

Project Will Improve Fish Passage and Reduce Flooding Risks for Nearby Towns

Spring Lake, N.J. - Construction of a 600-foot culvert in Wreck Pond has resumed after a nearly five-month break to ensure the safety of beach-nesting birds near the project site.

Construction on [the project](#) was halted on April 8 due to seasonal restrictions that protect beach-nesting birds. Monitors found a colony of least terns and a pair of American oystercatchers. Least terns are a state-listed endangered species and American oystercatchers are a species of concern.

“This is the first time least tern have nested on site since Hurricane Sandy in 2012,” said Katie Conrad, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to Conrad, the least tern colony had a peak size of 26 adults and successfully fledged 11 young. The American oystercatchers attempted two nests, but both nests were most likely killed by foxes before hatching.

While the nesting birds were great news, the true beneficiaries of the new culvert will be fish and people. The project will open up two miles of passageways and nursery habitat for migratory fish while helping protect the surrounding boroughs of Spring Lake, Spring Lake Heights and Sea Girt against future storm surges.

Work resumed September 6 on the new culvert. Conrad said the new culvert replaces a small, insufficient pipe not suited for migratory species. “There's a pipe currently in place not designed for fish passage that the alewife are still using,” said Conrad.

Replacing the undersized culvert with a larger “fish-friendly” one increases the natural movement of fish, water, debris and sediment. It also eliminates flood risks up-river of Wreck Pond by stopping the dam-like effect undersized water flow structures can create, protecting the surrounding communities.

The completion of the culvert, expected in mid-December, is the last major construction project scheduled for Wreck Pond. Following its completion the site will be monitored for sufficient water flow to ensure it is suitable for fish passage.

“We’re excited to see the completion of the project getting close. We’ve been doing scientific monitoring of the waterway and are finding lots of evidence that we can restore this estuary to good health with this project,” said Tim Dillingham, executive director of the American Littoral Society.

During the break in construction, ecological monitoring and restoration work was employed by USFWS and the American Littoral Society to track migratory fish such as American eel, river herring and their young. This will continue for the next few years, said Conrad, when alewife coming from the Atlantic will pass through the new culvert and be recorded and tagged throughout different points in their migration to spawn.

Other restoration work at Wreck Pond includes beach nourishment and berm and dune reconstruction to specifically increase habitat for the federally listed piping plover.

“Recent storms coming up the coast like Tropical Storm Hermine are a reminder that we need to make our coastal communities more resilient, which is one of the outcomes we expect from this project,” said Dillingham.

The [Wreck Pond project](#) is supported by \$3 million in federal funding from the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013. It is one of 70 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recovery and resilience projects in the Northeast under this funding.

“Investments in projects like the one at Wreck Pond support the goal of [President Obama's Climate Action Plan](#) to make communities more resilient to increasingly intense future storms that are the result of a changing climate,” said USFWS Northeast Regional Scientist Rick Bennett, who leads the agency’s [Hurricane Sandy recovery and resilience program](#). “They also provide opportunities for fishing, wildlife watching and other recreational opportunities that improve the quality of life for local residents.”

The Wreck Pond resiliency project is a partnership between USFWS, the American Littoral Society, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Coastal Engineering, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, NY District (ACOE), the towns of Sea Girt, Spring Lake and Monmouth County.

To learn more about the project, [click here](#). To view photos of the Wreck Pond Inlet and Dune Recovery, [click here](#). To learn more about other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hurricane Sandy recovery and resilience projects, [visit the Hurricane Sandy Recovery website](#).

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