

Restoring Natural Resources in Gloucester Harbor Impacted by the Gloucester Gas Light Company Manufactured Gas Plant Site



Background

The Gloucester Gas Light Company Manufactured Gas Plant Site (Gloucester MGP Site) operated from 1854 to 1952 and was located on the waterfront in Gloucester, Mass. Releases of MGP residuals, such as coal tar and associated polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from the Gloucester MGP Site contaminated various natural resources, including soil, groundwater, sediments, and surface water in the adjacent Gloucester Harbor.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

When hazardous substances enter the environment, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources can be injured. States, American Indian Tribes and the Federal government act as “trustee” for these resources on behalf of the American people. Trustees seek to identify the natural resources injured and determine the extent of the injuries. Trustees then work with the responsible parties to carry out restoration activities or recover funds from responsible parties to restore natural resources. These damage assessment and restoration efforts are authorized under provisions of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (the Superfund Law) and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (Chapter 21E).

Available Restoration Funds

- \$5,300,000 for ecological restoration



Gloucester Harbor in 2012 (Doug Kerr/Wikimedia Commons)

The Trustees

The Trustees in this case are the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, represented by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). The Trustees received a \$5.38 million settlement for past assessment costs, and to plan, oversee and restore ecological resources that were injured by the releases of hazardous substances from the Gloucester MGP Site.

Developing a Restoration Plan with Partners

Trustees are just beginning to work with the public and other partners to develop a plan that identifies projects to restore ecological resources. Local community members can assist the Trustees in developing a Draft and Final Restoration Plan by participating in public meetings, providing restoration project ideas and commenting on the Restoration Plans.

Projects To Be Considered

A wide range of projects will be considered, including wetland and salt marsh restoration, stream habitat restoration, culvert replacement, dam removal, shellfish and eelgrass restoration, stormwater management, and land protection projects. When evaluating projects, Trustees consider proximity to the injured resources along with a variety of other factors such as cost effectiveness, feasibility, and sustainability. The Trustees intend to fund projects in Gloucester and potentially the surrounding communities of Rockport, Essex, and Manchester.

Timeline

Trustees are planning to hold a public information meeting on October 29th, 2024. Trustees will solicit and explore project ideas during Winter/Spring 2025 and publish a Draft Restoration Plan for public comment in Fall 2025. Based upon comments received, a Final Restoration Plan will be published in Spring 2026. This timeline is approximate and subject to change.

Stay Updated

To stay updated on the restoration planning process and upcoming meetings, visit:

<https://darrp.noaa.gov/hazardous-waste/former-gloucester-gas-light-company>

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