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**NOAA CELEBRATES ENVIRONMENTAL
RESTORATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration joined New Hampshire Sen. Judd Gregg and Florida Rep. Bill Young to celebrate accomplishments of the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program today at the Dirksen Senate Office Building. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The event brought together more than 15 partners from 13 coastal states with their congressional representatives to recognize this highly successful community-based program. The event highlights exemplary local efforts and the importance of coastal, estuarine and anadromous fisheries habitat restoration to both their region's commerce and natural environment.

"New Hampshire's rivers, bays, and streams are vital resources that we all value deeply, enjoy and strive to protect. Through the Community-based Restoration Program, local communities working in partnerships have enhanced fish passages at dams, restored submerged aquatic plants, and improved wetland habitats. These projects illustrate New Hampshire's way of getting things done by bringing people together on all levels, from the local communities to the federal government to produce results that benefit everyone," stated Sen. Judd Gregg, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, which oversees funding for NOAA.

The NOAA Community-based Restoration Program joins local, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and communities to restore fisheries habitat throughout the United States. Through CRP in 2004, NOAA Fisheries provided \$6.5 million for 139 projects, leveraging twice this amount in non-federal matching funds. Thirty-three restoration projects were completed in 2004, restoring more than 2,700 acres of productive marine habitat.

"The NOAA Community-based Restoration Program is a model for how conservation groups and the federal government can work together with communities in a bottom-up approach to help restore crucial marine habitats," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "NOAA's goal of healthy coastal habitats and vibrant coastal communities can only be accomplished when there are strong partnerships like those developed under this program."

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In 2004, more than 3,000 volunteers helped complete restoration projects, contributing 41,000 volunteer hours. Such projects create educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities, and provide long-term ecological and economic benefits for fishery resources.

“Community-based partnerships are essential ingredients to successful restoration projects,” said Stephanie Lindloff, river restoration coordinator for the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. “The NOAA CRP not only helps restore our coastal environments, it also fosters the local stewardship that’s critical to protecting and restoring our rivers, wetlands and reefs for years to come.”

Working with partners, the NOAA CRP restores mangroves, wetlands, coral reefs, oyster reefs, submerged aquatic vegetation beds, salt marshes, riparian spawning grounds and many other habitats. In addition to ecological benefits, these projects:

- 1) Contribute to a healthy economy through job creation
- 2) Provide opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on restoration to enrich their coastal communities
- 3) Generate long-term stewardship for the nation’s living marine resources.

Since 1996, more than 800 projects in 26 states have been implemented with \$33 million in NOAA funds. These funds were matched up to five times by national and regional habitat restoration partners. For more information on the Community-based Restoration Program, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation’s coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.