

Halfway Brook Wetland Improvement Project



Final Report

Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District

51 Elm Street, Warrensburg, NY 12885

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Final Report to NYS DEC

Project: Halfway Brook Wetland Improvement Project

Project Sponsor: Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
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Contract #: C302157

Grant Amount: \$46,000.00

Local Match Provided: \$29,500.00

Project History and Summary:

Working with the Town of Queensbury Environmental Committee and other community groups, the District undertook a wetland improvement project designed to significantly reduce invasive species and increase the aquatic habitat for waterfowl and amphibians in a five acre wetland on Halfway Brook (wetland #GF 25) while increasing the public's knowledge of the importance of wetland habitat preservation.

This project is located in the Town of Queensbury on Halfway Brook, just upstream from Hovey Pond Park. The goal of this project is to enhance the quality of this highly visible wetland through the reduction of invasive plants, and the creation of habitat for a number of species of waterfowl and amphibians.



This project was conducted and overseen by Warren County SWCD staff, with labor and assistance from and many of the Town of Queensbury including the Parks and Recreation Department, the Water Department, members of the Town Board and many local citizen volunteers.

Using DEC approved management techniques, phragmites and purple loosestrife were controlled, potholes were excavated for habitat diversity, and a walkway and educational kiosk was constructed to highlight the value of wetlands in this highly visible park area.

Project Work Accomplished During April 2003-September 2005 reporting period

Invasive Species Control Program:

Approximately two acres of phragmites and purple loosestrife were treated through the control program that was established.

The entire phragmites plant including rhizomes was excavated which as a result created potholes for habitat. Seed heads and stems were hand harvesting in locations where this was not possible. About 75% of the area treated has remained free of phragmites. Regrowth that has occurred is being maintained through hand harvest.



As a biological control purple loosestrife beetles (*Galerucella calmarensis* and *G. pusilla*) were obtained and bred for dispersal over a two year period. Through feeding on the loosestrife plants, the beetles have made a significant impact; causing many of the plants to wilt and begin to die.



A wide variety of more than 50 different terrestrial and emergent, native, wetland species were planted in the areas that were excavated by staff and volunteers. Species such as blueflag iris and cardinal flower were planted along the water's edge in the form of Potted plants and plugs. Emergent species such as forget-me-not, yellow water lily and pickerel weed were planted as plants and plugs in the water. Wild rice was also applied in the form of seed to both pothole areas.



Habitat Diversity: In the course of the phragmites removal two potholes were created in the wetlands which now provide edge for both plants and animals. The boundaries of the potholes are irregular to provide maximum habitat edge effect, and the depths vary from one

to three feet providing differing zones for diverse plant species. These pothole areas increase the habitat for numerous species of birds and amphibians, ultimately diversifying the existing populations. Bird boxes were installed in the wetland area in the most ecologically beneficial location, with the intent of creating a breeding population of wood and migratory species such as marsh wrens and song sparrows in the wetland. Approximately twenty cedar logs were placed in the pothole areas of the wetland to create better habitat for species of ducks, frogs and turtles.



Educational Component: Beginning at the current grassed dike/walkway between Hovey Pond Park and the wetland, a 200 foot long, six foot wide wheel chair railed wooden walkway was constructed across the wetland. The second year, a 300 foot extension was added to the original walkway, connecting it with the second constructed wetland pothole. Each walkway ends in a 12 foot wide railed observation deck overlooking the potholes.



At the beginning of the walkway an educational kiosk was installed. Seven fiberglass embedded signs were designed and installed in the kiosk, along the walkways and on the observation decks. These signs depict the species and habitat diversity, functionality and importance of the wetland ecosystem. The signs also provide narrative regarding the partnerships and work that was accomplished in order to initiate the restoration of the Hovey Pond Park Wetland along the Halfway Brook.



Problems encountered and resolved:

Problems: Vandalism has been an issue at the Hovey Pond Park wetland restoration site. Two of the signs were ripped off of their support structures. The signs were retrieved and have been re-affixed to their posts. This was an isolated incident and has been addressed through help of the Queensbury Parks and Recreation Department.

Conclusion:

Through the cooperative efforts of many, enabled through this grant provided by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the Halfway Brook Wetland Improvement Project located at the Hovey Pond Park has been a very successful endeavor. The loosestrife and the phragmites which once encompassed the majority of the wetland are now benefiting from competition from the diversity of various native wetland species that were both planted and volunteered due to the habitat that was enhanced. The walkway has received much positive recognition both from the Town of Queensbury and the local public whom enjoy it on a daily basis. The educational signs and kiosk are acting to provide a forum to educate the community on the important functionary role of wetlands. We appreciate the hard work of all whom were involved in making this project a success.

