

COASTAL AMERICA 2012 AWARDS PROGRAM NOMINATION FORM

Please circle the award type (only one) you are recommending this team for:
(Partnership Award) - Spirit Award - Special Recognition Award

1. Full Name of Nominated Team: Musconetcong River Restoration Partnership _____

2. Nominator Contact Information:

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3. What is the lead Federal Agency (if any) for this project? (or lead organization for Special Recognition Awards): U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

4. Please provide a brief abstract overview of the project you are nominating (1 page max.)

The Musconetcong River Restoration Partnership (MRRP) is a multi disciplinary team of agencies, organizations and individuals working to improve and restore the Musconetcong River. The MRRP includes the private conservation groups, Federal agencies, State agencies, private landowners and others. Much of the work is focused on removing dams on the Musconetcong River, which supports Action H5.7 (Fish Passage Restoration) of the Delaware Bay Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.

In 2011 the MRRP removed the **Riegelsville Dam** remnants and the **Finesville Dam**, the first two obstructions upstream of the confluence of the Musconetcong River and the Delaware River opening 3.4 miles of migratory fish habitat. These dams are in Warren County, New Jersey. The Musconetcong is New Jersey's largest tributary to the Delaware, the longest undammed major river in the United States east of the Mississippi River. The watershed has been the subject of significant attention with regard to restoration of fish migration, including river herring, American eel, and striped bass.

The partnership works to preserve and protect the Musconetcong River and its watershed for present and future residents, restoring the natural flow, native vegetation and high quality fish and wildlife habitat there. The partnership also worked with the Mid Atlantic Regional Implementation Team of the Coastal America program through the New Jersey Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership to assist in funding the Riegelsville Dam removal project.

5. Project Need and Resource Benefits/Outputs (2 pages max.)

The MRRP is a large and diverse team of agencies, organizations and individuals working to improve and restore the Musconetcong River. The MRRP includes the private conservation groups, Federal agencies, State agencies, private landowners and others. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a member of the MARIT, is on the MRRP.

Removal of the Riegelsville Dam remnants and the Finesville Dam from the Musconetcong River was undertaken to benefit the resource in a number of ways including: restoration of natural stream flows, opening 3.4 miles of migratory fish passage for native diadromous fish species (such as American eels (*Anguilla rostrata*) and river herring – alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*)), improving habitat for other native and naturalized fish populations (such as trout and bass), reducing local flooding by lowering water surface elevations, appropriately managing sediment that has accumulated behind the subject dams, and possibly helping to alleviate flooding problems on the Delaware River by including some flood storage in the restoration design by restoring natural flood protection features (e.g., riparian wetlands). Dam removal has been identified as a critical conservation strategy to provide access to spawning areas for diadromous fish species. In fact Action H5.7 (Fish Passage Restoration) of the Delaware Bay Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan specifically identifies the need to provide fish passage on tributaries to the Delaware River. River herring stocks have precipitously declined since the 1970s and are currently being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Similarly the American eel is undergoing an extensive status review due to reductions in eel populations.

This project reopened the 3.4 miles of the lower Musconetcong River to fish migration in addition to restoring riverine ecological processes within this portion of the river (including sediment transport, biological connectivity, and improving floodplain dynamics). Additional dam removals are currently being investigated upstream including Hughesville, Warren Mill, and Asbury Dams. Portions of the Musconetcong River are federally designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System, which was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection. In addition, the project builds coastal connectivity in headwater areas of the Delaware Estuary and provides high quality spawning habitat for coastal dependent species such as American eel and river herring.

The Musconetcong River watershed encompasses four counties in northwestern New Jersey and is located within the New Jersey Highlands, an area identified by The New Jersey State Planning Commission as a "Special Resource Area," where "individual decisions may have greater extra-regional impacts than most other areas of the state." The river is protected by a New Jersey Stormwater Regulations "Category One" designation. The designation is intended to protect water bodies from "measurable changes in water quality". Protection and improvement of Category One waters is a New Jersey State priority. This project improves sediment transport,

biological connectivity, and floodplain dynamics, all of which are critical components in maintaining high water quality associated with Category One waters.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA), uses these dam removal projects to support their Watershed Education Program, which teaches students about fresh water ecology, ground and surface water characteristics, and the historic and geological features unique to the limestone valleys in the Musconetcong and adjacent Delaware River tributary watersheds. In addition, dam removal projects are used to educate students in the reclamation of river systems and the ecological benefits to riverine and coastal resources. This program promotes a sense of stewardship for the environment that is rooted in knowledge of science, local ecology, and history. The MWA Watershed Education Program is well established in several area elementary schools. In addition, the MWA offer “Meet the River” programs for pre-school children and “Camp Musky” Summer Day programs, as well as high school lectures to promote river restoration and conservation.

6. Partnership functioning - Funding & Other Support (1 page max.)

Members of the Musconetcong River Restoration Partnership play a variety of roles throughout the dam removal process. Some members provide technical assistance during the feasibility and design phase, others take a leadership role during removal or during riparian buffer restoration. Some provide outreach and education to the community, helping landowners and local agencies understand the steps in the process. Some partners provide funding directly, other apply for grants to fund the projects and others facilitate relationships with funders. The MRPP did a tremendous amount of work to get these projects completed including initial discussions with the landowners, education and negotiation with neighbors, township officials, other interested parties, and conducted numerous public meetings to discuss the projects. In addition, the MRPP worked on initial engineering and feasibility assessments and permits. Negotiations with the State Historic Preservation Office were also completed by the MRPP since both dams were historic and within a listed historic district. Signage is also part of the work MRPP completed to identify the ecological value of the subject projects. Direct funding provided by various partners is listed below.

Riegelsville Dam Removal

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$ 50,000
Conservation Resources Inc.	\$ 3,500
New Jersey Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership	\$ 20,000
Cora Books Foundation (Must not acknowledge publicly)	\$ 10,000
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	\$ 8,000
Total	\$ 88,500

Finesville Dam Removal

Natural Resources Conservation Service	\$ 247,950
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	\$ 45,000
American Rivers/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	\$ 59,000
Conservation Resources Inc.	\$ 4,175
Total	\$ 356,125

7. Team Partners: List all partners and identify project/team leads with an asterisk (*). Please provide all contact information using the format as shown in question 2 above.

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***Musconetcong Watershed Association**

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National Park Service

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IMPORTANT: If approved; only team members identified in this form will be eligible to receive the Coastal America Award. Please ensure that you correctly identify ALL TEAM MEMBERS.

Additional Information: All nominations must be submitted to the Coastal America National Coordinating Office by August 1, 2012 to be considered for the 2012 series. Winners will be selected and awardees will be notified in accordance with the published milestone schedule. Project photos are welcomed as accompaniments to Award Nomination forms. All materials should be sent via email to the Award Program Coordinator Carli Bertrand at: [Carli.Bertrand@usda.gov] 202-401-9922.



Finesville Dam



Finesville Dam – During construction



Finesville Dam – After removal



Riegelsville Dam



Riegelsville Dam – During construction



Riegelsville Dam – After removal