

To: Barrington Town Council

From: Wenley Ferguson, Restoration Coordinator, Save The Bay

Date: May 2, 2016

Re: Allin's Cove Conservation Management Plan

As a partner in the Allin's Cove salt marsh and buffer restoration project, Save The Bay in partnership with the Barrington Land Conservation Trust and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, recommends managing the upland area to maintain a coastal grassland. Coastal grasslands are rare habitat types in coastal areas of Rhode Island and southern New England.

As way of background, according to University of Connecticut, in New England coastal grasslands are ecologically significant ecosystems with limited occurrence that are maintained by both natural and anthropogenic disturbances. Development and natural succession have led to the loss of these habitats throughout New England. Rhode Island's State Wildlife Action Plan highlight how invasive plants can impact grasslands and early successional habitats.

Grasslands provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, including meadow voles, mice, white-tailed deer, red fox, cottontail rabbits, several species of sparrow, turkeys, bats, butterflies and other pollinators.

As part of the habitat restoration project, warm season grasses were planted by seed and then later switch grass plants were planted by volunteers. Project partners developed a management plan to maintain the coastal grassland which includes mowing half of the upland each year to prevent woody vegetation from colonizing the grassland and to prevent the spread of non-native vegetation that surrounds the coastal grassland including bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose, autumn olive and Japanese knotweed. The cutting will also help to reduce the height and vigor of *Phragmites australis*. The timing of the mowing is to occur outside of the growing and nesting season in the fall.

The plan to mow only half of the grassland each year is to ensure that there is cover and habitat for the variety of wildlife that use the coastal grassland and as NRCS' Gary Casabona stated "to increase vertical diversity". According to the Long Island Sound's Habitat Restoration Initiative, mowing or cutting the grass at regular intervals will help to discourage invasion of woody growth in grassland areas. This method of grassland restoration and management is often used in developed areas where burning is unsafe.

References:

Rothbart, Paul and Steve Capel. 2006. **Maintaining and Restoring Grasslands (Chapter 3)** in *Managing Grasslands, Shrublands and Young Forests for Wildlife*. J.D. Oehler, D.R. Covell, S.Capel, B. Long (editors). Published by the Northeast Upland Habitat Technical Committee, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. (p.14 – 27)

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