

PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has requested a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to disk material within man-made, fresh to brackish water, impoundments at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Newburyport, Massachusetts for invasive plant control measures. Additionally, an application is pending before the Department of Environmental Protection for the same project titled "Parker River NWR Impoundment Restoration"

Specifically, the Refuge is requesting permits to shallowly disk previously burned and/or mowed invasive plants within two man-made fresh to brackish water impoundments (Bill Forward and Stage Island Pools). The majority of these two impoundments are dominated by robust perennial vegetation such as purple loosestrife (*Lythrium salicaria*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*). These species of vegetation do not readily decompose during winter flooding regimes. Residual vegetative cover from these species during the following growing season precludes germination of more preferred annual vegetation and open mud flats for shorebird forage.

Disking of the impoundment bottoms would not add or reduce any fill within the wetland. It will basically speed-up the decomposition process of dead vegetative matter, as well as, aerate the top several inches of soil. For some soils, incorporation of the organic matter will provide additional food resources for decomposer wetland invertebrates.

The Refuge has for many years managed these impoundments for a wide array of wildlife with a management emphasis on waterfowl, shorebirds and other marsh and wading birds. After several years, non desirable invasive plants have taken root and need to be set back. Burning, chemical and mechanical activities alone have not yielded the desired results. Other National Wildlife Refuges within the Northeast region of the USFWS have found that periodic disking after mowing or burning significantly contributes to controlling these non-desirable plants.

Additional information may be obtained from **Janet Kennedy, Refuge Manger, Parker River NWR, 261 Northern Blvd, Newburyport, MA 01950 Tel: 978-465-5753**. Written comments should be addressed to: **Department of Environmental Protection, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 01208 Tel: 617-292-5500** within twenty-one days of this notice. Any group of ten persons, any aggrieved person, or any governmental body or private organization with a mandate to protect the environment who submits written comments may appeal the Departments Certificate. Failure to submit written comments before the end of the public comment period may result in the waiver of any right to an adjudicatory hearing.