



DEM, PARTNERS DEDICATE NEW ACCESSIBLE FISHING FACILITY ON THE WOOD RIVER IN HOPKINTON

PROVIDENCE - The Department of Environmental Management, in partnership with the [Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association \(WPWA\)](#), the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Small Craft Access Trust (SCAT) this morning dedicated a new handicap accessible shore fishing facility and canoe portage at Barberville Dam on the Wood River in Hopkinton. The site will give disabled anglers access to one of the state's prime fishing areas.

The newly designed facility consists of an accessible fishing pier on the riverbank, a parking area for four vehicles transporting people with disabilities, a sidewalk leading to the pier and the riverbank, and a canoe portage on the west side of the pier. The design will allow an individual to park, travel to the pier to fish or get to a canoe, all within an accessible route.

The Barberville Dam fishing access area was developed by DEM and is located on the [WPWA's](#) property at 203 Arcadia Road. In 1993, DEM and the WPWA entered into a cooperative agreement that allows the public to use the portion of its land that DEM developed. This had previously been all private property, and access to the river was limited. Since 1992, DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife has acquired three separate parcels of land at the Barberville Dam to improve public access to the Wood River.

The most popular trout fishery in Rhode Island, the upper Wood River offers excellent water quality, cool temperatures and continuous flow. The river is well suited for trout, and is frequently stocked with hatchery produced fish by DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife.

"This project could not have taken place without the cooperative effort of the [Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association](#)," noted DEM Director Jan Reitsma. "The Association's property offered an ideal location to develop a handicap accessible shore fishing area, and also provides a more suitable and safer location for portaging around Barberville Dam."

Lori Urso, Executive Director of the [Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association](#) said, "WPWA is grateful to have been a part of this project, and for the opportunity to offer a portion of our property for this purpose. Part of our mission is to promote recreational use of the river, something that has been very difficult and perhaps impossible for physically challenged individuals. We are also pleased with the improved and much safer portage for boaters that is now available through this project. We look forward to welcoming the public to the site, and we are here to provide information and assistance to recreationists to make their experiences on the Wood River more enjoyable."

Bob Cooper, Executive Secretary of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities said, "The Commission is pleased to have assisted in making one of Rhode Island's best trout fishing sites universally accessible by all people, including those with disabilities. This site provides the first accessible canoe launch and fishing platform on the Wood River. The Commission looks forward to creating more inclusive recreational opportunities available throughout the state, in partnership with DEM and the US Fish and Wildlife Service."

Bob Sousa, Region 5 Chief of Federal Aid, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service said, "I am excited about this project. You can travel a very long distance to fish in other states, but fishing is so good here in Rhode Island. The Barberville Dam Fishing Access Area is one more example of how the folks at DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife do a fantastic job of providing high quality angling experiences."

The total cost for the project was \$75,093.88. \$35,967.93 was provided from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Aid, through DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife; the Governor's Commission on Disabilities provided \$15,000; the SCAT Foundation provided \$24,125.95; and the WPWA donated a conservation easement for the land. The project was designed by DEM's Division of Planning and Development, and was constructed by W.H. Peppes General Contractor Inc.

Last year, Governor Lincoln Almond was presented with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director's Equal Opportunity Achievement Award. The award recognized the Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish and Wildlife for outstanding accomplishments in the design and construction of handicap accessible boat ramps in Rhode Island. The state's accessible docks and boat ramp projects have attracted national attention with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities receiving inquiries from disability groups and recreation planners in other states. Since 1996, new handicap accessible boat launch facilities have been completed at Weaver Cove in Portsmouth; Oakland Beach in Warwick; Bold Point in East Providence; Colt State Park in Bristol; and on Main Street in Westerly. Construction is currently underway at Haines Park, which will serve Barrington and East Providence. This summer the federal/state/local partnership will install an accessible fishing platform at Carbuncle Pond in western Coventry.

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