



Great Cedar Swamp Project

What is this project?

This Great Cedar Swamp (GCS) project focuses on the restoration of a degraded Atlantic white cedar swamp in Sharon, MA. The GCS is approximately 250 acres and overlies the northern end of the Canoe River Aquifer. The GCS is the primary source of groundwater recharge for the Town's public drinking water supply wells. A healthy swamp can help filter and clean our water and protect the community from flooding by absorbing stormwater runoff during storm events. Previous ditching and draining of the GCS have reduced its ability to provide these benefits. Today, the main drainage ditch in the swamp drains groundwater out of Sharon rather than allowing recharge within the swamp, which would otherwise feed the Town's wells. The lowered groundwater table has hurt the environment, causing die-offs of cedar trees and allowing other plants, including invasive species, to take hold.

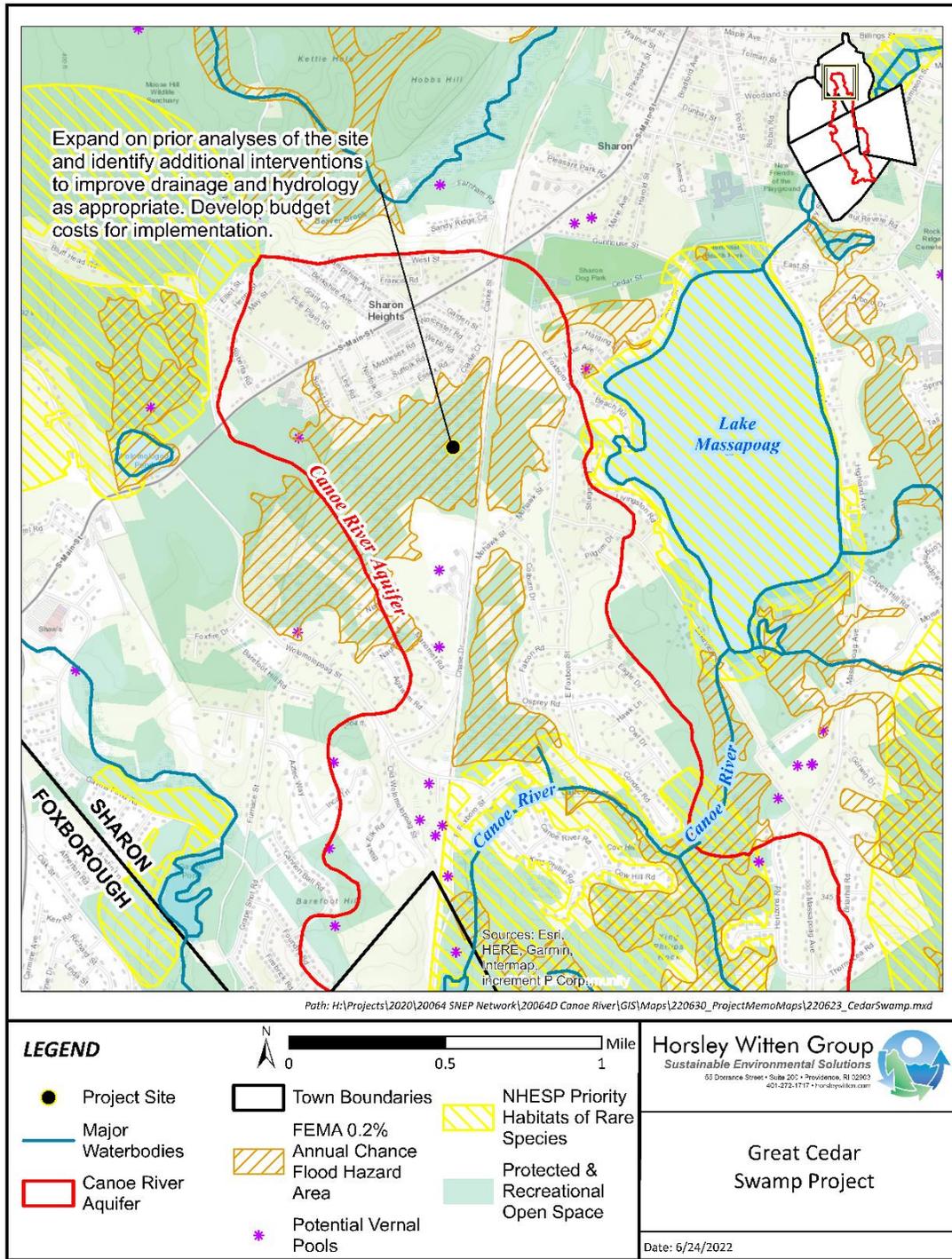
Prior analysis by the Town suggests that the installation of a weir (a low dam used to control the flow of water) in the main drainage ditch—a relatively simple fix—could improve the swamp's natural hydrology, meaning that more water would be captured, filtered, and cleaned by the swamp and directed to the Town's wells.

Why is this project important for the environment and for Sharon?

- **Restoration of habitat.** Restoring how water naturally circulates through the swamp would help provide habitat for the plants and animals typical of a healthy and vital cedar swamp.
- **Ecological benefits to the region.** Waterbodies and wetlands are interconnected. Restoration would help not only the GCS but an additional area of white cedar swamp to the west, as well as other interconnected waters.
- **Improved flood storage.** Restoring how water naturally circulates through the swamp will protect the community from flooding by allowing the GCS to absorb more stormwater runoff during storm events.
- **Protection against drought.** Restoring how water naturally circulates through the swamp will allow more native swamp plant species to grow and be healthy. This will improve the swamp's ability to capture stormwater and store more groundwater, helping protect the region against future droughts when rainfall is low.
- **Public recreation and health benefits.** A healthy swamp can provide recreational and health benefits to local residents, including hiking opportunities and protection against flooding that could damage local homes.
- **Increased groundwater recharge.** Sharon gets its drinking water from an area recharged by the GCS. The more the GCS is able to naturally do what it does best (absorb, filter, and clean water), the better local drinking water quality will be.



Figure 1. Healthy Atlantic white cedar swamp (left) and degraded Atlantic white cedar swamp (right) (Town of Sharon).



If you care about this project, what should you do?

If you are interested in supporting efforts to make this project a reality, we encourage you to reach out to the Conservation Commission in Sharon to voice your support. Let your community know that addressing this project should be a priority for the environment and for Sharon!

Town of Sharon Conservation Commission
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