Blackstone River Fish Passage

Elizabeth Webbing and Valley Falls Dams
Phase I: Preliminary Investigation and Alternatives Assessment

The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island (TNC) is requesting professional design services for the evaluation of alternative fish passage approaches at Valley Falls and Elizabeth Webbing Dams located on the lower Blackstone River.

TNC is cooperating with a project team including the Rhode Island Department of Environment (DEM) and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) to restore fish passage for diadromous fish in the lower Blackstone River. Target species include river herring, American shad, and American eel. All species were once present in the Blackstone River but were extirpated with the construction of mill dams. Under the Blackstone River Phase I Diadromous Fish Restoration Plan, efforts have been underway to restore self-sustaining populations of these important fish species.

Restoration plans include constructing fish passage structures at the Main Street, Slater Mill, Elizabeth Webbing, and Valley Falls dams. This is now an ongoing process. To date, the engineering firm of Fuss & O'Neill has developed 30 percent fish ladder designs for the first two dams: Main Street and Slater Mill. The consultant is continuing with this work and will provide the project team with fish ladder designs for permitting and for project bidding.

The purpose of this request is to retain a consultant to obtain baseline professional services for the evaluation of potential alternative fish passage approaches at the third and fourth dams, Elizabeth Webbing and Valley Falls. As part of the proposal, the consultant will outline an approach that may include, but is not limited to, tasks and costs for such work as review of existing information at each site, topographic/bathymetric field surveys, wetland delineations, cultural resources, and fish passage alternative assessments. These services are to provide the project team with an evaluation of conceptual alternatives for implementation of fish and eel passage structures at both dams. This information will be used in future contract work where conceptual alternatives will be converted into final designs.

The consultant will develop and provide a technical memorandum compiling the results of investigations and the alternative assessments for each site.