

HRRC Vegetation Management Recommendation 3-8-17

Phragmites management is an important element of the Herring River Restoration Project (Project) because the plant is an aggressive, non-native invasive species that can rapidly displace salt marsh and other native vegetation. Re-establishing native estuarine plant communities is a primary Project objective. These native communities provide critical food and habitat for estuarine birds, animals, fish, shellfish and other wildlife. Numerous scientific studies have identified significant impairments associated with *Phragmites* invasion in estuarine settings, including declines in habitat quality and diversity for plants, fish and wildlife, and disruptions to biogeochemical cycles.

Tidal restoration and saltwater inundation are expected to eliminate the majority of existing stands of *Phragmites* in the Project area, which are located in the lower and middle basins of the Herring River system.

Phragmites has the potential to expand or colonize in upstream areas of the Project where salinity levels will be high enough to stress freshwater wetland vegetation, but too low to stop *Phragmites* growth, which can tolerate salinity up to approximately 20 parts per thousand.

Methods of *Phragmites* control that do not include the use of herbicides, such as cutting, burning, and flooding, can be used during implementation of the Project to reduce and prevent the spread of *Phragmites*. The efficacy of these methods will be evaluated as part of the Project's monitoring program.

The HRRC acknowledges the significant community concerns and questions about herbicide treatment of *Phragmites* in Herring River and that Town Meetings in Wellfleet and Truro will consider articles directing the Selectmen not to sign any permit applications for the Project that include potential herbicide use.

Therefore:

The Herring River Restoration Committee (HRRC) recommends to the Herring River Executive Council (HREC) that the permit applications seeking authorization to implement the Project not include the use of any herbicides in the Herring River Restoration Project area. These permit applications will specify other non-chemical methods of *Phragmites* control.

The HRRC requests that the HREC make a determination on this matter, so that the HRRC may move forward in preparing permit applications.