



September 11, 2008

Grant to help shad navigate Brandywine

\$50,000 part of national groups' effort to give migratory fish a boost

By EDWARD L. KENNEY
The News Journal

Each spring, spawning American shad in the Atlantic Ocean swim to the Delaware Bay, then continue into the Delaware River. Many eventually make their way up the meandering Brandywine.

Then -- wham -- they run into an almost impassable dam.

"Shad, unlike salmon, can't jump over the dam. They don't jump out of the water," said Robert Lonsdorf, senior planner for watersheds and biodiversity for the Brandywine Conservancy in Chadds Ford, Pa.

Good news for the shad is the announcement Wednesday that a \$50,000 Community-based Habitat Restoration Program Partnership grant will fund a study to find ways fish can bypass the crumbling dam near the Market Street Bridge in Wilmington. The city owns the structure.

"They're looking at potentially removing [the dam] or putting in a rock-ramp fish way; it provides fish a way over the blockage," said Serena McClain, associate director of river restoration programs with American Rivers, a national organization that looks to maintain healthy rivers so communities can thrive.

The river group and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center are the main partners in the effort to unblock the Brandywine. Over the past seven years, the collaboration has resulted in more than \$2 million being invested in more than 100 projects nationwide that provide passage for migratory fish through dam or culvert removal and other methods.

Lonsdorf said the DuPont Co. and Hagley Museum also are helping with the Brandywine project.

There are 11 dams on the Brandywine in Delaware, and nine of them are blocked in some manner, he said. The first dam to be breached is the first one fish reach here in Delaware. The long-range goal is to eventually unblock as many dams as possible here so fish can at least make their way up a large part of the river system, Lonsdorf said.

The dam targeted for study, referred to as Dam No. 1, contains two water-distribution pipes. The study, which could be completed by next summer, also will deal with what can be done with them, possibly reburying them, McClain said.

The study also will include a cost estimate, she said.

Although American shad are the "poster fish," Lonsdorf said, other fish that could benefit from better passage include the hickory shad and blueback herring.

But, McClain said, "It's definitely not just for the fish. It's a way to kind of bring people back to the river, get people excited about the water. It helps reinvigorate the downtown area. People go there,

and it can be a destination of sorts."

"All across the country, people are changing the way they look at rivers, from something that cuts a town in half to something that can bind a community together," added Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers.
