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## Wellfleet country club to allow flooding from salt marsh project

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Herring River group to seek \$5M for golf course reconstruction.

By .....

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WELLFLEET — Chequessett Yacht & Country Club has become the first private landowner to agree to flooding on its property as part of a wide-ranging salt marsh revitalization project planned in Wellfleet and Truro.

“We believe the restoration is an important opportunity for the town,” club general manager Barbara Boone said.

The 105-acre country club is the largest of two dozen private properties with structures at risk of flooding if higher tides are introduced into the Herring River.

On May 2, after several years of negotiations, the club and the Herring River Restoration Committee finalized an agreement to allow higher water onto the golf course. In exchange, the project will seek \$5 million in government funding to elevate some holes and pay for operating losses during construction.

So far, no other private properties have signed agreements for what would be the largest salt marsh restoration in New England. But the initial survey work on each property, completed with landowner permission, has been completed.

“This agreement is a large-scale example of the careful and detailed approach we will pursue with all property owners who have a structure that could potentially be affected by the project,” Margo Fenn, the project coordinator, said.

For the 259-member golf club, protection of its land and assets is a priority, and the agreement has contingency plans in case the fairways are not elevated by the time the project begins, Boone said.

“We would still like to see an escrow account established,” she said. “We feel strongly that the ability to have quick access to a fund, in case there are unforeseen problems, would go a long way to reassure us and other abutters.”

The salt marsh restoration project, which began in earnest 10 years ago, is on the cusp of submitting its first regulatory permit application to the Cape Cod Commission. Having the agreement with the golf course will restore from 400 to 550 acres of salt marsh in the project’s first phase.

In addition to the golf course, five other private property agreements will be needed for the first phase, Fenn said.

“It’s encouraging,” Dennis Murphy, chairman of the Wellfleet Board of Selectmen, said of the agreement. Adding the golf course into the first phase will mean a greater overall benefit to the town, the harbor and shellfishing, Murphy said.

An upstream area along Upper Pole Dike Creek, where several private properties with structures at risk of flooding are located, will not be included in the first phase. A portion of Mill Creek, near the golf course, also will not be included because private-property agreements still need to be signed, Fenn said.

The elements of the golf course’s agreement will be discussed with the Herring River Executive Council, the project’s governing entity, at its meeting June 7. The agreement is essentially a strategy for moving forward; the executive council will have a greater role as specific pieces of the agreement become legally binding, Fenn said.

The towns of Wellfleet and Truro and the National Park Service, sponsors of the \$50 million project, hope to improve the ecosystem of the marshland, which they say has been damaged since a dike was built in 1909 at the mouth of the river.

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