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Patriot

Sandy Neck gets \$520K boost from feds

Money follows \$1M award last year

An acquisition and resource protection program for Sandy Neck started last year received a \$520,000 boost last week in the form of a new federal grant.

The new money will build on what was started with a \$1 million grant last year. Those funds were used to help purchase 70 acres of land, some of which had been previously subdivided for house lots, and to obtain conservation easements that added 366 acres along the seven-mile beach. The new grant will continue to expand the conservation area with small parcels that both fill in existing gaps in the preservation area and expand the edges.

Last year's purchases were the result of a coordinated program that drew funding from town, state, federal and private donations. Much of that work was coordinated through the

Barnstable Land Trust. Rep. William Delahunt informed local officials last week of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant for Sandy Neck in Barnstable.

The grant will add 30.3 acres of contiguous land parcels scattered along the barrier beach, including a northern portion near Route 6A. These new parcels will help form a protective buffer area of marshes and wetlands that serve as habitat for endangered bird species, such as the piping plover and the least tern.

Delahunt had high praise for the diligence of Barnstable town officials, the Barnstable Land Trust, Nature Conservancy and relevant state and federal agencies. The Congressman said the initiative serves as a model for other communities committed to open space preservation.

"This succeeded for two important reasons," Delahunt said in a prepared statement. "It was a collaborative effort that

drew from the public and private sectors, and across all levels of government. And there was consensus on a sound plan - as well as collective patience to see it through."

Sandy Neck Beach is a state-designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern because it provides unique habitat for diverse species and also faces significant development pressure. It is also one of the healthiest barrier beach systems remaining along the northeastern coastline, according to The



SANDY NECK FROM ON HIGH

Nature Conservancy. "People here at home know that Sandy Neck is an amazing place," said Wayne Klockner, Massachusetts director of the Nature Conservancy. "It's gratifying to know that its protection is a national priority as well."