CRMC DECISION WORKSHEET
2026-01-023

Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency

Hearing Date:	JUNE 23, 2026		
Approved as Recommended			
Approved w/additional Stipulations			
Approved but Modified			
Denied		Vote	

APPLICATION INFORMATION

File Number	Town	Project Location	Category	Special Exception	Variance
2026-01-023	Pawtucket	100 Main Street & Broadway Plat 22/23 Lot 287/553	B	☐	X
		Owner Name and Address			
Date Accepted	1/16/2026	**Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency** 137 Roosevelt Avenue Pawtucket, RI 02860	Work at or Below MHW		X
Date Completed	6/9/2026		Lease Required		☐

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Construct/maintain a vertical slot fishway for diadromous fish passage restoration within the Seekonk/Blackstone Rivers (below the Main Street dam to above the Slater Mill dam). Work also includes construct/maintain accessways, overlook, and plaza for maintenance and public access, restore/enhance upland buffer vegetation, improve stormwater management and reconstruct existing structural shoreline protection (vertical seawall)

KEY PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES

Coastal Feature: Manmade shoreline (wall); Freshwater wetland (riverbank, forested swamp)

Water Type: Type 4, Multipurpose Waters, Seekonk River

Red Book: 1.1.6, 1.1.7, 1.1.9, 1.1.10, 1.1.11, 1.2.1(D), 1.2.2(F), 1.2.3, 1.3.1(A), 1.3.1(B), 1.3.1(F), 1.3.1(J), 1.3.1(N), 1.3.2, 1.3.5, 1.3.6

SAMP: Metro Bay SAMP 5.5

FWWVC: 9.6, 9.7

Variances and/or Special Exception Details:
1.3.1(B)(3)(a)(2)-fill placement

Additional Comments and/or Council Requirements: N/A

Specific Staff Stipulations (beyond Standard stipulations): N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Engineer **RAS** Recommendation: **Approval**

Biologist **TAS** Recommendation: **Approval**

Other Staff _____ Recommendation: _____

Engineering Supervisor Sign-Off 6/17/26 date

Supervising Biologist Sign-off 6/17/26 date

Executive Director Sign-Off 17 JUNE 26 date

Staff Sign off on Hearing Packet (Eng/Bio) 6/17/26 date

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Staff Report

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

DATE: June 9, 2026

TO: Jeffrey M. Willis, Executive Director

FROM: T. Silvia, Staff Biologist / R. Singer, Staff Engineer

Applicant's Name:	Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency
CRMC File Number:	2026-01-023
Project:	Construct and maintain a vertical slot fishway for diadromous **fish passage restoration** in the Seekonk/ Blackstone Rivers; C/m associated accessways, overlook and plaza for maintenance and public access, including restoration and enhancement of upland buffer vegetation, stormwater management and reconstruction of existing vertical seawalls
Location:	100 Main Street & Broadway; Pawtucket: Plat(s): 22|23; Lot(s): 287|553
Water Type/Name:	Type 4, Multipurpose Waters, Seekonk River/lower Blackstone River
Coastal Feature:	Manmade shoreline; Forested freshwater wetland, Riverbank
Plans reviewed:	**"*Blackstone River Fish Passage Restoration Project, Main Street & Slater Mill Dams, Blackstone River, Pawtucket..*" 14 sheets dated December 2025 submitted January 2, 2026 to the CRMC by Nils S. Wiberg, RPE**
Staff Recommendation:	**Approval** with standard stipulations

A) INTRODUCTION:

1--CRMC Assent #2009-10-050 permitted two Denil-style fish ladders along a stretch of the upper Seekonk (tidal) / lower Blackstone (freshwater) Rivers, from below the Main St dam to above the Slater Mill dam; The work was never constructed and permits expired. In 2019, pre-application discussions for a similar project, followed by meetings in 2024 and 2025, reviewed the new project and determined CRMC would take permitting jurisdiction for coastal/freshwater resources, although a DEM Water Quality Certification and USACOE approval are also required for in-water work. The proposed fill requires Category B review.

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2--The Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency, owner of the project's eastern shoreline (Figure 1) is applying on behalf of RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to construct a vertical slot fishway to restore diadromous fish passage. Studies indicate the larger planned restoration effort within the Blackstone watershed could allow 1.2 million river herring and 22,000 American shad access to over 1400a of historic habitat; This project is part of the first stage.

Figure 1: Main St (south) & Slater Mill (north) dams, Pawtucket, built 1896 & 1793, respectively

3--Reconstruction of existing structural wall components, installation of stormwater management BMPs, restoration of upland buffer zones and creation of public access and fishway maintenance areas are also proposed as part of the project. The coastal feature is the Manmade Shoreline (vertical stone/concrete walls) and areas of regulated Freshwater Resources include River, Riverbank and Forested Wetland. The project site is located within the 100-yr floodplain and the fishway exit will be sited adjacent to regulatory floodway. After sediment sampling attempts revealed the substrate to be primarily cobble/bedrock CRMC, in conjunction with DEM, determined that the proposed work is not regulated as dredging.
4--A 30-day public notice period was issued 4/10/26, concluding with no objections; Several letters of support for the project were received from environmental steward groups. USGS and USFWS staff were

also consulted regarding impacts to open water resources and historic structures during the applicant's design process. The notice included an erroneous variance to 1.3.1(C)(4(a)(4) which has been deemed inapplicable.

B) PROPOSED PROJECT:

1--The fishway entrance will be installed below the Main St. dam for optimal fish use while minimizing attraction to the hydroelectric plant discharge on the western side of the River (a prior design concern). A new wall, backfill, water control gate and controls will be constructed. Upstream of this dam will be a water supply structure inlet (with pipe and debris screen) to provide attraction during higher flow conditions.

2--The fishway itself will be a sloping-floor channel with a series of divided pools separated by baffles. Openings will allow water to flow during optimal fish passage conditions. Concrete and/or native bedrock invert surface flooring and baffle openings will also allow for American eel passage. The top of the fishway will minimize visibility to the public and include removable grating to prevent falls.

3--The fishway exit will be installed upstream of the Slater Mill dam including a slide gate and slots to control flows. Stop logs constructed for winter months will prevent ice and allow maintenance while baffle design will limit excessive flood flows through the fishway. A single entrance (vs one at each dam under prior permit) will optimize passage efficiency for the organisms. A sampling station for DEM will be included near the exit, as well as a debris screen. Public education and viewing opportunities will be available also.

4--South of Main St, a pedestrian promenade parallel to the fishway is proposed, as well as an overlook plaza with seating and ADA-compliance design along the existing vertical stone seawall. This plaza will also serve as the maintenance access point. Similarly, north of Main St, the promenade will continue to another plaza with seating, and a third area within the existing lawn/park area will be constructed. Retaining walls and railings along steeper grades, native upland buffer zone plantings and re-loaming of disturbed areas are all proposed.

5--Permanent fill impacts within the tidal portion of the Seekonk for the fishway entrance include 1700sf, with 5000sf temporary impact, fill/excavation, and 180lf of stone wall removal. The permanent impact is mostly bedrock for the fishway entrance. Proposed project impacts to and within the freshwater portion of the River upstream of the dams are shown in Figure 2 from the applicant's narrative:

Figure 2: Freshwater Wetland Impacts (note dredging is considered excavation under this review)

Activity	Temporary Impact (sf) [6]	Permanent Impact (sf) [6]	Dredge (CY) [6]	Fill (CY) [6]	Length of Stone Wall to be Demolished (lf)
Supplemental Water Supply Intake [1]	900 ± [3]	225 ± [4]	40 ± [4]	40± [5]	20 ±
Fishway Exit [2]	1,500 ± [3]	590 ±[4]	155 ±[4]	65 ±[5]	20 ±
Total Impacts	2,400 ±	815 ±	190 ±	105 ±	40 ±

1. Upstream of Main Street Dam. 2. Upstream of Slater Mill Dam. 3. Temporary cofferdam. 4. Stone armor apron.
5. Stone armor at lower elevation than existing channel bottom. 6. Impacts within the Blackstone River/WOTUS

C) APPLICABLE REGULATIONS (650-RICR-20-00-01, 650-RICR-20-00-9, 650-RICR-20-00-5):

Redbook 1.1.6	Category B Applications	Type 4 fill, no objections

1.1.7	Variances	1.3.1(B)(3)(a)(2)
1.1.9	Setbacks	Water-dependent exemption
1.1.10	Sea Level Rise	See report
1.1.11	Coastal Buffer Zones	Management/restoration proposed
1.2.1(D)	Type 4 Multipurpose Waters	Allowable activity
1.2.2(F)	Manmade Shorelines	Concrete vertical wall along bank
1.2.3	Historic/Archaelogic Significant	National Historic Site
1.3.1(A)	Category B Requirements	Addressed
1.3.1(B)	Filling/Removing/Grading Shoreline Features	Proposed work on existing walls, grading for public access, plaza
1.3.1(F)	Treatment of Sewage/Stormwater	Stormwater management proposed
1.3.1(J)	Filling in tidal waters	Water dependent activity
1.3.1(N)	Maintenance of Structures	Work on existing walls
1.3.2	Alterations to Freshwater Flows	Requires permitting/FWWVC
1.3.5	Scenic Value	Enhancement proposed
1.3.6	Public Access	Enhancement proposed
FWWVC 9.6	Exempt Activities	In-water activities meet exemption
9.7	Regulated Standards/Variances	Jurisdictional Areas/Buffer Zones/Buffers
Metro Bay SAMP 5.5	Urban Coastal Greenway	Exempt activity

D) STAFF REGULATORY COMMENTS:

1—Although allowed under **Redbook** Section 1.2.1(D) in Type 4 waters, Section 1.1.6 requires Category B review for filling in Type 4 waters and the applicant has addressed the requirements of Section 1.3.1(A).

2—Per Section 1.1.7, the applicant has submitted variance criteria for the project. A variance to Section 1.3.1(B)(3)(a)(2) is required for the fill in tidal waters. As a water dependent activity (alternatives & avoidance), with a reduction in fill (minimization) from the prior approved design, and as a restoration and public access improvement project, it is staff's opinion that this project meets the variance criteria.

3—The project is exempt from Section 1.1.9 setback requirements as a water-dependent activity and is consistent with Section 1.3.1(J). Restoration within the setback is proposed along with coastal buffer work. Less in-water impacts are expected with the current project design than previously permitted. This option was selected from several alternatives which were reviewed, as historic dam structures are also preserved and existing tunnel infrastructure will be utilized.

4-- Future sea level rise impacts have been included in the project design including prevention of overtopping at the entrance and maneuverable gate positions depending on flow and tidal conditions (Section 1.1.10).

5--Based on lot size, existing vegetation within 150' from the coastal feature is considered coastal buffer zone per Section 1.1.11. The proposed disturbance to this area (forested upland/meadow) is to provide pedestrian pathways and overlook areas as well as access to the fishway; As such the work was reviewed as

buffer zone management with public and conservation purpose. Invasive management, including replacement with native plantings and additional buffer restoration areas, is also proposed.

6-- The coastal feature is a Manmade Shoreline (vertical stone wall fronting riverbank), transitioning through an upland buffer zone comprised of predominantly invasive vegetation (Section 1.2.2(F)). Demolition and reconstruction of portions of the wall are proposed in order to construct the fishway. All work is proposed in compliance with Redbooks Section 1.3.1(N) 1.3.1(G) Soil Erosion and sediment control has been adequately addressed through the use of coffer dams, and turbidity curtains,

7--Per Section 1.2.3, RIHPHC review is required for CRMC applications. Slater Mill Historic Site is listed in the State & National Registers and is a National Historic Landmark. Portions of the stone and concrete retaining walls are identified as individual landscape features contributing to its significance. Archaeologic monitoring was conducted as part of the design of the project. RIHPHC is coordinating review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act at the federal level and reviewed prior fishway designs in this area.

8—Stormwater treatment had been addressed and is in compliance with the Rhode Island Stormwater Manual and Redbook Section 1.3.1(F) All new hardscape surfaces are proposed to be constructed with permeable materials. No significant change in runoff has been proposed. A stormwater management plan, Appendix A checklist, Operations and Maintenance Plan, and Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan have been submitted.

9--Sections 1.3.5 & 1.3.6 relate to public access and scenic value. The project will enhance public access to a historic and scenic location allowing for ADA-compliance, observation opportunities and education experiences which currently do not exist. Signage is also proposed within the upland buffer zone.

10—**FWWVC** regulated resources within the Blackstone River portion of the project include perennial stream (River upstream of Main St dam), fringing forested swamp <1a in size (north of the Main St Bridge between the eastern riverbank and existing wall), and Urban River Region (200'/100' jurisdictional areas, 150'/25' buffer zones, respectively). The areas within the FWWVC buffer zone are comprised primarily of forested upland, stone wall, lawn, landscaping trees, and pavement and have prior DEM freshwater permits.

11--The applicant has submitted documentation of consistency with the FWWVC applicable Rules. Section 9.6.13(A)(5) states that "The maintenance, repair or installation of in-stream structures for manipulation and management of fisheries habitat…" are permissible conservation activities on state or federal properties by the DEM. As such, it is staff's opinion that the wetland (in-river) impacts noted above can be considered an exempted activity under the Rules as the applicant has demonstrated consistency with the conditions for exemption.

12-- For non-exempt activities, Section 9.7.1, 9.7.2, & 9.7.3 criteria must be met. Specifically, no alterations of freshwater wetlands (forested swamp) are proposed. The 150' required buffer zone from the River and required 25' buffer zone from the swamp are primarily developed and/or public park/pavement. No work is proposed within the only existing upland forest vegetation adjacent to the swamp. Additional plantings are also proposed within the buffer zone. It is staff's opinion that the FWWVC buffer standard is inapplicable to this location. Only temporary impacts are proposed within the Jurisdictional Areas and the upland activities provide a minimum 20' setback to the stream channel.

13--Due to the water-dependent nature of the project, work is proposed adjacent to the floodway, however all work is within existing river walls with no new construction in the floodway and the applicant demonstrates there will be no reduction of flood storage capacity as work will be at or below grade within the floodplain. Upstream/downstream/groundwater flows will not change. It is staff's opinion that the applicant has minimized and avoided impacts to non-exempt freshwater wetland resources as much as practicable for this project and it is staff's opinion that the project is consistent with FWWVC Rules & Variance requirements.

14—DEM Natural Heritage Area maps indicate the project site is potential habit for the common nighthawk (RI species of concern) and northern diamondback terrapin (state endangered). However, the nighthawk's last observation in the area was further north in 1986 and current conditions are not highly suitable for this species. The terrapin is found within tidal waters nearby and likely utilizes the area during the winter season. The applicant proposes coffer dam construction and monitoring during construction to ensure no impacts to the terrapin, with which staff concurs.

15--The applicant has consulted USFWS and NOAA Fisheries mappers as part of their submittal to ACOE for approval. Coordination regarding tricolored bat, monarch butterfly, sturgeon and flounder species will continue to occur with those agencies until a permit is received. Standard Assent stipulations require such approvals prior to work-start and also will incorporate any time of year restrictions for in-water work per RIDEM and/or ACOE approvals.

16--**Metro Bay Region SAMP** Section 20-00-5.5(D) allows an exemption for this project from the Urban Coastal Greenway requirements. Notably, the project will still exceed the minimum 15% vegetated cover requirement, and provide public access and stormwater management, consistent with UCG standards.

E) CONCLUSION:

1--This conservation project is proposed to enhance fish passage in the Blackstone/Seekonk Rivers. The design was chosen to replace a prior permitted project that was not constructed, while reducing impacts to the River and associated wetlands, coastal features and upland buffer areas. Some portions of the project meet exemption criteria under the FWWVC Rules and Metro Bay SAMP requirements. The remainder of the project is regulated under the Redbook and FWWVC standards as noted herein.

2--The project design includes reconstruction of existing stone walls along the River and installation of a vertical slot fishway. The water dependent work involves fill in the River, which is a permanent impact under the FWWVC and Redbook requirements; A variance was requested. No work is proposed within the forested wetland or FWWVC buffer zone.

3--Upland, the proposed work include public and fishway maintenance access, a public promenade and overlook plaza, with ADA-compliant design features and stormwater management BMPs. Additionally, work in the coastal and FWWVC buffer zones includes invasives management, restoration planting and enhancement, which are consistent with CRMC's regulations.

work in the coastal and FWWVC buffer zones includes invasives management, restoration planting and enhancement, which are consistent with CRMC's regulations.

It is staff's opinion that this project reduces prior design impacts and/or qualifies for exemptions from standard requirements. Provided HPC, DEM WQC and ACOE approvals are received, there are no staff objections to the issuance of an Assent for this project and standard stipulations are withheld pending Council's Decision.

Staff Signature: _____ T. Silvia, Biologist

Staff Signature: _____ R. Singer, Engineer