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Good Wives River project underway, with some setbacks

by Kevin Webb
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A project designed to repair the Good Wives River Bridge and remove thousands of feet of sediment from Gorham's Pond is now underway, but the impending winter has altered the planned schedule.

The project focuses on the restoration of the Good Wives River Bridge, which separates the upper and lower portion of Gorham's pond, the installation of a fish ladder and the removal of sediment from the upper pond. Bids for the project began in August, with Candide Contractor being

chosen to complete the necessary work. Though work was initially expected to begin in October and continue for eight weeks, a late start will likely force the project into next year.

"There's been a lot of planning going on to try and work through as much of the winter as we can, and then we're going to have to finish in the spring," Friends of Gorham Pond vice-chair Lucia Zachowski said.

Friends of Gorham's Pond, an organization dedicated to preserving the pond, has



A photo of the sediment removal work underway. Photo courtesy of the Friends of Gorham's Pond.

worked for years to raise both funding and awareness for the dredging project. The group has linked the excess sediment build up to increased flooding in town, as water blocked from entering the Long Island Sound overruns the banks of the Good Wives River. Much of the sediment buildup is believed to have originated from sand used on I-95, which eventually migrated down to the water.

The group has identified some 6,000 cubic feet of sediment that needs to be removed from the pond, and expects about half of that, 3,000 feet, to be removed from the Upper Pond by Candide. Zachowski said that because the Department of Transportation has halted its use of road sand, the dredging should have a lasting impact on the pond's condition.

According to Zachowski, state grants

for the project fell short of bid pricing, but private donations from the Friends of Gorham's Pond were able to cover the funding gap and ensure that the dredging would take place. Approximately \$650,000 had been raised for the project between the town, the state and private donors, with the Friends being responsible for \$50,000.

"The amount that we're able to dredge given these state funds is a good start and people will see an enormous impact, but funding is an issue," Zachowski said.

Donations are still being accepted to help with the sediment removal, and contributions to the Friends are tax deductible. The organization has told supporters that they can donate \$200 to provide an additional dump truck for sediment removal, providing a near instant-turnaround on their investment.

Moving forward the Friends are pursuing the necessary permits, funding and approval to continue the dredging further downstream into the lower pond.