

Great Bay Resource Partnership Awarded EPA's Environmental Merit Award

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BOSTON — For its success in protecting ecologically important lands in one of New Hampshire's fastest-growing areas, the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership has earned an award from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The partnership received the EPA's Environmental Merit Award during a ceremony Wednesday at Faneuil Hall in Boston.

The Great Bay Partnership was among three groups from New Hampshire to receive this year's award.

"Our Environmental Merit Awards are among the highest honors EPA can bestow to recognize environmental accomplishments," said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator for EPA's New England Office. "I offer my gratitude to these citizens for their extraordinary contributions in protecting our shared environment."

This is the second time that the Great Bay partnership has earned EPA's merit award. The first time was in 1997, three years after the formation of this partnership of nine nonprofit organizations and state and federal agencies.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership is a comprehensive approach to identify Great Bay's most critical habitats and to protect them. With The Nature Conservancy as lead acquisition agent, the partners also include Ducks Unlimited, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Hampshire Audubon, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Since 1994, the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership has protected 4,710 acres of habitat around Great Bay.

"The Great Bay Estuary is one of New Hampshire's environmental jewels, but it is also one of the most threatened ecosystems in our country," said U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg. "Its close proximity to major population centers has heightened the need for extraordinary measures to protect this special place. Fortunately, the organizations that make up the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership have done a remarkable job in meeting this responsibility."