



February 14, 2025

Central Street Culvert Replacement and Central Pond Restoration Update

Over the past years it has become evident that parts of Town are susceptible to flooding from storms and the frequency of these events is increasing. Conversations began in May 2006, after the “Mother’s Day Storm”, about the need to upgrade and protect critical Town infrastructure. Since then, through multiple studies, site inspections, analysis, and public meetings the Central Street Culvert Replacement and Central Pond Restoration Project was identified as a priority.

Originally built in 1850, the Central Street Culvert and Pond have sustained damage from multiple flooding events that have eroded the integrity of the bridge, tide gate, culvert, and pond retaining walls over time. In 2016, the Town made temporary repairs to the culvert that had an expectancy to last 3-5 years.

Not only does the Central Street Bridge connect Manchester-by-the-Sea to the rest of Cape Ann via Route 127, but it also houses a main electrical trunk that services all of Cape Ann. Additionally, Central Pond provides the only natural habitat for the Rainbow Smelt in the area. Waiting for a collapse or failure before replacement would incur more cost to the Town and a significantly longer repair time and disruption.

The Town previously contacted abutters to the Central Street Culvert Replacement and Pond Restoration several times over the past few years for local permitting and general project notification meetings. Most recently, in the past 8 months, the Town has contacted the abutters for the purpose of finalizing Chapter 91 permitting, a process that began in 2021. Details of the project, anticipated impacts to the area, and steps the Town will take to remediate any damage to property owners were provided. Additional easements will likely be required, and the Town will follow up directly with those abutters as the permitting process concludes.

The projected start date of the project is fall 2025, however construction details are still being confirmed and finalized. Once the Town has final permitting and project bids, information regarding the start date, length of construction, and potential community impacts will be broadly communicated to residents. Project details, including the 10-year history of work and public meetings can be found at: <https://manchester.ma.us/825/Central-Street-Culvert-Replacement-Centr>