

*Pacific Northwest Salmon Center vision takes root near Belfair, Mason County where Hood Canal and Union River meet.*

**BELFAIR, WA** — The Pacific Northwest Salmon Center today announced that it has finalized the acquisition of 90 acres along the Union River near Hood Canal in Mason County, Washington. This acquisition clears the way for establishing a permanent home for the environmental education and research facility and its associated programs and partnerships.

“This acquisition secures an amazing resource into the public trust that will now be part of our community for future generations to come,” says Fred Barrett, president of the salmon center board of directors. “In addition, the envisioned center will bring environmental education, research and eco-tourism opportunities to our community that are world-class, and provide our children the sciences, skills and motivation to be good stewards of the earth when they grow up.”

Plans for the completed center include water quality labs, interactive educational exhibits, classes for youth and adults, information on the many efforts focused on the health of Puget Sound, seminars, artwork, trails, a salmon spawning stream, and the continuing annual Wild Salmon Hall of Fame celebration. The 90 acre location allows for hands-on wetlands restoration that will return 45 acres of diked land back into salt marsh, and establish natural treatment ponds to handle local storm water for the local community. These real time learning experiences will provide unique opportunities for students to be involved in long term restoration efforts, learning science through application and observation.

Earlier in April, 2008, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) acquired 52 acres of the 90 acre property to provide a means for restoring the estuarine

function to a vital component of the Hood Canal marine complex. This acquisition also insured that the last major land parcel of the Union River estuary is maintained in a protected status from future development and provides an opportunity to expand upon existing efforts to preserve riparian and estuarine habitat. The purchase of the remaining 38 acres was accomplished through a combination of public and private grants, donations and financing. The deal was completed on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Neil Werner, board member for the salmon center and Executive Director of the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group said “The next steps for the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center include remodeling the existing structures on the property to bring them up to commercial building codes, and to move the organization’s offices from its current location to the newly-acquired properties.”

The Pacific Northwest Salmon Center expects to begin community programs in the fall of this year.

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**For more information on Pacific Northwest Salmon Center:**

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