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NATIONAL  
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ADMINISTRATION

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**NOAA FISHERIES, OCEAN TRUST AND NATIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTE  
TRIPLE HABITAT & RESOURCE RESTORATION PROGRAM  
Seafood Industry Invited to Join Expanded Program in 2003**

Officials from NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), Ocean Trust and the National Fisheries Institute today announced awards totaling \$118,315 for nine new community-based habitat and resource restoration projects.

The projects are designed to enhance a variety of marine habitats and fisheries in the coastal areas of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Maryland, Virginia, Texas, Washington and Alaska. Ocean Trust is coordinating the projects, with technical input from NOAA Fisheries regional staff.

"Restoring our coastal environment and commercial fisheries to a healthy level is a priority for the Bush Administration," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries. "With the support of Ocean Trust, the National Fisheries Institute and other partners, we are making progress in this area by encouraging the local community to work with us on restoration projects and to raise awareness of the importance of our valuable marine habitats."

Officials encouraged seafood businesses and volunteers to get involved in habitat restoration by submitting proposals during the 2003 project solicitation period that will open on January 15. "We'd like to invite seafood companies, restaurants, retailers and the public to join in this partnership to restore habitat and local fisheries," said Thor Lassen, president of Ocean Trust. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build a strong coalition with public participants to enhance fishery-dependent ecosystems."

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All three partners echoed the win-win nature of this public/private partnership, which began in June 2000 with three initial projects. “The commercial fish and seafood industry is committed to the restoration and conservation of important fish habitat,” said Justin LeBlanc, National Fisheries Institute vice president for Government Relations. “Restoring these areas means a healthier coastal environment and improved fisheries for fishermen and consumers who love seafood.”

While the overall goal of habitat restoration is the same, the specific designs and goals of the projects are quite distinct. The following projects began work during the summer of 2002.

In Massachusetts, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with Egg Island Oyster Company and the Wellfleet Shellfish Department to restore the Cape Cod quahog fishery.

In Connecticut, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with the Noank Aquaculture Cooperative and the Nature Conservancy to re-establish a commercial oyster bed and create an oyster-spawning site in Oyster River.

In New York, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with Cornell Cooperative Extension and local shellfish growers to enhance bay scallop stocks and study benefits of scallop cage culture as habitat for blackfish in Hallocks Bay and Hay Harbor.

In Maryland, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with Gordon Shellfish to restore hard clam and disease-resistant Eastern oyster cross-breed beds in Chincoteague Bay.

In Virginia, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with Omega Protein and the Elizabeth River Project on the restoration of wetlands along Paradise Creek.

In Anahuac, Texas, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with Jeri’s Seafood and NMFS to restore a salt marsh system at Smith Point.

In south Texas, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with the USFWS and local shrimp companies to advance the largest single restoration project in the U.S. at Bahia Grande, an 11,000 acre shallow water estuary.

In Washington, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association and the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to re-establish commercially viable oyster populations within Henderson Inlet.

In Alaska, Ocean Trust and NOAA Fisheries are working with the Prince William Sound Science Center to restore a razor clam seed bank in the Copper River Delta of Cordova.

NOAA provides financial and technical support for the partnership with Ocean Trust through its Community-based Restoration Program (CRP). The program, which is part of NOAA Fisheries, has been working with community organizations to support effective habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas since 1996.

For each project, NOAA Fisheries regional staff works closely with communities to aid in project development and implementation. Projects are monitored and maintained by communities, promoting stewardship and a heightened appreciation for the environment and its well-being. For more information on the Community-based Restoration Program, see the website at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

The National Fisheries Institute is the nation's leading trade association representing all aspects of the seafood industry. Ocean Trust is a national conservation foundation working to bring science, conservation and food perspectives together for the sustainability of the oceans. Potential partners or sponsors interested in becoming involved in habitat and resource restoration projects in 2003 should contact Ocean Trust, (703) 450-9852, or see the website at: <http://www.oceantrust.org/projects>.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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