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NOAA AWARDS \$230,000 TO RESTORE SALMON HABITAT PUGET SOUND

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced awards totaling more than \$230,000 to restore anadromous fish habitat on three watersheds in the rapidly urbanizing lowland Puget Sound. The project is one of many citizen-driven efforts funded through the Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries).

"NOAA and the Bush Administration are working to improve the understanding of our environment and to strengthen local and regional initiatives like salmon habitat restoration," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "These grants to our partners in Puget Sound will help advance knowledge critical to those efforts in Washington."

West Milton – Hylebos Creek Restoration (\$35,000)

Efforts to restore salmon habitat on Hylebos Creek have been coordinated by Friends of the Hylebos Wetlands, who have been aggressively organizing the five municipalities of the Hylebos Watershed around an integrated habitat conservation and restoration plan. This project will enhance anadromous fish habitat on a site acquired by the City of Milton.

Friends of the Hylebos has been working with volunteers and Earthcorps to install engineered large woody debris to improve in-channel habitat, and experimenting with hummock construction to restore coniferous riparian canopy in areas dominated by reed canarygrass.

"Community-based Restoration Program support has enabled us to attract additional project partners and funders, transforming the West Milton Hylebos Creek restoration into a multi-year effort that will have greater ecological benefits and higher community commitment," said Chris Carrel, Executive Director of Friends of Hylebos Wetlands.

Newaukum Creek Side Channel Restoration (\$49,850)

Newaukum Creek mainstem was historically a complex of side channel and wetland habitats. Agricultural development followed by urbanization have reduced habitat value, however Newaukum Creek contains one of the most significant Puget Sound Chinook Runs in the Green River Basin.

The Mid-Puget Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group in cooperation with the City of Enumclaw, King County Conservation District, and King County, will install woody debris structures and plant conifer forest along a reach of Newaukum Creek that has been recently acquired by the City of Enumclaw. A side channel will be constructed on the site to add 24,000 square feet of rearing habitat, identified as a critical limiting factor in the Green Watershed.

"This is going to be a great project because of the scope of the restoration that will occur, and because of the public benefits gained through the direct involvement and interpretive features that will be built into it," reports Troy Fields, executive director of Mid-Puget Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group. "This project is a prime example of public/private partnerships that are vital if we are to restore Northwest Salmon runs."

Tarboo Creek Fish Passage (\$149,900)

Tarboo Creek has been targeted by the Northwest Watershed Institute as an opportunity to implement restoration on a watershed scale. During preliminary watershed assessments, five culverts were identified as high priority fish passage barriers, and targeted for removal. This early action project will open six miles of Coho salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout spawning and rearing habitat.

"The NOAA award in combination with several other efforts underway, will allow Northwest Watershed Institute and project partners to open up most of the potential habitat, our first step in working with landowners to restore abundant salmon runs in this watershed," said Peter Bahls, executive director of the Northwest Watershed Institute.

More than one-third of the stream miles in Tarboo Creek watershed are blocked to salmon by culverted road crossings, most built decades ago. The pipes are too small, too steep inside, or have a drop at the outlet end that makes it difficult or impossible for young salmon or adult spawners to get upstream.

Five landowners, 13 project partners, and community and business volunteers will be donating substantial materials and labor. One of the sites will host the Olympic Music Festival, where the landowner is interested in promoting the educational potential of the project site.

Through the Community-based Restoration Program, NOAA supports on-the-ground restoration efforts that empower communities while protecting and restoring our living marine resources. Since 1996 the CRP funds have supported over 700 projects in 26 states, from reef restoration to anadromous fish habitat enhancement. Federal money is made more effective through cooperation with local partners. Awards support locally relevant projects that restore and enhance our marine resources. For more information about the Community-based Restoration Program, Please see our Web site at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration> or contact your local NOAA representative.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (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. Learn more about NOAA at <http://www.noaa.gov>.