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Contact: Matthew Kimble
NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center
(503) 872-2738

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**NOAA GRANT ALLOWS
FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT IN TILLAMOOK BAY ESTUARY**

The Tillamook Estuaries Partnership received a \$48,088 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for fish habitat conservation. The project is funded by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department.

The Nestucca-Neskowin Watersheds Council and the Tillamook Estuaries Partnership have selected Smith Creek, a direct tributary of the Nestucca River, for fish passage improvement. The creek is located upstream from the Tillamook Bay Estuary, one of the most biologically important in the state of Oregon. The watershed assessment for the area identifies failing culverts as critical aquatic habitat modifications limiting salmonid and marine species population recovery. The NOAA Restoration Center Community-based Restoration Program is providing the final piece of funding for replacement of a passage-blocking culvert at Gist Road.

The new culvert will replace an undersized concrete culvert that has a 3.5 foot drop at the outlet and prevents fish access. The new oversized culvert will simulate a natural stream bottom and will allow steelhead trout, chum salmon and the federally listed coho salmon access to nearly two miles of quality spawning and rearing habitat. Salmon have been observed in large numbers below this culvert, attempting to access their historic habitat.

“Smith Creek’s location as the third significant tributary to the Nestucca River upstream from the Bay gives the stream special significance,” said project manager Derek Sowers. “This is a very important low gradient, off-channel refuge for fish during winter flooding and a location for fish to spawn during the spring and fall. Spawning gravel will now be available from the Smith Creek watershed to replenish the historic spawning beds and should contribute to the recovery of the fish populations in the area.”

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The three landowners adjacent to the culvert replacement site are key collaborators on the project. Funding and technical assistance for environmental improvements on Smith Creek are also being provided by other state, federal and local agencies. This multi-partner project will demonstrate to other private landowners the benefits that their stewardship can have for the restoration of marine resources.

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 600 projects in 25 states, from reef restoration to anadromous fish habitat enhancement. Federal money is made more effective through cooperation with local partners and focused on implementing locally relevant projects that restore and enhance our marine resources.

For more information about the Community-based Restoration Program, please see the website at; <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>; or contact your local NOAA representative.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems in order to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property, and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 33 years.

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. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.