



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



Contact: Brian Gorman
206-526-6613

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NOAA Celebrates Earth Week at Recovery Act Project to Remove Abandoned Fishing Gear from Puget Sound

NOAA, the Northwest Straits Foundation, and other local partners celebrated Earth Week today in Seattle at an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project that is employing local residents to remove derelict fishing nets from Puget Sound to restore fish and wildlife habitat.

“The Recovery Act is working, providing both immediate and long-term economic benefits here and across the country,” said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service. “We’re in Seattle today to celebrate how local workers are restoring habitat for salmon, orcas, and other threatened and endangered species that are so important to the culture and economy of the Northwest.”

NOAA provided \$4.5 million in Recovery Act funding to the Northwest Straits Foundation for a project that is employing divers to remove more than 3,000 tangled and abandoned nets and other derelict gear from Puget Sound.

Abandoned fishing gear damages habitat and can cause marine species to become entangled and die. Removing the derelict fishing gear benefits threatened Southern Resident Orca whales, Chinook salmon, and chum salmon among many other species in the area. Removal teams include members of the Nisqually, Puyallup and Squaxin Indian tribes, as well as other commercially trained divers.

“I returned from serving our country in Iraq with limited job prospects,” said Chris Bolt of the Northwest Straits Foundation, currently working as a diver removing derelict gear. “Today, I’m diving to remove abandoned fishing gear to improve the habitat for fish, whales and other animals for the long-term health of Puget Sound.”

Through the Recovery Act, NOAA was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration. The Puget Sound project is one of 50 habitat restoration projects selected by NOAA.

More than 30 projects have broken ground, with the rest preparing to start throughout the next year and a half. The 50 projects are supporting thousands of short-term and long-term jobs. They support the equivalent of more than 250 full-time jobs as of the latest report and are expected to support the equivalent of an additional 1,000 full-time jobs before they are completed.

When all the planned projects are complete, 8,900 acres of habitat will be restored, and fish will gain access to 700 stream miles that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of

abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reefs.

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