

factsheet

August 2008

Land acquisition for fish habitat protects tidal wetlands of the Columbia River

The Bonneville Power Administration proposes to fund the purchase of 229 acres of land on the north side of the Columbia River in Cowlitz County, Wash., to protect fish habitat. An additional 75 acres of land will be donated by the Port of Longview.

BPA proposes to fund the Columbia Land Trust to acquire the property through its contract with the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership. The Columbia Land Trust will own the property in fee title. The land acquisition will place property that is currently privately owned into permanent conservation protection with the eventual goals of restoring off-channel salmonid habitat and enhancing and restoring riparian habitat.

Willow Grove is a relatively intact and functional intertidal wetland area located just downstream of Longview, Wash.

Vegetation is typical for disturbed tidal wetlands along the Columbia River; on-site vegetation is a mix of native and non-native emergent vegetation, and native shrub and tree species are dominant along tidal channels and shoreline areas on the southern portion of the property. The site is indirectly connected to the Columbia River via Coal Creek Slough and is subject to tidal influences from the Columbia River. A single large channel called Fisher Slough enters Willow Grove from the west off of Coal Creek Slough. Various small inlets occur off of Fisher Slough creating small backwaters. Fisher Slough branches into three channels in the site. These channels create numerous small channels throughout the site. Salmon fry were observed in some of the shallow channels in various locations throughout the site.

Willow Grove has undergone grazing or other activities that resulted in the clearing of habitat throughout the site. Some ditching has been done in the northwest corner of the site. These activities have reduced the habitat quality of Willow Grove and created a pathway for establishing invasive species of plants at the site. A larger ditch system in the southern portion of the site was probably done to drain the area for possible development or grazing. After acquiring the property, Columbia Land Trust will work to restore the wetlands and to improve ecological functions.

Overall, Willow Grove has excellent ecological functions, including use by salmonids, and has the potential to provide even greater ecological functions and salmonid rearing use (coho, chinook, steelhead and cutthroat). On the Washington State Wetland Rating Form for Western Washington, Willow Grove scored as a tidal fringe wetland and scored 20 for water quality functions, 26 for hydrologic functions, and 29 for habitat functions, giving an overall score of 75. Scoring above 70 classifies Willow Grove as a Category I Wetland.

Partners on this land acquisition project include: Port of Longview, Washington Department of Ecology, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (North American Wetlands Conservation Act program).

Land to get management plan

If this land is acquired, which is expected in summer 2008, the Columbia Land Trust will develop a



management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of resources on the property. The public will be given an opportunity to review and provide comments on the management plan.

For more information

If you have any questions regarding this proposal or would like additional information, please contact

Michelle O'Malley, BPA, at (503) 230-5138, toll-free at (800) 282-3713 or via e-mail to mmomalley@bpa.gov.

For information on Columbia Land Trust's land acquisition or management program, contact Ian Sinks, Conservation Director/Coast and Estuary Conservation Lead at (360) 696-0131 or isinks@columbialandtrust.org.

Willow Grove Land Acquisition Cowlitz County, Washington

