Wetland and aquatic improvements project under way in Grays Harbor

Local News

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Olympia, WA - The State Department of Transportation has begun a project to restore wetlands at the Grass Creek mitigation site West of Hoquiam. Joe Irwin with the DOT said in the coming weeks crews from Roglins Incorporated plan to remove portions of a dike on the site in order to reconnect tidal channels and restore natural tidal influence to the area off of State Route 109. A ceremony Wednesday hosted State Route 520 Program Director Julie Meredith and Grays Harbor County Commissioner Terry Willis.

Local leaders and environmental representatives joined the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to kick off the Grass Creek Mitigation Project, an effort to restore wetlands and improve shoreline habitat. WSDOT awarded a contract to Rognlin’s Inc. of Aberdeen to remove portions of an earthen dike on the 68-acre Grass Creek site reconnecting tidal channels and restoring the natural tidal influence. The work at Grass Creek restores and protects a variety of wetlands and shoreline habitats, mitigating environmental stress caused by the State Route 520 Pontoon Construction Project. Crews will remove invasive reed canary grass from portions of the site and plant evergreen huckleberry, salmonberry, nootka rose and other native plants. “The work to establish and protect habitat at the Grass Creek shows the commitment WSDOT has to the local environment,” SR 520 Program Director Julie Meredith said. “We’re making sure that we account for the unavoidable effects from building a casting basin and 33 pontoons in Aberdeen.” This mitigation project protects the environmental health of the Grays Harbor watershed. The restored tidal channel will provide habitat for migrating salmon. Native plants and organic soils will improve water quality and benefit land and aquatic environments. After the work is done, WSDOT will monitor the Grass Creek mitigation site for 10 years. WSDOT evaluated the site and published findings in the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project’s final environmental impact statement released in December 2010. This spring, crews started building a casting basin at the Aberdeen Log Yard and soon will begin building 33 concrete pontoons that will form the backbone of a new SR 520 floating bridge spanning Lake Washington in King County. Grass Creek is part of a larger network of environmental mitigation projects throughout the state built and managed by WSDOT. Since 1988, WSDOT has created more than 183 replacement wetland sites totaling 908 acres. More information about the SR 520 program is available at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr520bridge.