

Fish & Wildlife Service Announces \$20 Million in Grants, \$7.5 Million to Six Washington Counties

Local News

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Posted on : February 1, 2013 at 9:49 am

Washington DC - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe announced \$20 million in grants to 24 critical coastal wetland projects in 13 states and territories to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and their fish and wildlife habitat. An additional \$21.3 million in matching funds will be provided by partner contributions from state and local governments, private landowners and conservation groups through the 2013 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program. The

announcement includes eight grants in six Washington counties worth more than \$7.5 million. "When President Obama unveiled his America's Great Outdoors initiative three years ago, our goal was to work with communities across the country to create a 21st century conservation ethic," Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said. "Our coastal grants program is a model of this kind of partnership, conserving vital wetlands hand-in-hand in partners from Maine to the Pacific Northwest to as far away as American Samoa in the South Pacific." Coastal areas comprise less than 10 percent of the nation's land area yet support a significant number of wildlife species, including 75 percent of migratory birds, nearly 80 percent of fish and shellfish and about half of all threatened and endangered species. "These coastal wetlands are extremely important to the future of both wildlife and humans," Ashe said. "As Superstorm Sandy showed, it is essential to have natural wetlands available to act as a buffer against extreme weather events." Coastal wetlands also serve as some of nature's most productive fish and wildlife habitat while providing improved water quality and abundant recreational opportunities for local communities. These grants will help our state partners implement some high-quality projects that support conservation and outdoor recreation.

The grants will be used to acquire, restore or enhance coastal wetlands and adjacent uplands to provide long-term conservation benefits to fish, wildlife and their habitat. The National Coastal Wetlands

Conservation Grant Program is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and funded under provisions of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. Funding is provided by

Sport Fish Restoration Act revenue — money generated from an excise tax on fishing equipment, motorboat

and small engine fuels. Coastal Wetland Grants in Washington announced today include: Lower Dungeness Floodplain and Estuary Restoration (Clallam County) The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, proposes to acquire and conserve 28 acres of wetlands, shoreline and buffers within the Lower Dungeness

Floodplain and Estuarine Basin. This project will build upon a network of properties that are already in

conservation in the Basin and leverage other state funded acquisitions. This project will also remove unused

buildings, utility poles, septic tanks and approximately 400 cubic yards of creosote-contaminated debris from estuarine and marine wetlands adjacent to and at the project site. The Dungeness River estuary supports a rich and diverse ecological community that includes more than 250 bird species, 44 species of land mammals, 11 marine mammal species, 10 species of reptiles and amphibians and 23 species of fish. Grant: \$930,300 Non-federal cost share: \$517,250 Total project cost: \$1,456,550

North Livingston Bay Wetlands Phase 1 (Island County) The Washington Department of Ecology, in partnership with the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, proposes to permanently protect and begin restoration of 113 acres of coastal wildlife habitat, including 45 acres of tidelands, in Livingston Bay on Camano Island. The wetlands are part of Port Susan Bay and are adjacent to the Skagit and Stillaguamish River Deltas, which together account for more than a 36 percent of tidal wetlands in Puget Sound and support significant runs of salmon that use the wetlands throughout Port Susan Bay. This acquisition is a priority for The Puget Sound Partnership Nearshore Action Agenda. Phase 1 is the first step in a larger acquisition and restoration project that will provide both direct and indirect benefits to a large and diverse assemblage of fish and wildlife species, including salmon, forage fish, waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, seabirds, neotropical migratory birds, raptors, marine mammals and many other species. Grant: \$1,000,000 Non-federal cost share: \$450,000 Total project cost: 1,450,000

Tarboo-Dabob Acquisition and Restoration Phase 3 (Jefferson County) The Washington Department of Ecology, in partnership with Northwest Watershed Institute, is proposing to permanently protect 119 acres that are critical to forming a continuous nature preserve surrounding Tarboo-Dabob Bay, one of the least developed coastal embayments remaining in Puget Sound. This area represents the most threatened and biologically significant private parcels that are within the state-designated 6,284-acre Dabob Bay Natural Area, identified in 2009 as state-wide priority for protection by the Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage program. In previous phases, multiple properties totaling 3,681 acres were protected from the headwaters to the estuary. The project will protect a diversity of at-risk freshwater and estuarine species including five salmon stocks, forage fish species, numerous shorebird, waterfowl, and land bird species. This project is essential for the continued success of the effort by 42 project partners, including state, federal, tribal, shellfish grower, and landowner interests, to protect and restore these Puget Sound coastal wetlands of state-wide and national significance. Grant: \$1,000,000 Non-federal cost share: \$500,000 Total project cost: \$1,500,000

Snow Creek Salt Marsh and Near Shore Restoration Phase 2 (Jefferson County) The Washington Department of Ecology, in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, proposes to restore the Snow Creek estuary and

nearshore areas. Phase 2 builds upon work in Phase 1 to restore the natural processes, conditions, functions, and biological resources to approximately 21.4 acres of shoreline, estuary and uplands that have been severely impacted by past development. The wetlands provide important habitat for summer chum salmon, Puget Sound Chinook and steelhead, coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and numerous other fish and wildlife species such as shellfish, forage fish and migratory shorebirds. The project involves removal of a creosote-impregnated trestle over Snow Creek; tide channel construction to restore 2 acres of salt marsh; alteration of 1760 feet of railroad grade; removal and replacement of a private waterline utility; and planting 1.4 acres of marine riparian areas with native vegetation. Grant: \$815,435 Non-federal cost share: \$370,669 Total project cost: \$1,186,104

Port Gamble Bay Shoreline Acquisition (Kitsap County) The Washington Department of Ecology, in partnership with Kitsap County, proposes to acquire 225 acres of diverse estuarine bay, wetland complexes, tidelands, and adjacent maritime forest. The Port Gamble Bay Shoreline Acquisition project is part of a large landscape-scale conservation initiative known as the Kitsap Forest and Bay Project which seeks to protect 1.78 miles of shoreline and 6,690 acres surrounding Port Gamble Bay. The project area contains some of the most pristine nearshore habitat in the upper Hood Canal watershed, featuring gravel beaches, mud flats, sand spits, and freshwater input from numerous small streams. Port Gamble Bay provides important, refuge and feeding habitat for salmonids as well as spawning habitat for the second largest stock of Pacific Herring in Puget Sound. This proposal will provide both direct and indirect benefits to a diverse array of wildlife species, including waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, neotropical migratory birds, raptors and owls, anadromous fish, forage fish, mammals, and other species. Grant: \$1,000,000 Non-federal cost share: \$520,000 Total project cost: \$1,520,000

Fudge Point Shoreline Acquisition (Mason County) The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) proposes to protect 31 acres of tidelands, wetlands, and forested uplands on Harstene Island through a fee acquisition. This is part of a larger project to protect tidelands, wetlands, and associated uplands at Fudge Point. The property has been an acquisition priority for State Parks since the 1960s and supports many regional and local plans, including The Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda. The Fudge Point acquisition protects sandy beaches, feeder bluffs, high-functioning marine riparian habitats, unarmored shoreline, and a 4.6-acre pocket estuary. Puget Sound Chinook, coho, and steelhead will benefit from this project. Spawning sites for sand lance and rock

sole, forage fish that are an essential part of the Puget Sound food web, are documented on site, as well as on

adjacent beaches. Grant: \$1,000,000

Non-federal cost share: \$1,010,000 Total project cost: \$2,010,000 Oakland Bay Estuary Conservation Phase 3 (Mason County) The Washington Department of Ecology, working with multiple partners, proposes to acquire, restore, and

permanently protect 76 acres of biologically-sensitive estuary, nearshore, and riparian habitat in the Johns

Creek watershed which empties into Oakland Bay. The project will reconnect the project site to Oakland

Bay, reestablish tidal inundation and nearshore function, and return a golf course area to native saltmarsh,

shrubs and trees. The project site includes a 4,000 foot stretch of marine shoreline with remnant channels and

emergent salt marsh and the mouth and part of lower Johns Creek, all of which provide important fish and

wildlife habitat. This project is part of a larger strategic effort to conserve key marine near-shore and freshwater habitat in the Oakland Bay watershed as outlined in the South Puget Sound Salmon Recovery

Plan. Oakland Bay is one of the largest commercial shellfish production areas in Puget Sound. Grant:

\$1,000,000 Non-federal cost share: \$1,300,000 Total project cost: \$2,300,000 Kindred Island

Acquisition (Pacific County) The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) proposes to acquire and conserve 355 acres of

wetlands, shoreline, and forested buffers along one of the most pristine bays in the country and its tributaries.

The acquisition of Kindred Island ensures that the ecological integrity of northern Willapa Bay will be preserved and supports the WDFW's goal of protecting and restoring the critical estuarine habitats in

Willapa Bay. Once the acquisition is complete, WDFW plans to eventually remove a dike that restricts tidal

inundation of the pastures. This will enable the site to return to a mosaic of estuarine mudflats, marshes, and

channels and will benefit multiple species of fish, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Grant: \$803,500

Non-federal cost share: \$373,237 Total project cost: \$1,176,737 Including the 2013 grants, the

Service has awarded about \$320 million to coastal states and territories since

the program began in 1992. When the 2013 projects are complete, about 298,000 acres of habitat will have

been protected, restored or enhanced as a direct result of these grants. A complete nation-wide list of projects

funded by the 2013 grant program can be found online at

http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2013/pdf/2013awardslist_v2.pdf.