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For Immediate Release
August 20, 2013

NOAA Fisheries Announces \$3.7 Million in funding for habitat restoration in Alaska, Oregon and Washington

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has announced \$3.73 million in funding for habitat restoration projects in Oregon and Washington to restore more than 1,800 acres of habitat, benefiting threatened species including steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon.

"Without the right habitat, fish struggle to grow and reproduce, and that means smaller fish populations," said Will Stelle, Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Western Region. "These projects will increase fish habitat—providing the important feeding and breeding grounds they need to thrive."

In the Northwest, populations of fish like salmon and steelhead trout are limited by a lack of habitat. NOAA Fisheries works with partners in the region to restore habitat for these fish by reconnecting wetlands and stream channels to tidal flow. NOAA scientists also address the impacts of marine debris on our coastal habitat and wildlife.

Restoration efforts will include:

- **Coastal Alaska (\$330,000):** In partnership with the [Alaska Marine Stewardship Foundation](#) and the [Sitka Sound Science Center](#), we will remove marine debris from the shorelines of Alaska.
- **Puget Sound – Whidbey Basin (\$1.4 million):** Three projects, with [The Nature Conservancy](#), will make progress toward Puget Sound Action Agenda's goal to restore 15 percent of degraded floodplain habitat by 2020. Our goal is to restore nearly 500 acres of floodplain habitat in Whidbey Basin, one of the most important areas in Puget Sound for recovery of threatened Puget Sound Chinook and steelhead.
- **Smith Island (\$1 million):** Working with [Snohomish County](#), we will begin to restore nearly 330 acres of wetlands in the Snohomish River estuary. This will fulfill 25 percent of NOAA's 10-year target for tidal wetland restoration in the Snohomish Basin. It will also provide important habitat for threatened Puget Sound Chinook and steelhead.
- **Tillamook Bay (\$242,000):** In [Tillamook County](#), the loss of wetlands has been a limiting factor for young coho and Chinook salmon. Working with the county, we will complete planning efforts to restore 500 acres of wetlands, addressing 70 percent of the tidal wetlands restoration goal for Tillamook Bay.
- **Waite Ranch (\$392,000):** In partnership with [Ecotrust](#), we will begin efforts to return more than 200 acres of land—which was previously used for farming—back to productive tidal wetlands within the Siuslaw River estuary. These tidal wetlands provide important nursery and refuge habitat for threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon.

- **Washington Marine Waters (\$100,000):** With the [Northwest Straits Marine Foundation](#), we will remove derelict fishing gear from Puget Sound, as part of an ongoing effort to mitigate impacts.
- **Willamette River (\$221,000):** Working with [The Nature Conservancy](#), we will initiate the restoration of 300 acres of floodplain habitat and bring 4 miles of streams back to a more natural condition. These efforts will address recommendations from the Upper Willamette Chinook and Steelhead Recovery Plan.

NOAA Fisheries' investment in habitat is part of a long-term effort to rebuild fisheries, many of which have declined precipitously from habitat loss, over-fishing and climate change. Recent successes show that restoring habitat is a way not only to stop the decline of fish populations, but also to regrow them to historic high numbers.

This is the first year of an anticipated three years of funding.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/noaa>, [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).