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News Release



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KNOCKING DOWN BARRIERS AND BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS: A POPULAR PROGRAM FREES MILES OF WATERWAYS FOR FISH

Forging dozens of new partnerships with myriad public and private organizations at every level, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will spend \$2.3 million this year to help reopen 837 miles of fish habitat and spawning grounds in 29 states.

Nearly \$400,000 will go to projects that will open more than 20 miles of fish habitat and passage for migrating fish in Oregon, Washington, California and Nevada.

The popular Fish Passage Program, which engages willing partners to remove obsolete dams and other obstructions, construct fishways, and improve or replace culverts under roads or railroad tracks, approved 62 projects this year alone – twice as many projects as in previous years, thanks to Congress appropriating additional funds.

“This is a program with home runs all around,” said Steve Williams, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. “Because our partners all contribute to the cost of individual projects, our budget goes a long, long way. We have other Federal agencies, State agencies and dozens of private conservation and civic organizations who are on board in this effort. We welcome and value all of them.”

Williams pointed to the Manistee River culvert replacement project in Michigan and the Good Hope dam removal in Pennsylvania, each of which had a total of 13 private and public supporting partners, as examples of the kind of wide acceptance that the Fish Passage Program has throughout the country.

Many of the small dams set for removal date as far back as the American and the Industrial Revolutions. Most were built either to accommodate early barge traffic or to provide power or irrigation for a fledgling economy, in a time when ecological or wildlife concerns were non-existent.

Over time, however, it became apparent that obstructions in hundreds of waterways were cutting fish off from their spawning or rearing grounds, contributing to a long, slow decline in many species’ populations.

Since 1999, when the fish passage program began, the program has supported 105 projects throughout the United States, restoring fish access to more than 3,750 miles of river habitat and 69,191 acres of wetlands. The program, which operates on a 50-percent match, has been able to add \$6.2 million in partner contributions since its inception.

“This program operates with a minimum of fanfare, and a lot of efficiency,” said Mamie Parker, Assistant Director of Fisheries and Habitat Conservation. “Partners seek us out. They match our money with their money. It’s such an exciting thing to watch. It’s the simplest of concepts, and it’s so effective. It really works.”

Six projects in the Pacific Region will receive funding this year. They include:

Oregon -- Fort Creek (diversion fish screen)(\$20,000) – This project will install a screen at an irrigation diversion, opening five miles of in-stream habitat -- including spawning habitat 300 feet upstream of the diversion -- for native redband trout.

Washington -- Lantz Creek (culvert replacement) (\$80,100) – This project on a tributary of the Wishkah River will replace two perched and undersize culverts with appropriately sized culverts, opening up 2.25 miles of habitat to coho salmon and cutthroat and steelhead trout.

Washington -- Hulten Creek (culvert replacement) (\$100,000) – Seven species of salmonids, including bulltrout, coho and sockeye, will benefit from this project in the Quinault River basin. The existing culvert will be replaced with a bottomless arch, opening up 1 mile of stream and wetland habitat.

Washington -- Culvert assessment on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lands in Western Washington (\$70,000) – Stream crossings within the Nisqually, Dungeness and Outer Coast national wildlife refuges and Quilcene, Quinault and Makah national fish hatcheries will be assessed to identify fish barriers. Those identified will be prioritized for removal.

California -- Calaveras River (Bellota weir) (\$35,273) – Located in California’s Central Valley, this weir blocks virtually all upstream migration of migrating adult salmon and steelhead from fall through spring. This project will provide upstream and downstream passage at the 20-foot-high water diversion weir.

Nevada -- Truckee River (diversion restoration) (\$85,100) – This project will re-establish fish passage at a private irrigation structure and restore access to 10 miles of river habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge system which encompasses nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>
For more information about the Fish Passage Program across the United States,
visit: <http://fisheries.fws.gov/FWSMA/fishpassage>*