



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ANNOUNCES SELECTION
OF COASTAL WETLANDS GRANTS**

Ten coastal wetlands conservation projects, covering more than 4,000 acres, will be undertaken this year under a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant program designed to stem the loss of our Nation's valuable coastal wetlands.

The Service will contribute \$3.9 million to the projects, which range from restoring tidal marshes in the Tijuana Estuary of southern California, to restoring mangrove and seagrass communities at Dynamite Docks in southeast Florida. The states will match the Federal grants by contributing \$2.3 million to the projects.

The Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program makes matching grants available to all coastal states through a competitive process. Wetlands conservation projects are for the purpose of restoring, protecting, and acquiring coastal wetland ecosystems.

"America's coastal wetlands provide vital habitat for hundreds of species, from striped bass to brown pelicans to manatees," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. "They support economically important sport and commercial fisheries and are critical to the

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survival of many endangered species -- in fact, 45 percent of the Nation's endangered species depend on coastal habitat."

"If we are to save these wetlands, we have no choice but to act now -- tomorrow is too late," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner said. "I am delighted we are able to work with the states now to undertake these essential conservation projects."

Thousands of acres of coastal wetland habitat have been lost to waste disposal, commercial centers, port facilities, improper dredge material disposal, and other shoreline modifications. Many other coastal areas have been degraded by pollution and contamination.

The projects selected by the Service involve acquisition of 3,788 acres of coastal wetlands and restoration of another 583 acres. Sixteen states submitted 43 proposals requesting Federal grants authorized by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Act).

In addition to the 10 new conservation projects, the Service is also funding \$1.975 million for the completion of last year's acquisition project for Bald Head Island, North Carolina.

Final selections of projects to be funded were based on specific requirements outlined in the Act and other ranking criteria employed by the Service.

The following is a listing of projects to be funded this year:

1) SOUTH CAROLINA, Bay Point Island

The South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department will acquire 290 acres of maritime forest and 886 acres of intertidal wetlands on Bay Point, a coastal barrier island. The area is one of high biological diversity and includes prime nesting areas for the endangered loggerhead sea turtle and roosting and feeding areas for the endangered woodstork and bald eagle.

State Share: \$471,500

Federal Share: \$1,414,500

2) CALIFORNIA, Tijuana Slough

The California State Coastal Conservancy will seek a \$576,900 grant for tidal marsh restoration within the Tijuana Estuary of southern California. This is part of a long-term restoration program for the Tijuana Estuary, one of the largest remaining wetlands in southern California. The project site is within the Tijuana River

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National Estuarine Research Reserve and Tijuana Slough
National Wildlife Refuge.

State Share: \$576,900

Federal Share: \$576,900

3) TEXAS, Boca Chica

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will acquire 1,161 acres of beach, dunes, and coastal wetlands in the Playa del Rio area. The area will be managed as part of the Boca Chica State Park and Wildlife Management Area to protect these fragile ecosystems.

State Share: \$107,500

Federal Share: \$322,500

4) FLORIDA, Dynamite Docks

The Florida Department of Natural Resources will restore the former Dynamite Docks area which is now part of the Key Largo Hammocks State Botanical Site. The project includes removal of a man-made spit, returning shoreline and basin depths to their original configuration, and the restoration of mangrove and seagrass communities.

State Share: \$56,661

Federal Share: \$169,983

5) FLORIDA, Keewaydin Island

The Florida Department of Natural Resources will acquire 280 acres on Keewaydin Island which is part of the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve located in southwest Florida. The acquisition area is within a unit of the Coastal Barrier Resources System.

State Share: \$37,500

Federal Share: \$112,500

6) VIRGINIA, Chesapeake

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation will acquire a 336 acre tract known as the Southwestern Marshes near Chesapeake, VA. The area is one of high biological diversity and habitat to the endangered eastern big-eared bat and Dismal Swamp shrew.

State share: \$183,640

Federal share: \$183,640

7) WASHINGTON, Snohomish River Diking District #6

The State of Washington will acquire and restore 453

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acres along the Snohomish River. The land formerly was diked and drained for agriculture. The project will remove the dikes and restore the natural tidal wetlands hydrology.

State share: \$500,000 Federal share: \$500,000

8) FLORIDA, Coupon Bight

The Florida Department of Natural Resources will restore and enhance 100 acres of coastal wetlands and associated uplands bordering Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve in the Florida Keys.

State share: \$2,850 Federal share: \$8,550

9) CALIFORNIA, Moss Landing Wildlife Area

California will use \$250,000 to acquire 71 acres of coastal wetland in Monterey County. The acquired parcel will be added to the existing Moss Landing Wildlife Area, managed by the California Department of Fish and Game, adjacent to the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Endangered brown pelicans and California clapper rails inhabit the area.

State share: \$250,000 Federal share: \$250,000

10) OHIO, Mentor Marsh

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources will acquire 311 acres of valuable wetlands and critical buffer areas contiguous to Mentor Marsh, an existing 643-acre State Nature Preserve in Lake County, Ohio.

State share: \$130,806 Federal share: \$392,418