



# NEWS RELEASE



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## **Polluters Finance Projects for Puget Sound Fish and Wildlife**

*Court settlement leads to creation of Puget Sound Marine Conservation Fund*

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are announcing the creation of a \$2 million ***Puget Sound Marine Conservation Fund*** and requesting proposals for conservation and restoration projects.

Among the largest community service payments ever allocated to restoration in the Pacific Northwest, the money in the ***Puget Sound Marine Conservation Fund*** originates from the community service payments of polluters and will directly benefit the natural resources impacted by the pollution.

"This fund exists because diligent vessel inspectors from the Department of Ecology first identified the illegal oil-water bypass device that many ships were using," said Dale Jensen, manager of Ecology's prevention, preparedness and response program. "The shipping industry has now learned that we won't stand for this behavior in Washington waters."

The funds are part of a \$25 million settlement resulting from charges filed earlier this year against Evergreen International S.A. (Evergreen), an international shipping company, in five judicial districts with major ports. The charges ensued from an investigation begun in 2001 after the discovery of oil in the Columbia River near Kalama, Washington. Investigations by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Washington Department of Ecology discovered multiple environmental violations by Evergreen which led to the filing of 24 felony counts and one misdemeanor count. The charges included making false statements, obstruction of Coast Guard inspections, failing to maintain an accurate Oil Record Book, and one negligent violation of the Clean Water Act.

Evergreen pleaded guilty to all of the charges in April of this year and U.S. District Judge Terry J. Hatter, Jr. ordered the company to pay \$25 million to be divided equally among the five judicial districts involved, with \$10 million directed to environmental community services projects in the districts.

Together with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Washington Department of Ecology, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation established the Puget Sound Marine Conservation Fund as a grant-making program for projects in and around Puget Sound. Grants ranging from a few thousand dollars up to \$250,000 will be awarded to non-profit conservation organizations, state or federal agencies, Tribes, schools, soil and water conservation districts and other special districts. The Foundation will oversee the distribution of the grants.

"The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, as a private, non-profit foundation, is in a unique position to receive and leverage funds from settlements, as well as from private donors, to create partnerships and invest in innovative conservation projects," said Krystyna Wolniakowski, Director of the Foundation's Northwest Regional Office in Portland. "We are extremely pleased that the courts directed these community service payments to the Foundation."

The grants will be used to finance on-the-ground habitat conservation, protection, restoration and management projects; landowner outreach and incentive programs for restoration and management of natural resources; public use and natural/cultural projects that benefit the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System and other federal and state refuges and protected natural resource areas; and collaborative projects from local communities seeking environmentally and economically sustainable solutions to natural resource problems.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will ensure that these funds specifically benefit the natural resources and the local communities in the Puget Sound area that were most affected by these illegal activities," said David Allen, Regional Director for the Service's Pacific Region. "The Service is proud to participate in collaborative community efforts to protect and restore the unique natural resources we all depend on in the Pacific Northwest."

Representatives from the State of Washington, as well as the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will work with the Service and the Foundation to review projects for funding. The agencies anticipate dispersing all of the funds in one round of grant approvals, expected to be completed by spring, 2006. A second round of proposals may be sought if funds remain after the first round of grants. Eventually, other money may be deposited into the Fund from future court settlements or from other donors seeking to support projects in the same geographic area.

The Request for Proposals is posted on the Foundation's website at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org); Applications are due by November 10, 2005. Questions can be directed to Krystyna Wolniakowski, Director, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-Pacific Northwest, at 503-417-8700, extension 22, or at [wolniakowski@nfwf.org](mailto:wolniakowski@nfwf.org).

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*The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt*

*organization, established by Congress in 1984 and dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and the habitat on which they depend. Our goals are to promote healthy populations of fish, wildlife, and plants by generating new commerce for conservation. The Foundation meets these goals by creating partnerships between the public and private sectors and strategically invests in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The Foundation does not support lobbying, political advocacy, or litigation.*

*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 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services 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 and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.*

*The Department of Ecology, created in 1970, is Washington's principal environmental management agency. Its mission is to protect, preserve and enhance Washington's environment, and promote the wise management of our air, land and water for the benefit of current and future generations. Its goals are to prevent pollution, clean up pollution, and support sustainable communities and natural resources.*