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News Release



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More Than \$6 Million in Coastal Wetland Grants Going to Hawaii and Washington

The Federal Assistance Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is awarding more than \$18 million in Coastal Wetlands Conservation grants to 14 states, Interior Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett announced today. Of that amount, the states of Hawaii and Washington will receive a total of \$6.1 million in grants.

The Coastal Wetlands Conservation grants will provide federal funding for three projects in Hawaii and six in Washington and will be supplemented with \$6.7 million from state and private partners. The grants will be used to acquire, restore, or enhance more than 1,015 acres of coastal wetlands for long-term conservation benefits to wildlife and habitat. Partners in this year's projects include state and local governments, Tribal partners, Ducks Unlimited, local land trusts, private land owners, and many others.

"These grants will help protect and restore an ecosystem which provides very important habitat for aquatic species," said Ren Lohofener, Director of the Service's Pacific Region, which includes Washington and Hawaii. "We look forward to working with our partners in Hawaii and Washington as they address their conservation priorities."

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grants are awarded to states through a competitive process. The program is funded under provision of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, with money generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

The following are descriptions of the nine projects which received grants this year in Hawaii and Washington.

Hawaii

Nu'u Coastal Wetland Refuge. Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife requests funding to acquire the 78-acre Nu'u Makai Wetland Reserve on Maui to preserve and facilitate restoration of the island's best remaining coastal wetland. The Reserve hosts the most significant remaining wetland complex on the southeast shore of Maui and includes over 5000 feet of coastline. The project area will provide habitat necessary for recovery of three endangered waterbirds, including the Hawaiian coot, Hawaiian stilt, and Hawaiian duck. The Reserve will also provide reintroduction sites for four other listed waterbirds and several plant species. Protection and enhancement of the wetlands will also benefit the adjacent marine near shore environment, a rich fishing area and haul out site for the endangered Hawaiian monk seal.

Partners: HI Division of Forestry and Wildlife, HI Land Conservation Fund, Maui Open Space Preservation Fund, Landowners (bargain sale).

Coastal grant request: \$1,000,000
Partner share: \$1,500,000
Other Federal: \$1,000,000
Total cost: \$3,500,000

Pouhala Marsh Restoration. Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) proposes to restore 40 acres of degraded estuarine wetlands to benefit four endangered water birds. The Recovery Plan for Hawaiian Waterbirds (FWS, 2005) identifies Pouhala Marsh as a core wetland of critical importance for the recovery of the birds. Water bird habitat at Pouhala is threatened by the spread of introduced mangrove trees and other invasive species. Restoration of the wetland habitat, increased boundary fencing, and trapping for introduced predators will also benefit Hawaiian waterbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. At 70 acres, Pouhala is the largest remnant of what was once an extensive system of wetlands in Pearl Harbor.

Partners: HI DLNR, USFWS Pacific Islands Coastal Program, Ducks Unlimited.

Coastal grant request: \$400,000
Partner share: \$221,000
Total cost: \$621,000

Restoration of Mana Plain Coastal Wetlands. The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) proposes to restore and enhance 141 acres of native wetland, sand dune, and coastal strand ecosystems on the Mana Plain on the island of Kauai. Wetland restoration on Kauai is a high priority for the recovery of endangered water birds because of the abundant water supply, lack of predators (mongoose), and resident populations of native Hawaiian ducks. Increased availability of nesting and foraging habitats will contribute to the recovery of four species of endemic and endangered water birds observed at the restoration site. This project will result in a 45 percent increase in the area of existing wetland and aquatic habitats to native wildlife in the Mana Plain.

Partners: HI Division of Forestry and Wildlife, PAHIO Resorts, Ducks Unlimited, Wetland Management and Education Services, HI Division of State Parks, USFWS Pacific Islands Coastal Program.

Coastal grant request: \$1,000,000
Partner share: \$486,372
Total cost: \$1,500,000

Washington

Lummi Island Coastal Conservation. As part of an ongoing conservation effort, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) proposes to permanently protect a 355-acre waterfront property in the San Juan Islands through a combination of fee tile acquisition and conservation easements. The project site is one of the last remaining large undeveloped waterfront properties in the San Juans. It includes intertidal estuarine wetlands, eelgrass beds, and an open wetland which serves as the largest duck-breeding habitat on Lummi Island. The project will also support restoration of a three acre pond and associated stream by fencing out livestock, removing invasive species, and planting a buffer of native species. A total of 53 acres of wetlands will be permanently protected as part of the project.

Partners: WDFW, San Juan Preservation Trust, Lummi Island Heritage Trust, Barry Herman, Wildlife Conservation Trust, Fairbanks Environmental Services.

Coastal grant request: \$600,000
Partner share: \$1,046,000
Other Federal: \$75,000
Total cost: \$1,721,000

Nalley's Ranch Estuary Restoration. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, (WDFW), partnering with the Skokomish Tribe, proposes to restore 108 acres of intertidal wetlands on tribal land west of the mouth of the Skokomish River and Nalley Slough in the Hood Canal Basin. Phase 1 of the project includes reestablishing tidal influence to the wetlands by removing approximately 5,000 linear feet of dike surrounding the project area. The estuary is important for the rearing and acclimation of juvenile salmonids from freshwater to saltwater and project implementation will contribute to recovery of Puget Sound Chinook, Hood Canal summer chum salmon, and bull trout populations in Puget Sound.

Partners: WDFW, WA State Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Coastal grant request: \$680,000
Partner share: \$1,140,000
Total cost: \$1,820,000

Quilcene Estuarine Wetlands Restoration and Protection. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requests funding to protect and restore 50 acres of tidal wetland in the Quilcene Bay portion of Hood Canal. This project will return 38 acres of coastal wetland habitats to properly functioning conditions to provide habitat for numerous fish and wildlife species, including several threatened salmonid species. WDFW also plans to acquire an adjacent 12 acres of estuarine wetlands. Restoration of the wetlands will include removing 3000 feet of saltwater levee reinforced with thousand of tires, and reestablishing historic tidal channels to restore tidal exchange in eutrophic areas.

Partners: WDFW, Schinke Family, WA State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Local Lead Entity Participants.

Coastal grant request: \$350,000
Partner share: \$230,000
Total project cost: \$580,000

Smuggler's Slough Estuary Acquisition. Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE), in partnership with the Lummi Indian Nation, requests funding to acquire and restore 246 acres of Nooksack River estuarine wetlands and restore tidal hydrology and fish access to 7.35 miles of slough and 38 acres of palustrine wetland habitats on or adjacent to the project area. This project will benefit numerous fish, migratory birds, and other wildlife, including Bull trout, Chinook salmon, and species of concern like Coho salmon and Steelhead trout. Acquisition and restoration of this area is a priority for the State of Washington and its partners, including the USFWS Puget Sound Coastal Program.

Partners: WDOE, WDFW, Lummi and Nooksack Indian Nations, Whatcom County Trust, NRCS, USFWS Puget Sound Coastal Program, Ducks Unlimited.

Coastal grant request: \$705,355
Partner share: \$291,999
Total cost: \$997,354

Tarboo Valley Wetlands Acquisition, Phase II. Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) proposes to permanently protect and restore wetlands and salmon runs on approximately 124 acres, representing the key remaining unprotected portions of the lower Tarboo Creek floodplain joining the Tarboo-Dabob Bay. In Phase I, completed in 2006, four properties totaling 285 acres were protected and are being restored. The project area comprises 90 percent of the remaining unprotected wetlands in the lower Tarboo floodplain, which is a highly productive and diverse habitat for five salmon stocks, forage fish species, numerous shorebird, waterfowl, and land bird species.

Partners: James Yeakel and Joan Purdy, Northwest Watershed Institute, Jefferson Land Trust, Freeman Family, Bullitt Foundation, WDOE, Jefferson County, WDFW, USFWS Private Stewardship Grant Program, NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program.

Coastal grant request: \$770,000
Partner share: \$350,000
Total cost: \$1,120,000

Wiley Slough Estuary Restoration. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) proposes to restore natural processes, conditions and functions to 175 acres of estuarine wetlands in the Skagit River Estuary by removing dikes to restore riverine and tidal flooding to the project area. Restoration of the Skagit River Estuary is key to the success of the Skagit River Chinook salmon recovery. The project area will also provide habitat for threatened Bull trout, species of concern including Coho salmon, Puget Sound steelhead trout, and numerous migratory birds. The Skagit River Delta is a critical over-wintering area and stopping area in the Pacific Flyway. When completed, this project will result in the addition of approximately 7.3 miles of tidal channel as a result of restored tidal and riverine flooding. This funding request represents the final portion of the \$3.8 million needed to construct the project.

Partners: WDFW, Seattle City Light, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, USFWS Puget Sound Coastal Program, NRCS.

Coastal grant request: \$568,872
Partner share: \$1,441,000
Other Federal: \$1,880,155
Total cost: \$3,890,027

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, 64 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.