

News Release

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January 5, 2017

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Photos available upon request

Washington Partners Awarded \$4.7 Million in Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants for Six Critical Projects

Six critical coastal wetland projects in the state of Washington have been awarded \$4.7 million through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program, which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The projects funded in Washington range from estuary restoration and protection in Puget Sound to habitat protection along the outer Washington coast. The awarded projects are Barnum Point Acquisition (\$1 million), Dosewallips Floodplain and Estuary Restoration (\$402,117), Grayland Acquisition (\$1 million), Lower Henderson Inlet Acquisition (\$800,000), Zis a ba Estuary Restoration (\$511,496) and Zylstra Lake Acquisition (\$1 million).

Coastal wetlands across the nation are under siege from both increased development and sea-level rise, making habitat conservation critical so that wildlife and coastal communities continue to thrive for future generations. Nationwide, more than \$17 million will be awarded by the Service to 20 projects in 10 coastal states to protect, restore or enhance more than 13,000 acres of coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program.

State and local governments, Native American tribes, private landowners, conservation groups and other partners will contribute more than \$20 million in additional funds to these projects. Click [here](#) for the complete list of projects funded by the 2017 grant program.

“Wetlands in coastal watersheds, including on national wildlife refuges, are diverse and complex ecosystems that are vital to the nation’s economy and an important part of the nation’s natural heritage. They provide crucial habitat, including breeding grounds, nurseries, shelter and food for fish, birds and other wildlife,” said National Wildlife Refuge System Chief Cynthia Martinez. “The pressure on wetlands is increasing from the demand for land and water, as well as from the effects of climate change, and it is vital that we protect them for future generations.”

Coastal wetlands include both salt marshes in estuaries and freshwater wetlands that extend inland within the coastal drainages. Coastal wetlands play an important role in reducing flooding from storm surge and in stabilizing shorelines in the face of sea-level rise. According to a Service [report](#), wetlands in coastal watersheds are lost at an average of 80,000 acres annually. Conservation of these habitats will not only benefit coastal wetland-dependent wildlife, but will also enhance flood protection and water quality, and provide economic benefits and recreational opportunities for anglers, boaters, hunters and wildlife watchers.

“Coastal wetlands are extremely important to the future of both wildlife and humans,” said Robyn Thorson, the Service's Pacific Region Director. “In addition to providing essential habitat for migratory birds, fish, shellfish, and many threatened and endangered species, these coastal areas are essential to coastal communities and act as a buffer against extreme weather events.”

The program, funded in part through taxes paid on equipment and fuel purchases by recreational anglers and boaters, creates significant benefits for the American public. The billions of dollars generated through recreational angling, boating, waterfowl hunting and bird watching benefit communities in the vicinity of wetlands restoration projects.

The Service awards grants of up to \$1 million to states based on a national competition, which enables states to determine and address their highest conservation priorities in coastal areas. Since 1992, the Service has awarded nearly \$400 million in grants under the program.

Here are details on the six Washington projects.

- **Barnum Point Acquisition:** The Washington Department of Ecology, partnering with Island County, proposes to acquire 67 acres of Puget Sound waterfront property on the east side of Camano Island. The project is situated in Port Susan Bay, within the Greater Skagit and Stillaguamish Delta area, which is considered one of the most important places on the northwest coast for estuarine and nearshore conservation for its biodiversity and key role in the life histories of dozens of internationally important estuarine-dependent species.
- **Dosewallips Floodplain and Estuary Restoration:** The Washington Department of Ecology, partnering with Wild Fish Conservancy, proposes to restore five acres of tidally-influenced floodplain and enhance 25 acres of salt marsh and mudflats at Dosewallips State Park in Jefferson County. The goal of the project is to improve ecosystem processes that create and maintain wetland habitats in the delta of the Dosewallips River by recreating a distributary network on the right bank of the river, which will reconnect the mainstem channel to salt marsh to the south of the river.
- **Grayland Acquisition Project:** The Washington State Department of Ecology, partnering with Ducks Unlimited, proposes to acquire and protect 1,750 acres of diverse and threatened habitats including wetlands in Grays Harbor County. The property contains more than 1,100 acres of estuarine and palustrine wetland habitats, tidal mudflats, old-growth forests, interdunal wet/swale complexes and wet meadow/grasslands. The property is surrounded by existing conservation lands and is located within close proximity to other state and federal public lands including Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge, Johns River Wildlife Area, Bottle Beach and Graylands Beach State Parks.
- **Lower Henderson Inlet Acquisition:** The Washington State Department of Ecology, partnering with Capitol Land Trust, proposes to acquire two parcels totaling 106 acres in Thurston County. Following the acquisition, the project will restore 23 acres of nationally declining palustrine emergent wetlands damaged by past agricultural use, including restoring natural hydrologic function in some areas. It will also remove dilapidated structures, debris, and invasive vegetation, and restore impacted areas to prevent potential water and soil contamination and spread of invasive plants.
- **Zis a ba Estuary Restoration:** The Washington Department of Ecology, partnering with the Stillaguamish Tribe, proposes to restore 88 acres of coastal wetlands in Snohomish County. The project area is currently diked and isolated from tidal influence. The project is designed to restore tidal and riverine influence by removing the majority of the perimeter levee and building a setback levee to protect surrounding property owners.
- **Zylstra Lake Acquisition:** The Washington State Department of Ecology, in partnership with the San Juan County Land Bank, proposes to acquire and conserve over 541 acres on San Juan Island. The project, which includes two lakes, approximately one mile of riparian stream/estuary shoreline and almost three miles of marine shoreline, is located in the 11,464-acre False Bay watershed. The project will protect and reintegrate a network of lakes, wetlands and riparian areas with the ocean and protect associated water rights necessary for future stream restoration projects.

More information is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/index.html>.

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