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2314 Strawberry Point salmon recovery gets grant

Island County is the recipient of a \$179,000 state competitive grant to fund salmon recovery efforts along six miles of beach at Strawberry Point near Oak Harbor.

The two-year grant is administered by the state Department of Planning and Community Development's Resource Enhancement Program.

The Strawberry Point project is part of a statewide effort to support commercial and recreational salmon harvest by keeping the salmon population at a sustainable level. It was one of 95 projects approved this year by the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Strawberry Point reaches into Skagit Bay northeast of Whidbey

Island's Crescent Harbor, opposite the north and south forks of the Skagit River. The waters and habitat of the Skagit River delta are used by endangered Chinook salmon and the forage fish they eat to survive.

Skagit River Chinook are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"This project will help protect and maintain a healthy Strawberry Point watershed," County Planning Director Phil Bakke said in a press release.

The grant will be used to collect information about the watershed and prioritize shoreline and near-shore protection efforts. Money is also included for work by partners in the

project: the Whidbey-Camano Land Trust, WSU Island County Cooperative Extension and Marine Resources Committee, and the Whidbey Island Conservation District.

Those groups will help with public education and outreach, increasing voluntary participation by landown-

ers in conservation and stewardship programs and identifying people who want to establish conservation easements.

Both Island County and Washington State Parks own public lands in the area and will be included as non-funded participants in the grant.