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San Juans get \$1.8 million for salmon recovery

Some \$1.86 million is on its way to San Juan County government agencies and non-profits for salmon recovery projects.

Gov. Christine Gregoire announced the allocations on Dec. 19. All told, more than \$60 million in grants to protect and restore salmon populations and their habitats were awarded across Washington.

"The health of salmon populations is an indication of the health of our environment," Gregoire said in a press release. "Protecting and restoring our land and water is key to the quality of life in Washington and essential to the strength of our economy."

The grants include \$35.5 million from Gregoire's initiative to address the short-term needs of Puget Sound waters.

The grants from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board ranged from \$12,000 to more than \$2 million. They were awarded to organizations in 28 counties for work ranging from planting trees along streams to cool the water for salmon, to replacing culverts that prevent salmon from migrating to spawning habitat, to restoring entire floodplains.

The following grants were awarded in San Juan County (listed in order of grant amount):

- Skagit River System Cooperative, "Assessing Habitats of Juvenile Salmon in San Juan County," \$650,825.

The Skagit River System Cooperative will use this grant to assess the presence of Chinook salmon and their use of certain types of habitat to better evaluate the types of restoration projects needed. The information will be used to make habitat type and place specific priorities for recovery.

er Puget Sound Chinook salmon, which are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, within the county.

Resource managers only generally understand linkages between nearshore habitat and salmon, which doesn't translate into strategic recovery actions by habitat type or place within a diverse landscape. The results of this assessment will be translated into ranking criteria for projects evaluated for funding. Work will include classifying shorelines into habitat types and sampling fish within these types for six areas.

The cooperative will contribute \$115,881 in donations of equipment and labor.

- San Juan County Land Bank, "Preserving Watmough Bay Salmon Habitat," \$465,600.

The San Juan County Land Bank will use this grant to buy 7.29 acres, including 680 feet along Watmough Bay, on Lopez Island.

The property contains an intact rocky intertidal zone and a 150-year-old forest. With one exception, the rest of the bay's shorelines are owned by the federal Bureau of Land Management and the San Juan County Land Bank.

The remaining landowner will donate another 5 acres, including 500 feet of shoreline, and two additional development rights to the Land Bank. As a result, the Watmough Bay watershed of about 400 acres will be preserved in its entirety.

The Land Bank will contribute \$698,400 in cash and cash donations.

- San Juan County, "Replacing the Point Lawrence Road-Cascade Culverts," \$225,000.

San Juan County will use this grant to replace two culverts with a larger one to carry flood flows and allow full fish passage and tidal exchange at the mouth of Cascade Creek on Orcas Island.

The two culverts, one 30-inch diameter culvert and one 18-inch diameter culvert, will be replaced with a 12-foot-wide by 8-foot-high culvert, where Cascade Creek flows into Buck Bay under Point Lawrence Road. The project will allow coho and coastal cutthroat to use pristine shaded riparian habitat at the lower reaches of Cascade Creek.

The county will contribute \$155,000.

- People for Puget Sound, "Restoring Deer Harbor Estuary,"

\$146,671.

People for Puget Sound will use this grant to begin restoring the Deer Harbor estuary, the largest estuary on Orcas Island.

Until the mid-20th century, the estuary supported chum and coho salmon as well as native oyster beds. Starting in the 1860s, logging, development, manipulation of the tributary streams and construction of the Channel Road Bridge altered the freshwater hydrology, plant communities and tidal flow patterns in the estuary. These impacts have led to the elimination of shellfish populations in the lagoon, loss of salmon-rearing and spawning habitat in the tributaries and degradation of salmon foraging habitats in the estuary.

Work will include removing fish passage blockages to lagoon tributaries and planting native plants and trees to provide shade and attract insects, which salmon eat.

People for Puget Sound will contribute \$25,900 in a federal grant and donated labor.

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salmon, cover habitat, collect fine sediment and remove quantities of algae, plants and other organisms. One removed net contained 11,000 dead salmon. All 22 populations of Puget Sound Chinook salmon use the marine waters of San Juan County, mostly for migrating to and from the ocean. The group has identified 65 derelict nets in the county.

The Northwest Straits Initiative has removed more than 500 nets from Puget Sound since 2002 and has documented the deadly effects of this gear on more than 55 marine species, including Chinook, sockeye and chum salmon and bull trout.

The foundation will contribute \$15,100 in cash donations.

OKWIAAIII, "Studying Juvenile Salmon Prey," \$71,260.

KWIAAIII will use this grant to study the food sources for salmon as a method to determining the location of salmon populations along San Juan County's 408 miles of shoreline.

Previous studies found juvenile Chinook congregate on the shorelines much of the year, but are selective in their choice of habitats. Knowing which habitats are preferred by juvenile Chinook will give KWIAAIII geographical focus for protection and restoration actions.

Using a combination of visual identification and biogeochemical methods, KWIAAIII hopes to determine which prey were being used by the Chinook and the extent to which Chinook depend on land-based (thus more human-influenced) prey.

The group plans to build on its "Food Security for Salmon" community project on Wolfson Island to engage landowners directly in research and formulating land-use actions, focusing on two juvenile salmon hot spots: on Resident Channel (Wolfson Orcas) and South Lopez Island.

KWIAAIII will contribute \$15,910 in donation of labor and materials.

Friends of the San Juan, "Removing the Shoal Bay Tide Gate," \$52,000.

Friends of the San Juan will use this grant to remove a derelict tide gate, reconnecting nearly 5 acres of high-quality coastal lagoon habitat to San Juan County nearshore.

A large cement tide gate is in the tide channel

Friends of the San Juan, "Restoring Smuggler's Cove Road Forage Fish Habitat," \$90,000.

Friends of the San Juan will use this grant to restore the beach near Smuggler's Cove and improve habitat for the fish that salmon eat.

Work will include completion of project designs, permitting, landowner outreach and engineering. Shoreline armoring associated with roads has been identified as the largest impact to forage fish spawning habitat in San Juan County.

Restoration will address the negative impacts of shoreline armoring at Smuggler's Cove Road, on Blind Bay off Shaw Island. This project will remove riprap along the shoreline, replace vegetation and restore the beach for forage fish spawning. Partners include San Juan County and Coastal Conservation Services.

Friends will contribute \$16,000 in donated labor.

Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Foundation, "Removing San Juan Derelict Fishing Nets," \$31,225.

The Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Foundation will use this grant to remove abandoned fishing nets for 25 days in salmon migration routes in San Juan County. The group will remove about 375 acres of derelict fishing nets.

Abandoned fishing nets kill

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of the Shoal Bay lagoon. This dredged structure is constituting flow, impeding fish passage at low tides, creating water quality problems within the lagoon and eroding the upper beach and estuarine wetland habitat.

Removal of the gate will provide improved areas for salmon and their food sources to feed and rest. The diverse nearshore marine environment of Shoal Bay off Lopez Island includes sand smelt, spawning habitat for Pacific herring, eelgrass prairies, shellfish beds, a sand spit and a coastal lagoon. Juvenile Chinook, coho and chum salmon use Shoal Bay and juvenile salmon have been observed in the lagoon. Friends of the San Juans is partnering with the Coastal Geologic Services, Wyllie Behreavend Fisheries, landowners and community

volunteers.

Bids will contribute \$100,000 in a federal grant and donated labor.

Northwest Marine Technology, "Restoring Neck Point Coastal Marsh," \$44,871.

Northwest Marine Technology will use this grant to remove a 55-cubic yard berm that blocks flushing of the Neck Point coastal marsh on Shaw Island.

Coastal salt marshes are important for salmon because they are a source of insects, which salmon eat. In a good salt marsh, streams flood the marsh bringing in fish and crustaceans during high tides and flush the marsh out during low tides. The Neck Point salt marsh is flooded only at the maximum tides because the tidal channels are blocked from the neighboring cove by the berm.

Juvenile salmon occupy the nearshore coastal zones during spring and summer and have been observed in the cove bordering this salt marsh. Removing

the berm will help establish flushing and drainage and access for fish. Work will include deepening the site to stabilize the bank and add habitat for insects.

Northwest Marine Technology will contribute \$8,069 in donated equipment and labor.

(San Juan County Land Bank, "Removing the Deer Harbor Pool and Restoring the Site," \$22,445).

The San Juan County Land Bank will use this grant to remove a 100-foot concrete swimming pool that was built in 1935 along the easterly shore of Deer Harbor on Orcas Island.

The 253 linear feet of wall has obstructed shoreline processes within the bay. Removal of the concrete pool walls will allow for natural shoreline processes and restoration of habitat. Benefits at this site. Long-term project benefits will be realized for Chinook and chum salmon, Pacific herring, eelgrass and bald eagles.

The Land Bank will contribute \$12,321.

"These projects are developed and supported by local watershed groups and reviewed by a panel of scientific experts to ensure that the projects funded will be the most effective in bringing salmon populations back from the brink of extinction," said Steve Wharinger, Salmon Recovery Funding Board chairman. "This strategic approach, making local priorities with scientific review, has made Washington a national model."

Several populations of salmon were put on the federal list of endangered species in 1991. By then, the number of salmon had fallen to only 40 percent of historic levels in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California. By 1992, almost three fourths of Washington's watersheds were affected by Endangered Species Act listings of salmon and bull trout.

These listings set off agencies of activities including the formation of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to oversee the management of state and federal fisheries.

controversy. Since 2000, the board has awarded more than \$233 million in grants, funded by federal and state dollars, for 839 projects. Grantees have contributed about \$100 million in matching resources, bringing the total investment to more than \$333 million.

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board's citizen members are appointed by the governor: Steve Wharinger, Okanogan County; David Trout, Depoe; Donald "Bud" Hoar, Okanogan County; Joe Ryan, Seattle; and Bob Nichols, Olympia.

Five state agency directors also serve as members (Conservation Commission, Department of Ecology, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation).

Information about the Salmon Recovery Funding Board is available at <http://www.salmonrfb.org>.