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Counties receive millions in grants for salmon recovery

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More than \$60 million in grants to protect and restore salmon populations and their habitats have been awarded to communities across Washington State.

"The health of salmon populations is an indication of the health of our environment," said Gov. Christine Gregoire. "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 Governor 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.

Snohomish County received a total of \$4,501,985, and Island County received \$1,458,767.

Among other projects in Snohomish

County, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. will use \$97,750 to restore the Leque Island estuary. Work will include removing portions of old dikes and using the spoils to create setback dikes to protect adjacent properties.

In Island County, the Whidbey Camano Land Trust will use \$59,000 to develop a list of priority properties on the southern tip of Camano Island for salmon recovery and to assess community and landowner willingness to protect and restore habitat; \$650,000 to buy a voluntary land preservation agreement on 32 acres in Skagit Bay containing a former pocket estuary to protect it from further damage; and \$510,000 to buy 43 acres and about 40 acres of Skagit Bay tidelands to protect it from development.

"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 Tharinger, Salmon Recovery Funding Board chairman.

"This strategic approach, linking 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 1999, almost three-fourths of Washington's watersheds were affected by Endangered Species Act listings of salmon and bull trout.

Those listings set off a series of activities including the formation of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to oversee the investment of state and federal funds for salmon recovery. Since 2000, the board has awarded more than \$233 million in grants, funded by federal and state dollars, for 889 projects. Grantees have contributed about \$100 million in matching resources, bringing the total investment to more than \$333 million.

For more details on salmon recovery funding projects, visit www.rco.wa.gov/documents/srfb/8th_Round/2007sal_grants_by_county.pdf.