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Contact: Janet Sears
(206) 526-6172
<janet.sears@noaa.gov>

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**National Marine Fisheries Service Announces
Partnership to Restore Salmon Habitat**

Restoring salmon habitat along the Skykomish River in Washington State is the goal of a new federal-private partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service and the not-for-profit organization, Long Live the Kings. With the aid of a \$40,000 award from the fisheries service, the two organizations will collaborate to restore 3.5 miles of juvenile salmon habitat in the Haskel Slough, from its confluence with the Skykomish River to its headwaters.

"Long Live the Kings is committed to restoring, enhancing and protecting the environment and habitat on which such salmon populations depend," stated Wayne Daily, a principal investigator working with Long Live the Kings.

Long Live the Kings initiates and fosters efforts to rebuild and restore naturally spawning salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest. In the last ten years, the organization has played a key role in assisting the State of Washington to develop 12 regional salmon enhancement groups. Long Live the Kings and the project principles have been involved in building solid working relationships with salmon restoration groups from California to Alaska, including British Columbia. Long Live the Kings also has completed three years of a major salmon rearing effort in the Hood Canal region.

(more)

"This partnership is an outstanding example of how diverse organizations with similar objectives can work together to benefit our nations's natural resources," declared Will Stelle, the fisheries service's Northwest regional administrator. The fisheries service is responsible for assessing the status of salmonid species, identifying important habitats and factors affecting the recovery of these fishes, and taking actions to moderate or counteract detrimental effects.

A shortage of summering habitat for juvenile salmonids and the lack of protection from floods are limiting production of coho and spring Chinook salmon in Puget Sound rivers. Haskell Slough, with 3.5 miles of prime habitat to access by juveniles by a buildup of silt, exemplifies one of the many difficulties salmon face in their spawning cycle. Actions earlier this century caused the Skykomish River, which runs adjacent to the slough, to flood and deposit silt in the slough.

Long Live the Kings, with support from the National Marine Fisheries Service Restoration Center, the Stilliguamish and Snohomish Regional Salmon Fisheries Enhancement Group (a state-authorized group), and a private property owner, will open silt-filled sections of the slough, starting at its mouth and progressing upstream. This work will provide about 3.5 miles of open-water habitat for juvenile salmonids during low-flow summer months. It also will serve as a refuge for juveniles during winter flood flows.

Fisheries service scientists estimate that the restoration will result in the eventual return of more than 10,000 adult salmonids to the Skykomish River. "Because of the historic loss of salmonid habitat, protecting existing habitats is not sufficient to recover salmon populations," said Rolland Schmitt, the fisheries service's national director. "Restoration of salmon habitat must be an integral part of any recovery plan."

The Haskell Slough project will be developed as a model for restoration of other damaged sloughs in the Skykomish and other areas of salmon habitat along the west coast of the United States.

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