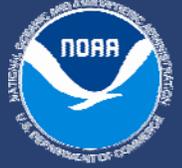




# Fisher Slough Marsh Restoration



COASTAL RESTORATION  
*at work*

In February 2009, NOAA received \$167 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to restore coastal habitat and help jump-start the nation's economy by supporting thousands of jobs.

After a rigorous selection process and review of more than 800 proposals, the agency is funded 50 high quality, high priority coastal restoration projects — spanning the country from New England's salt marshes, to the shores of the Great Lakes, to the coral reefs of the Pacific Islands. One of these projects was the Fisher Slough Marsh Restoration Project.

## Salmon in the Skagit Delta

Fisher Slough is a tidally influenced wetland and farmland complex located in the Skagit River delta of Washington. The Skagit River supports an abundance and diversity of Pacific salmon, and is one of the only rivers that supports all eight species of migratory salmonids.

## Common Ground Between Farmers and Fish

For farmers and residents in the 23 square mile area around Fisher Slough, springtime flooding is a persistent problem. The diking and drainage systems originally built in the 1930s to reclaim the land for farming have aged, and are now inefficient and require ongoing maintenance.

The aging infrastructure that is supposed to protect communities and agricultural fields can only protect them from minor floods; larger floods levels still impact the community. At the same time, the diking structures restrict salmon habitat and undermine the recovery of threatened Chinook salmon and other salmon species.

NOAA, partnering with The Nature Conservancy, Skagit County Dike District 3 and Drainage District 17, found a solution that serves both farmers and fish. They replaced antiquated floodgates with self-regulating gates that allow increased fish passage. They also built setback levees to restore important tidal channel habitat and improve flood control.



Construction at Fisher Slough.

The Fisher Slough project:

- employed local businesses,
- improved flood protection by increasing the flood storage capacity of system,
- decreased levee maintenance and dredging,
- improved drainage,
- restored 60 acres of marsh habitat and provided passage to 15 miles of habitat, and
- supported restoration of threatened Chinook salmon.

## Restoration Leads to Results

This project aimed to benefit the local agricultural community by reducing the risk of flood-damage and drainage maintenance costs. In addition, 16,000 more young Chinook salmon are expected to migrate out through Fisher Slough to the Skagit and into Puget Sound every spring as a result of this project.