



## NOAA RESTORATION CENTER



Student volunteers replanting native vegetation.

**The Community-based Restoration Program provides funding and technical assistance to restoration projects that benefit coastal, marine, and migratory fish habitat.**



Lowe Creek Restoration Project Location.

## Lowe Creek Channel and Wetlands Restoration at Boatman Grove

The Coquille River is a drowned river mouth estuary characterized by a steep upper watershed originating in Oregon's Coast Range Mountains that transitions into a low-gradient alluvial plain. Early settlers of the Oregon Coast found this rich, fertile landscape to be well-suited to agriculture, except for the predictable seasonal flooding that keeps these lowlands wet. Subsequent diking, channel straightening, and tidegate installation gave these lands utility for agriculture, but at the expense of the fish, plants, and animals dependent on floodplain connectivity and off-channel habitat. In many coastal systems, including the Coquille, up to 95% of floodplain habitat has been lost, due to water control structures, road building, and development. This habitat is particularly important to Pacific salmon, for spawning, rearing, and over-wintering habitat.

Oregon Trout is returning a 107-acre parcel of pasture land in the Coquille watershed near Bandon, Oregon to its pristine state, by removing tidegates, re-connecting the floodplain with the river, and by adding numerous habitat features throughout the site.

The NOAA Restoration Center, through its partnership with the FishAmerica Foundation, provided \$30,000 to support the Lowe Creek Channel and Wetlands Restoration at Boatman Grove. Other partners include the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Coquille Watershed Association, Ducks Unlimited, and the Coquille Indian Tribe.

## Restoring Habitat



Ancient myrtle grove, adjacent to Coquille River.



The new Lowe Creek channel.

In addition to removing a tidegate to return floodplain function to the site, restoration activities include creating a tidally-affected wetland pool, adding large wood throughout the site, planting native vegetation, and re-routing Lowe Creek into its historical channel. Lowe Creek will gain approximately one mile of functional length. The parcel was purchased by Bandon Biota in 2005, and a subsequent land use agreement with Oregon Trout and the adjacent property owner is in place for all the planned restoration work.

These restoration activities serve two purposes: Ecologically, the restored site offers rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids, starry flounder, Pacific lamprey, and numerous other species. It offers spawning and migratory habitat to adult salmonids, especially chum, coho, and Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). Overwintering habitat is especially important to the coho salmon (*O. kisutch*), which spends up to a year and a half in fresh water before migrating to the ocean.

Many other estuarine and marine species also depend on this habitat, including sculpins, crustaceans, starry flounder, sturgeon, mammals, and birds. The parcel of land where this restoration project is located also contains an ancient myrtle grove that is thought to be the oldest stand of myrtle trees in the world.

Hydrologically, the restored site provides flood storage capacity, allowing the rising river to temporarily 'store' water in the floodplain, thereby decreasing flux in the stream channel. This also serves to deposit nutrient-rich sediments onto the vegetated floodplain. By moving Lowe Creek into its historic channel, an additional mile of stream is added to the floodplain. This adds a moderating effect for Lowe Creek runoff, making its flows more predictable, less erratic, and more hospitable for fish.

For more information about FishAmerica Foundation: <http://www.fishamerica.org>

For more information about funding through the NOAA Restoration Center: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/funding\\_opportunities/funding.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/funding_opportunities/funding.html)

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Myrtle groves, salmon-bearing streams, and fertile agricultural lands come together on the Oregon Coast.