



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

Puget Sound  
Washington State  
Pacific Region



*The Skokomish watershed is the ninth largest freshwater basin in Puget Sound and the largest tributary to the Hood Canal.*

*From its headwaters in national park and forest, the north and south forks flow through timberlands into the agricultural landscape of the Skokomish floodplain.*

*The Skokomish Indian Nation has its reservation at the Skokomish River Delta.*

# Skokomish River Watershed

**Over the last 20 years, a collaborative effort among tribal, local, state and federal governments has resulted in an exemplary watershed-scale restoration effort in the Skokomish River basin. This effort is focused on the recovery of Hood Canal Summer-run chum salmon, Puget Sound Chinook salmon, and Puget Sound steelhead, all listed as *threatened* under the Endangered Species Act.**

### 2005: WATERSHED ACTION TEAM

Tribes, NGOs, timber and shellfish industries, farmers, landowners, and governments built a collaborative team to wrestle with shared river challenges. The Watershed Action Team is one of the early integrated teams to address the intersection of land use and salmon recovery.

### 2009: NORTH FORK DAM RELICENSING

After protracted legal negotiations, the Skokomish Tribe secured joint management of North Fork river flows, regulated the Cushman Dam, and have begun to restore channel forming processes. The restoration of flood flows is anticipated to help move sediments blocking fish passage during dry summers.

### 2007-2014: ESTUARY RESTORATION

After many decades of tribal advocacy, full tidal flow and hydrologic connections were restored to the 907-acre Skokomish Estuary. To this date, the Skokomish is the most complete estuary restoration in Puget Sound.

### 2016: GENERAL INVESTIGATION COMPLETE

Guided and supported by local, state, and federal partners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a General Investigation, authorized with initial appropriations in 2016. This opens the door to extensive restoration of key areas in the mainstem floodplain.

### 2018: SPRING CHINOOK RETURN

Following restoration of habitats and river flows, the Skokomish Indian Nation began reintroduction of spring Chinook salmon to the watershed in 2016. In 2018, early migrating fish returned to the watershed to spawn, the first since extirpation of the population over the last century.

## What's Happening Now?

The Skokomish Indian Nation and the Mason Conservation District have developed a strategy for reach-scale floodplain restoration in the mainstem Skokomish River surrounding the North Fork confluence.

Partners have identified a set of 10 actions with an estimated cost of over \$32 million, which will restore habitat over hundreds of acres of river channel and floodplain.

Partners are pursuing a range of state and federal funding sources.



# NOAA Investments

## Direct Funding

NOAA's Restoration Center provided \$277,000 through regional cooperative agreements to support habitat restoration. The Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund provided \$300,000 to support Skokomish Tribe participation in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers General Investigation.

## Technical Assistance

Between 2006 and 2011, NOAA Restoration Center staff supported Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in developing the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program, a new state fund which enabled emerging large scale estuary restoration. The Skokomish Estuary restoration was among the flagship projects of this new state authority, receiving \$3.7M in grants.

## Grant Program Innovation

Skokomish Restoration was the beneficiary of the "Portfolio Process", developed by NOAA Restoration Center, which allowed the state to provide funding for additional phases of an approved project without redundant competitive processes. The Skokomish Estuary Restoration was the test case for integrating diverse federal and state funds into single state contracts, reducing waste in large project funding.



Photo: "First tides" enter the abandoned Nalley Farm through a levee breach.

## About NOAA's Restoration Center

NOAA's Restoration Center, housed within the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, strategically targets habitat restoration across the country where our fisheries need it most.

Our projects help recover threatened and endangered species, support sustainably managed species, reverse the damage done by oil spills and toxic releases, and strengthen the resilience of coastal communities. With our national network of partners, our teams are able to leverage funding and develop high-quality restoration projects that advance NOAA Fisheries priorities.

In Washington State, our activities focus on watersheds where our funding and technical assistance can make the greatest contribution towards the recovery of salmon and steelhead. Although our work focuses primarily within the Puget Sound watershed, we also work across the state to enhance fish passage and improve habitat for NOAA's trust resources.

For Information about the Skokomish Watershed, contact [paul.r.cereghino@noaa.gov](mailto:paul.r.cereghino@noaa.gov)



Top: Remnant salt marsh provides seed to regenerate restored tidal plains. Bottom: Estuary channels form naturally after restoration of tides.

