

## **WILEY SLOUGH**

### **RECREATIONAL REPLACEMENT LANDS**

The restoration of approximately 156 acres of former estuarine marsh and roughly 7.2 acres of historic tidal channel in Wiley Slough to facilitate the recovery of ESA-listed Chinook salmon in the Skagit watershed is expected to impact a range of diverse resource recreational opportunities presently available at the site, otherwise known as the Skagit Wildlife Area. Since its inception with an initial land acquisition in 1948, the Skagit Wildlife Area has been managed and maintained primarily as habitat for waterfowl and watchable wildlife. The restoration project site is located within the Skagit Wildlife Area, which is also known as the “Headquarters” unit. This area was originally acquired as a part of the<sup>[SRH1]</sup> Wildlife area through a land swap with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and was subsequently diked in the early 1960’s to serve as a pheasant release site that would provide hunting opportunities for individuals who might otherwise be unable to engage in this type of activity without traveling long distances to eastern Washington.

In addition to wildlife-related recreation, the area also receives extensive usage for hiking, dog training and has become both suitable and desirable for outdoor use by persons with disabilities.

With the 1999 listing of Puget Sound Chinook salmon populations as Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act, efforts in the Skagit watershed have focused on restoring historic tidal and riverine systems associated with the Skagit River. While the Wiley Slough Restoration Project is expected to promote a diversity of fish and wildlife species that rely on natural estuarine habitats, the removal of existing dikes and subsequent changes to established habitat systems over time is expected to result in significant changes in use patterns by wildlife species that currently utilize the area.<sup>[SRH2]</sup>

In recognition and response to these anticipated changes in both resource and recreational use, Governor Christine Gregoire has directed the Department of Fish and Wildlife to “work in good faith with legislators, waterfowl hunters and other community members to develop off-site hunting and recreation opportunities”. WDFW Director Jeff Koenings, in a letter to Legislative leaders dated May 29, 2007, has committed to requesting the participation of all stakeholder groups who have either been involved in the development of the Wiley Slough project and/or who have concerns with impacts the project will have on current uses of the proposed restoration area.

As of June 15, 2007 the Department of Fish and Wildlife has initiated a process of identifying and contacting relevant stakeholder groups with an interest in developing a plan to retain and enhance recreation opportunities impacted by the Wiley Slough Restoration Project. A facilitated multi-party collaborative process will be initiated in July 2007 in the Conway / Mount Vernon area of Skagit County and will involve a series of interest-based collaborative sessions extending throughout the summer and into early fall.

This process will provide participants a structured approach to assist them in identifying, developing and providing an action plan for inclusion in a report for submission to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 2008 for decision making and budgeting purposes. Interim activities involving facilitated meetings, stakeholder involvement and process development for purposes of fulfilling this proviso will be conducted and coordinated through the Regional Director of the WDFW Region Four Mill Creek office.

Individuals wishing to obtain additional information regarding meetings, permitting and implementation schedules for the Wiley Slough Restoration Project may do so at [www.wileyslough.org](http://www.wileyslough.org).

[SRH1]What has been presented

[SRH2]Fish do not currently utilized the area. They are isolated from it.