# ESTUARY PROJECTS



The Skagit Estuary is a key location for all anadromous salmonids. In this environment, out-migrating salmon smolts go through physiologic changes that equip them for later life in saltwater. Reconnecting tidally-influenced channels increases the health and

numbers of young salmon reaching the ocean-a particularly important step for chinook.

Estuary projects include: Dry Slough (featured), Edison Slough, McElroy Slough (featured), Deepwater Slough, and Fisher Slough.

# Dry Slough Restoration

Dry Slough is a historic fork of the lower Skagit River. Preparation of the design report and Habitat Conservation Plan are in progress. The project objectives: open up river and tidal flows in a historic river channel that is now diked off, and develop a long-term plan for balancing ongoing agricultural practices with voluntary salmon recovery efforts.

# Benefits

• Regains eight miles of side channel rearing and estuary habitat for chinook and other salmon.

 Demonstrates ability to establish large salmon projects on private land without detrimental influence to ongoing agriculture, drainage, and flood control efforts.

## McElroy Slough Restoration Project

This project will restore tidal flushing, fish passage, and dendritic channel habitat areas within the marsh and lower tributary stream system. In addition to offering significant benefits to fisheries resources, the project will also provide flood reduction benefits to the Blanchard community.

With the absence of salt water flushing in the slough, freshwater exotic vegetation species have grown densely throughout the lower slough, restricting its flow capacity, reducing water velocity, and increasing sediment deposition. Culvert hydraulic restrictions at road crossings affect flooding potential within Blanchard. Portions of the marsh area have been reclaimed for rural development and agriculture, and many of the slough's dendritic channels have been cut off or filled by dikes built around the lower slough and Whitehall Creek. This loss of dendritic channels directly corresponds to the loss of fisheries habitat area for the limited salmonid population currently able to access the slough area through the controlled outlet.

# Benefits

- Elevates salinity levels consistent with historic conditions.
- Provides opportunities for fish passage through outlet culverts.
- Maximizes opportunities for fisheries/wildlife use of expanded habitat areas.
- Reduces flooding potential for local residences and infrastructures.
- Integrates slough restoration with improvements to the Whitehall Creek alluvial fan and Harrison Creek.



McElroy Slough

Watershed Dry Slough (WRIA 03.0220)

Cost \$74,500 Reconnaissance Study

Revenue 100% Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Partners Salmon Recovery Funding Board Local Property Owners Skagit County U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Watershed McElroy Slough (WRIA 01.0648)

**Cost** \$1,000,000

#### Revenue

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Skagit County U.S. Fish and Wildlife Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

#### Partners

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Skagit County U.S. Fish and Wildlife Washington Department of Ecology Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Skagit System Cooperative Natural Resource Conservation Service