

News Release

Washington Fish and Wildlife Office
510 Desmond Drive SE
Olympia, WA 98503
Phone: (360) 753-9440
<https://www.fws.gov/wafwo/>



Contact: Jeff Krausmann, (360) 753-6053
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Port Gardner Bay Draft Damage Assessment Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment - Available for Public Comment

Federal, State, and Tribal officials responsible for restoring injured natural resources from hazardous substance releases into the Port Gardner Bay area are announcing the release of the draft document entitled: *Port Gardner Bay Draft Damage Assessment Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment* (Plan/EA) for public comment. The Plan/EA, dated August 2016, was prepared by the Port Gardner Bay Trustee Council (Trustees), a committee of State, Federal, and Tribal Trustees representatives including; the U.S. Department of the Interior/Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Tulalip Tribes, the Suquamish Tribe, and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Discharges and releases of hazardous substances into Port Gardner have resulted from industrial and municipal processes since the early 1900s. The accumulation of these substances has resulted in the contamination of sediments and injuries to natural resources. The Trustees are developing the Plan to determine the best way to compensate for injuries to natural resources resulting from these releases. Affected natural resources include fish, shellfish, wildlife, sediments, water quality, and the ecological services they provide.

The proposed Plan and alternatives were analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through an Environmental Assessment (EA). When selected, the Restoration Plan will guide implementation of Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) restoration activities. The EA analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed Plan and alternatives considered by the Trustees to restore, replace, rehabilitate, and/or acquire the equivalent of the injured natural resources and their services.

The Trustees evaluated three alternatives: the No-Action Alternative, which is required to be included in the NEPA analysis; the Smith Island Restoration Project Alternative; and the Blue Heron Slough Restoration Project Alternative. The Trustees' preferred alternative is the Blue Heron Slough Restoration project which will benefit the range of different resources injured by releases of hazardous substances in Port Gardner Bay. The proposed Blue Heron Slough project will restore approximately 350 acres of intertidal, wetland, and riparian habitat in the Snohomish estuary to benefit salmon and other species. While Blue Heron Slough is a monumental habitat restoration project alone, it increases the significant restoration efforts in the Snohomish estuary by adding nearly 350 acres to more than 700 acres of restoration already underway (i.e., Qwuloolt and Smith Island projects). Although the Blue Heron Slough Restoration project will be used in part to address natural resource damages in Port Gardner Bay, it is being undertaken by Wildlands and the Port of Everett, as a broader multi-resource

restoration site intended to provide credits for the following purposes:

- Salmon Conservation (already approved).
- Natural Resource Damage Restoration (the subject of this comment period).
- Wetland Mitigation (in process).

The public is invited to review and comment on the proposed plan and EA for 30 days. Comments will be accepted until close of business, September 1, 2016. The document is available on the Washington Fish and Wildlife Office website at: <https://www.fws.gov/wafwo/>.

Written comments concerning the draft Plan/EA should be addressed to: Jeff Krausmann, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Fish and Wildlife Office, 510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 102, Lacey, Washington, 98503. You may also submit written comments by electronic mail to jeff_krausmann@fws.gov.

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