



For Immediate Release:

Portland, Oregon, 11/5/19 - **Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership Announces Conservation Projects For 2019**

Contact: Joan Drinkwin, PMEP Coordinator, 360.820.3323, info@pacificfishhabitat.org

The Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP) is pleased to announce the following projects have been selected for funding through the National Fish Habitat Partnership. These projects represent important conservation priorities of PMEP. \$124,118 has been awarded to the partnership through the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the following three projects:

Eelgrass Expansion in the Morro Bay Estuary

Funding provided: \$34,038

Sponsor contact: Lexie Bell, Director, Morro Bay National Estuary Program, 805.772.3834, lbell@mbnep.org

The project will expand restoration efforts to restore eelgrass habitat to benefit fish and wildlife in the estuary. The project includes eelgrass transplanting from natural eelgrass recruitment and will target a wide distribution of locations for a total of 42 square meters.

“PMEP funding will allow the Morro Bay National Estuary Program to continue critical, proven eelgrass restoration in Morro Bay. Morro Bay once hosted the largest extent of eelgrass between San Francisco and Southern California. With a more than 95% decline in the last decade, consistent, successful restoration is key. The Estuary Program is actively working with research and restoration partners to ensure that this importance resource for fish and water quality is not lost forever in Morro Bay.” – *Lexie Bell, Director, Morro Bay National Estuary Program*

Assessment and mapping of seagrass and macroalgae kelp habitats

Funding provided: \$48,000

Sponsor Contact: Dick Vander Schaaf, The Nature Conservancy, 503.802.8100 ext. 136, dvanderschaaf@tnc.org

The purpose of this project is to map seagrass and kelp habitats using previously collected data from monitoring surveys conducted by the Oregon marine reserve program. The surveys include: 1) video lander surveys where a tripod mounted video camera is dropped to the bottom for few minutes to record habitats and species; 2) SCUBA transect surveys

that record habitats and species encountered; and 3) ROV surveys that encounter the target habitats. The project will focus on two marine reserve sites, Otter Rock Marine Reserve and Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve. The project will also note the presence of juvenile fishes that are associated with the target habitats using the available monitoring data. Recent population explosions of sea urchins have decimated subtidal kelp beds in southern Oregon and Northern California creating “urchin barrens” that will likely impact juvenile fishes. Expanding our knowledge of these habitats will provide better understanding of what roles they play in nearshore ecology, their importance for juvenile fishes, how to conserve them and how we can more easily monitor them in the future.

“PMEP funding is essential for conducting this pilot kelp mapping project and elevating the importance of kelp and seagrasses as juvenile fish habitat in our coastal ocean.” – *Dick Vander Schaaf, The Nature Conservancy*

Mattole River Estuary Middle Slough Restoration

Funding provide: \$42,080

Sponsor contact: Hugh McgGee, Mattole Restoration Council, 707.629.3514 (office), 406.546.2053 (mobile). hugh@mattole.org

The Mattole River Estuary Middle Slough Restoration Project will restore off channel slough habitat adjacent to the Mattole Estuary, providing connectivity to 800 ft. of previously restored slough habitat and the Mainstem/Estuary of the Mattole River. The project is part of a 10-year restoration plan for the Mattole Estuary and Lower Mattole River developed cooperatively by the Bureau of Land Management in collaboration with the Mattole Restoration Council, Mattole Salmon Group, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“Restoring off-channel habitat in the Mattole Estuary is the most critical task we can accomplish to restore and protect our wild salmon populations. PMEP funding is a vital piece of the foundation to advance this important work” – *Hugh McGee, Mattole Restoration Council*

These projects represent a portion of the on-the-ground conservation work implemented in 2019 under the National Fish Habitat Partnership. Through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Fish and Aquatic Conservation program, over \$4 Million was contributed to 83 projects in 34 states. Overall, these Federal funds were matched more than 3-to-1 with nearly \$15 Million in match funding contributed from state agencies, local municipalities, non-governmental organizations, tribes and other partners.

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About Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership

The Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership is a nationally recognized partnership that seeks to advance regional and national goals relating to juvenile fish habitat. PMEP is a consortium of organizations focused on West Coast fish habitat in the region's estuaries and nearshore marine waters. With its partners, PMEP synthesizes the best available information to help protect and restore West Coast fish habitat, including compiling datasets that enhance our understanding of this habitat. PMEP also provides, with partners, targeted restoration and conservation funding to support on-the-ground work.

www.pacificfishhabitat.org

About the National Fish Habitat Partnership:

Since 2006, the National Fish Habitat Partnership has supported 935 projects benefiting fish habitat in all 50 states. The partnership works to conserve fish habitat nationwide; leveraging federal, state, tribal, and private funding resources to achieve the greatest impact on fish populations through priority conservation projects of 20 regionally-based Fish Habitat Partnerships. For more information, visit:

<http://fishhabitat.org/>

<http://www.facebook.com/NFHAP>

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