

Posted February 11, 2014 - 8:31am **Updated** February 20, 2014 - 9:46am
Elliott Slough to become protected wetland



Washington State Department of Ecology Much of Elliott Slough is pristine wetland with few invasive species. About 500,000 shorebirds visit the area each year.

By Amelia Dickson
The Daily World

Elliott Slough, located just east of Aberdeen, will soon be Grays Harbor County's newest protected wetland, with the state Department of Ecology receiving a \$310,000 grant from the federal government. The grant will allow Ecology to restore and protect 175 acres of high-quality coastal surge plain along the Chehalis River and six miles of slough at the head of Grays Harbor.

Elliott Slough is currently owned by the Grays Harbor Historic Seaport Authority, which was looking to sell the land. The Chehalis River Basin Land Trust and Ecology worked together to collect about \$211,000 to purchase the land.

The United States Fish & Wildlife Service matched the funding with a \$310,000 grant.

The Quinault Indian Nation, Friends of Grays Harbor, the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Rose Foundation all contributed money to the project.

"There are a lot of people who have been looking at preserving this land for a while," said Camille St. Onge, an Ecology spokeswoman.

Most of the money will be used to purchase the land, St. Onge said. Elliott Slough is in excellent condition, so the state won't have to use much money for restoration. There are very few invasive species on the property, the department said.

The slough is adjacent to a state Natural Area Preserve and an Audubon Society preserve. After the purchase is finalized, Elliott Slough will become part a nature preserve owned by the Chehalis River Basin Land Trust.

St. Onge said Elliott Slough is home to several species of animals, including river otters, black bears and about 50,000 ducks. Each year, about 500,000 shorebirds stop at the site during their migration.

"It's important to protect this area because so many animals need it to survive," St. Onge said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service grant is part of a large program to protect wetlands nationwide.

Washington was among 12 states and Puerto Rico that received funding from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program. Ecology received \$2.2 million for the Elliott Slough project, the Skokomish estuary restoration and the Lower Nasella - Ellsworth Creek project.

"The projects selected for the grant funds will help restore and enhance our wetlands which are vital habitat for fish and wildlife," said Lauren Driscoll, wetlands manager for Ecology's shorelands and environmental assistance program. "This is a significant opportunity for the selected communities to leverage their local dollars with matching federal grant funds. These projects will help preserve our wetlands for future generations."

- See more at: <http://thedailyworld.com/news/local/elliott-slough-become-protected-wetland#sthash.qWtopCmp.dpuf>