

DUCKABUSH ESTUARY RESTORATION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG) is working in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore habitat at the mouth of the Duckabush River. The project will reconnect the Duckabush River to adjacent wetlands by modifying local roads and elevating Highway 101 onto an estuary-spanning bridge, restoring rare estuarine habitat important to native fish and wildlife.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- ✓ Planning and Fundraising (2016-2019)
- Design (2019-2025) **WE ARE HERE**
- Acquire Construction Funding
- Construction Phase
- Post-Project Monitoring

PROJECT UPDATES

After six years, the Design Phase of the Duckabush Estuary Restoration Project is expected to be complete in late 2025. In December 2024, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) signed a Project Partnership Agreement allowing the project to transition into the Construction Phase. This agreement outlines each agency's roles and responsibilities for the future work.

Once federal construction funding is secured, the work on the new US 101 bridge could begin as early as mid-2026 and is expected to take two to three years to complete. Following bridge construction, the estuary restoration work will start and be finished within two years. Additional resources and guidance on how to stay notified of US 101 travel updates will be available closer to the start of construction.

For more information on the project, please visit the Duckabush Estuary Restoration Project page on WDFW's website or email questions to PugetSoundNearshore@dfw.wa.gov.

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF DRONES

You may have noticed some drone activity around the Duckabush Project area. Beginning in Fall of 2024, WDFW scientists started utilizing aerial drones to study harbor seals within the Nisqually, Dosewallips, and Duckabush river estuaries. This work is authorized by a larger drone use plan that covers surveys along Washington State's coastal and inland waters.

Drones will fly a few times each month during medium-high tides when seals typically rest on land and are easier to count. You might also notice seals that appear to be wearing little orange backpacks or thumb-sized transmitters on their hindflippers. WDFW scientists are attaching temporary trackers to monitor harbor seal haulout behavior, movements, and habitat use. Seal presence is only part of the story though; the researchers are also collecting seal poop samples to learn more about their diets.

Monitoring efforts will continue through December 2025. These surveys will help WDFW researchers understand how many salmon are consumed each year as part of a harbor seal's complex diet. The results will inform salmon recovery efforts at the surveyed locations and provide insight into how the Duckabush River estuary habitat is utilized by fish and wildlife prior to restoration.



Duckabush estuary seals and a temporary backpack tracker. MMPA/ESA Permit No. 22678. Photos by WDFW



DUCKABUSH ESTUARY EDUCATION TOURS

The Estuary Education Tour series returns to the Duckabush Estuary this summer with a new lineup of guests presenting on a wide variety of local topics. From May through September, join us on the last Wednesday afternoon of each month to learn how the Duckabush will be transformed through restoration. Each tour will feature a different local expert who will share their knowledge on subjects like native plants, local history, salmon biology, and more! Save the dates, and stay tuned for more details!

TOUR DATES

May 28, 2025
June 25, 2025
July 30, 2025
August 27, 2025
September 24, 2025

ALL TOURS ARE FROM:

2:30PM - 4PM

MEET AT:

WDFW Duckabush River Access, Brinnon WA

RESOURCES / MORE PROJECT INFO

PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ARTICLE:

<https://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/Article/3998167/usace-wdfw-sign-project-partnership-agreement-for-duckabush-estuary-restoration>

WDFW DRONE MONITORING ARTICLE:

wdfw.wa.gov/newsroom/news-release/washington-researchers-will-use-drones-survey-seals-and-sea-lions

WDFW DUCKABUSH PROJECT PAGE:

wdfw.wa.gov/duckabush

HCSEG DUCKABUSH PROJECT PAGE:

pnwsalmoncenter.org/duckabush-restoration-project

QUESTIONS?

WDFW CONTACT:

PugetSoundNearshore@dfw.wa.gov



Washington
Department of
**FISH &
WILDLIFE**

HCSEG CONTACT:

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