

News

American Rivers, NOAA Team Up to Improve Coastal Fisheries

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WASHINGTON, October 25, 2001 - American Rivers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced a new three-year partnership to improve coastal fishery resources today - the American Rivers/NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program Partnership. The cooperative effort will match state, local and private funding for voluntary dam removal and fish passage projects in California, the Northeast, and the Mid Atlantic states.

"NOAA Fisheries is pleased to be part of a groundbreaking public-private partnership to remove obsolete and unsafe dams to restore free-flowing river habitat historically used for fish spawning and rearing," said Scott Gudes, acting NOAA Administrator. "By teaming our efforts with American Rivers, a proven leader in dam removal and fish passage, we will enhance anadromous fish habitats and help rebuild numerous fishery populations that much more quickly."

American Rivers will receive \$400,000 during the first year of the partnership to support project funding and engineering expertise from NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program. The program, which is part of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, has been working with community organizations to support locally-driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas since 1996. NOAA-funded projects provide strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that offer educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. As a matching grant award, the total value of the effort could exceed \$5 million over the three-year life span of the partnership.

"This partnership is an example of how national organizations can team up to serve local needs," said Elizabeth Maclin, Director of Field Operations, Dam Programs, at American Rivers. "Lack of funds is often the number one obstacle facing local communities that want to address the fish passage problems associated with obsolete dams."

More than 75,000 dams taller than six feet have been built across the country and tens of thousands of smaller dams. Many of these dams are no longer used for the purpose for which they were built, and have often been completely abandoned. These aging structures can block migratory fish from reaching spawning grounds, upset a river's temperature, and flow, and create a safety hazard. By removing some of these dams and constructing fish passage at others, significant improvements to rivers and fish habitat can be achieved - often at a relatively small cost.

In each of the three regions, American Rivers and NOAA's Community-Based Restoration

Program will establish a steering committee of state and federal government and non-governmental representatives to review and recommend applications for funding. American Rivers, in consultation with NOAA, will make the final project selections. These funds may not be used to satisfy a legal obligation, such as the terms of an operating license for a utility-owned hydropower dam.

Applications are available now at <http://www.americanrivers.org/feature/restorationgrants.htm>. Project proposals will be considered in two initial cycles, with postmark deadlines falling on December 1, 2001 and April 1, 2002. Awards are expected to fall within the range of \$5,000 to \$25,000 for projects that have clear and identifiable benefits to anadromous fish populations and restoration of riverine habitat that support anadromous species.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.

American Rivers, a national non-profit dedicated to helping local communities protect, restore, and enjoy their hometown rivers, will coordinate the projects in collaboration with NMFS regional staff.

For more information about NOAA and American Rivers' efforts to restore rivers and improve fisheries, point your browser to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration> and <http://www.americanrivers.org/damremoval/default.htm>.

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