

# NEWS RELEASE

from the *National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration*,  
*National Fisheries Institute*, and  
*Ocean Trust*



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## **NOAA, OCEAN TRUST AND NATIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTE ANNOUNCE THREE-YEAR PLANS FOR HABITAT RESTORATION** *Industry, Government, Conservation Partnership Brings Communities Together*

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA fisheries), an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), today celebrated the renewal of its pilot habitat restoration partnership with Ocean Trust (OT) and the National Fisheries Institute (NFI). A total of \$200,000 in combined funding will be available for restoration projects during the first year of the new, three-year agreement.

"We are very pleased to be continuing this fisheries habitat restoration partnership with Ocean Trust and NFI members," said Bill Hogarth, assistant administrator for NOAA fisheries. "This relationship is proof positive that private industry and government can work together to mutually benefit the resources upon which so many livelihoods depend."

"We're taking a new approach to conservation that is built on strong partnerships between industry, government and local conservation groups working together toward common objectives in habitat and resource enhancement," said Thor Lassen, president of Ocean Trust.

Ocean Trust established habitat restoration projects on all three coasts in the first year of managing the joint NOAA/NFI/OT initiative and doubled the initial federal funds it received for habitat restoration. As a matching grant award, the renewed partnership has the potential to bring up to \$1.7 million to community-based restoration efforts over the next three years. Projects slated for 2001-2002 include enhancement of salmon stream bed in Washington, reseeded of soft-shell clam populations in Massachusetts, creation of oyster spawning sites in Alabama and restoration of 6,000 acres of a shallow water coastal estuary in Texas.

NOAA fisheries provides federal support for the partnership through its Community-Based Restoration Program. The program works 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.

All three partners echoed the win-win nature of this public/private partnership. "The commercial fish and seafood industry is committed to the restoration and conservation of important fish habitat," said Justin LeBlanc, National Fisheries Institute vice president for government relations. "Restoring these areas means a healthier coastal environment and improved fisheries for fishermen and consumers who love seafood."

A major component of each project is the involvement of community-based businesses and volunteers in each area. "We'd like to invite seafood companies, restaurants, retailers and the public to join in this partnership to restore habitat," said Lassen. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build a strong coalition with public participants to enhance coastal and estuarine ecosystems."

The National Fisheries Institute is the nation's leading trade association representing all aspects of the seafood industry. The Ocean Trust is a national conservation foundation working with the seafood industry on habitat restoration. Potential partners or sponsors in each area should contact Ocean Trust, (703) 450-9852, or see the Web site at <http://www.oceantrust.org/projects>.

NOAA fisheries 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. For more information on the Community-Based Restoration Program within NOAA fisheries, see the Web site at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.