

# Restoration Project Complete for Klingel Wetland

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NORTH MASON LIFE

The Great Peninsula Conservancy has completed its first habitat restoration project. In August, work was finished on turning an old farming dike to saltwater marsh at Klingel Wetland, which is the GPC's longest-owned property.

The wetland is located along Hood Canal's north shore, off State Route 300, and is adjacent to Pat's Little Red Barn.

Based in Bremerton, the nonprofit organization preserves rural landscapes and natural habitat and owns several properties in North Mason area, including the nearby 21.5-acre Jimmy Bryan Wetland. For the Klingel project, GPC partnered with several agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The work centered on 13 acres of the 90-acre preserve. In addition to the removal of a 1,450-foot-long dike, a new dike was built closer to State Route 300 to help protect adjoining properties and the road from flooding.

With the dike removal, the marsh was connected back to Hood Canal and made accessible to young salmon, which come from Union River.

"We've given back to salmon and other marine life," said GPC Executive Director Sandra Staples-Bortner. "The salmon can now feed, grow and be protected from predators."

GPC has owned the original 66 acres since 1985, donated by Elizabeth Klingel to what was then the Hood Canal Land Trust. Later donations of adjacent land by Robert and Cathy Bryan and Oda Beard brought the total size to 90 acres.

In the '80s, the parcel, part of Lynch Cove Estuary, was one of the state's only 14 pristine coastal areas left. Neighbors Gary and Celia Parrott recog-



A view of the restored area at high tide.

COURTESY PHOTO

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For more information about Great Peninsula Conservancy and the Klingel Wetland, go to [www.greatpeninsula.org](http://www.greatpeninsula.org).

nized its importance and started a process of preserving the land, with the blessing of Klingel and her brother, Terry.

Local conservation trusts were still new in those days, and the Parrotts helped the Klingels in approaching national organizations such as the Nature Conservancy for help. They heard the same thing: The property should be preserved through local channels. Their efforts led to the creation of Hood Canal Land Trust, which later merged into Great Peninsula Conservancy.

Rich in wildlife habitat, including some rare species such as trumpeter swans and white pelicans, the Klingel Wetland has been on the restoration wish list for several groups for more than 30 years.

"It's been a long-standing project," Staples-Bortner said.

The 13-acre portion was previously diked to create pastures and hayfields, but has not been farmed in 35 years. The dike caused a large part of the pasture to become a freshwater wetland and prevented saltwater from reaching into the wetland. With the dike removal, Hood Canal tides will slowly retake the land. The project included the re-creation of old tide channels.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service pro-

vided nearly \$200,000 for construction through the USDA Wetland Reserve Program. The agency also has owned a conservation easement on the property since 2004.

Other funding came from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office through a salmon recovery grant (\$57,000) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$54,000 through an estuary and salmon restoration program).

All the work was sourced locally. Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group provided project design and Pat McCullough of Belfair-based ESA Inc. served as consulting engineer. Zephyr Construction, a family-owned Allyn company, was the contractor, and Staples-Bortner said the crews went

to great lengths to minimize impact on the site and to comply with the many restrictions.

The Hood Canal Coordinating Council, Ducks Unlimited and Mason County were also partners on the project.

Another \$43,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's marine riparian initiative will pay for replanting the 13 acres with native plants and for the removal of invasive species. Work will be done this fall by the Mason County Conservation Corps.

"We're using that grant for planting vegetation along the shoreline on the 13-plus acres, and to rehabilitate the staging area," said GPC Operations Director Kate Kuhlman.

Mason County Conservation, which is administering the grant and providing the work, had al-

ready planted some areas this past spring. The saltwater will kill the freshwater species on its own but the new plantings will take several years to establish.

Staples-Bortner said it will take some time for the marsh to completely restore itself. The organization is asking people not to visit the area for the next few months — probably until next year — to give the recovery time.

Future plans may include the addition of educational signs and displays as well as some trails for bird watching.

Great Peninsula Conservancy will monitor the restoration process at the Klingel Wetland. The organization is also scoping out other projects for Hood Canal restoration work, including a potential parcel on the Tahuya Peninsula.