

What is it? The [Pacific Northwest Salmon Center](#) will include interactive displays, hands on educational activities for all ages, trails, a salmon spawning stream, research labs, meeting space The central core is a state of the art research program and educational center, applying the best available science to the study of wild salmon, their habitat, and the relationship to the health of the ecosystem. Visitors will have the opportunity to observe scientists and research first hand and to become involved in active solutions. By engaging the public in this way, they will hopefully become good stewards of the land and knowledgeable about the ecosystem. It is this public ownership that will lead to the changes in politics and policy necessary for the survival of wild salmon and the health of our ecosystem overall.

Location: We have finalized the purchase of 90 acres in Belfair, located west of State Route 3 and north of the Theler Community Center, formerly known as the Johnson Farm. The property is located at the mouth of the Union River Estuary on the Hood Canal. 52 acres was purchased by WA Fish and Wildlife and the remaining 38 acres was purchased by the Salmon Center.

Benefits: 40 acres of this site was originally salt marsh, diked many years ago, and can now be returned to its original salt and freshwater wetlands. The estuary supports sustaining populations of chinook, chum, coho, sturgeon, and cutthroat. The diked 40 acres represents 23% of the original Union River estuary. While Hood Canal supports the largest area of estuarine wetlands on the west coast, 73% of its salt marsh habitat has been lost since the 1800's.

Plans: It is our intention to not only restore habitat but also increase the recreational use of the portion of the trail system which currently follows the Johnson Dike. The current 3500' of dike and trails will not be removed, but will be breached in multiple locations to allow estuarine function back into the saltmarsh. Fill will only be removed where necessary to allow the wetlands to return to its original geography. Bridges and pile supported walkways will be built over the breached portions of the dike. During the reconstruction, a new alternate trail will be put in place for public use that will become another loop trail within the existing system and take the community through the future PNWSC facility. When complete, the end result will be a loop trail making use of both the old and new routes. The existing buildings on the East side of Roessel Road will be for administration, storage, education, research and other PNWSC functions. Eventually new buildings will house the exhibit area, additional education space and other center functions.

Timeline: The purchase was finalized in 2008. In 2009 we will be bringing the existing structures up to code for use as our administration center. The restoration of the saltmarsh is expected to begin in 2009 as well.

Job Creation: While using an open bid process, it is anticipated the construction will create a number of local employment opportunities. When the Center is complete, our business plan calls for 17 employees, growing to 33 within a few short years. Increased tourism drawn by the Center will support other businesses in the community.

For more information, please contact the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center at 275-3575.