

Benefits of Coastal Restoration for People and Nature

Restoration pays off for habitats, species and people.

“This job will keep my family in employment for three years. In addition, I have 20 employees and 30 subcontractors, working with me on this job. It’s a pretty big impact in the community because nearly all of us have lived here all our lives. It’s rewarding to work close to home and be able to do something to help the community and the fish.”

- Craig Holmgren, Project Superintendent, Interwest Construction Inc.

Fisher Slough, WA



The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) passed by the U.S. Congress provided the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Restoration Center with \$167 million for habitat restoration projects.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was selected to lead eight coastal restoration projects totaling approximately \$24.5 million. Many of these sites are dramatic expansions of restoration work that began as proof-of-concept projects supported through an ongoing national partnership between TNC and NOAA.

Documenting the ecological, social and economic benefits of restoration have been critical measures of project success in terms of benefits for people and nature. These eight projects focused on specific outcomes – such as job creation – within communities that have been hard hit by the recession. As a condition of funding, each project has well defined performance goals and scientific monitoring plans that demonstrate the promise of taking restoration to regional scales.

Jobs and Habitat Summary

State	Jobs (Direct)	Cost	Habitat Improved
Virginia	71	\$2,167,000	22 acres shellfish reefs, 100 acres seagrass, reintroduce bay scallops
California	71	\$1,645,741	104 acres riparian
Louisiana	91	\$4,183,367	3.4 miles shellfish reef, 350 acres saltmarsh
Florida/USVI	80	\$3,361,243	25,000 coral colonies
Alabama	139	\$2,956,446	1.6 miles shellfish, 30 acres seagrass and marsh
Hawaii	138	\$3,408,848	27 acres coral reef cleared
Alaska	56	\$1,018,486	460 acres estuary, 65 miles open river
Washington	225	\$5,766,100	60 acres marsh, 5 miles open river
TOTAL	870	\$24,507,231	

Habitat restoration is a potent job creator: according to NOAA statistics, for every \$1 million invested in restoration, nearly 18 jobs are created. Our eight TNC lead ARRA-funded projects resulted in twice that figure, with 36 jobs directly created for every \$1 million.

Jobs created or sustained by restoration projects fall into one of three categories: direct, indirect and induced. Direct jobs are in construction, heavy equipment operators, tug and barge operators, engineers and scientists. These are the people who do the actual restoration.

Habitats Restored

535 acres of seagrass beds
 424 acres of saltmarsh and freshwater wetlands
 140 miles of open river and creeks
 90 acres of floodplain and riparian habitat
 29 acres of shellfish and coral reefs
 Five miles of shoreline protected

Science and Monitoring

Survival and growth of shellfish, seagrass saltmarsh and coral
 Increase in fish production, salmon survival, water quality and denitrification
 Economic impacts: jobs, fishing, recreation

Benefits to People and Nature

Economic output in community
 Flood and storm protection
 Clean water
 Sustainable resources
 Increased cultural and recreational values

Increased biodiversity
 Endangered species recovery
 Improved fish habitat and increased fish production
 Hydrologic connection
 Whole ecosystem recovery

There are also indirect jobs - the people and companies that supply materials that are used on site, such as lumber, concrete and plant nurseries. Finally, restoration boosts induced jobs, those that provide goods and services (food, clothing, housing) to people working on restoration sites.

Many large-scale benefits were demonstrated by these projects. For example, many projects helped to develop innovations and techniques needed to have impacts at ecologically meaningful scales. In Florida and the USVI, restoration of staghorn and elkhorn corals are reversing decades of decline. These species are the main building blocks of reefs in both the Florida Keys and the U.S. Virgin Islands and improving this habitat can improve fish and fishing industries, recreation and tourism that will benefit the people for generations to come.



“The human impact is clear. We created jobs and restoration of coral reefs is important to local communities; not only for commercial fishers and dive charters, but to every person in the world that depends on coral reefs for their ecological, economic and cultural importance. I feel that am working to preserve lives.

- Kemit-Amon Lewis, TNC

Conclusion

- Restoration works- we can make coastal ecosystems and habitats whole again.
- Restoration pays- it creates more jobs per million than many other kinds of infrastructure projects and generates benefits that are economically important. In Mobile Bay, for example, an economic study showed that each dollar spent on reef restoration generates two dollars in economic output in the local economy.
- Restoration matters - to communities and stakeholders in every coastal state in the U.S.