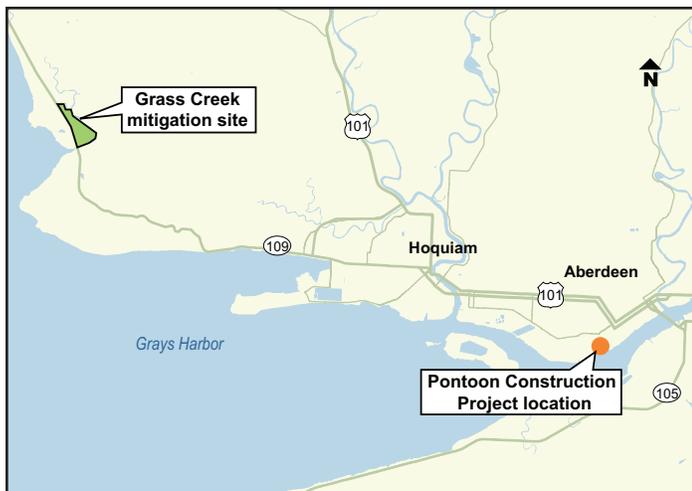




### Wetland and aquatic improvements at Grass Creek

June 2011



The mitigation site is located in Grays Harbor County, about seven miles northwest of Hoquiam.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is providing improvements to wetland and aquatic resources at Grass Creek in Grays Harbor County. This work, which will begin this summer, is part of the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project.

The enhancements will strengthen the local natural environment by establishing wetlands, creating mudflats, removing invasive species, and reconnecting tidal channels. The improvements will mitigate for a loss in wetlands and shoreline created by the new pontoon casting basin and launch channel in Aberdeen.

#### Why is WSDOT providing mitigation?

Through the environmental review process, WSDOT works to avoid, minimize and mitigate for all environmental effects. While we have avoided and minimized to the greatest practical extent, construction of the casting basin and launch channel resulted in the loss of approximately one acre of wetlands, as well as shoreline and fish habitat effects. To mitigate for this, WSDOT will provide improvements at the Grass Creek site.

#### What will the Grass Creek mitigation project include?

WSDOT provides mitigation for wetland and aquatic resources effects by restoring, enhancing, and/or creating wetland and aquatic habitat. The Pontoon Construction Project will enhance the 68-acre Grass Creek site located about seven miles northwest of Hoquiam in Grays Harbor County. Work to restore and protect the wetland and shoreline habitats includes removing portions of an earthen dike along the creek that borders this property, which will:

- Reconnect tidal channels and restore the natural tidal influence.
- Establish wetlands and create mudflats.

We will monitor this site and collect data on plants, wildlife, soil and water for 10 years to ensure the site is compatible with and contributes to the local ecosystem.

#### What is the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project?

WSDOT is advancing pontoon construction to restore the SR 520 floating bridge in the event of a catastrophic failure or store the pontoons until they are needed.

WSDOT and contractor Kiewit-General are currently building a casting basin facility at the 55-acre Pontoon Construction Project site in Aberdeen. The facility will feature a concrete batch plant, on-site water treatment and a 4-acre casting basin, where pontoon construction will occur.

At the facility, crews will construct 33 pontoons. The largest 21 pontoons will be 360 feet long, 75 feet wide, and nearly 30 feet tall, making them the largest in Washington, for the planned replacement of the SR 520 floating bridge.

## What are the ecological benefits of the mitigation project?

When complete, the Grass Creek mitigation site will support a variety of plants and wildlife that thrive in wetlands, salt marshes and mudflats. The restored tidal channels will provide habitat for migrating salmon. Native plants and organic soils will improve water quality and benefit the on-land and in-water environments.

Native plants include evergreen huckleberry, red twig dogwood, salmonberry, sitka spruce and western red cedar. Native fish include staghorn sculpin, bull trout, longfin smelt and shiner perch. Wildfowl include great blue heron, mallard, song sparrow and bald eagle.

This mitigation directly and indirectly benefits the environmental health of the larger Grays Harbor watershed area. The Grass Creek site provides a good ecological fit with project effects, and has the highest likelihood of success, based on the property's location and characteristics.

## What is the project timeline?

Work begins this year, and will be substantially completed in early 2012 and fully completed in early 2013. WSDOT will monitor the site from 2013 to 2022.

The Grass Creek site will provide approximately 45 acres of potential mitigation area that could be used for future WSDOT projects.

## What does the project site look like?



*Invasive reed canary grass currently covers much of the Grass Creek site. Mitigation work will improve the site with native plants.*



*WSDOT and regulatory agency staff conduct a field visit of the Grass Creek site to understand its characteristics and develop a successful mitigation approach.*

### SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project contact information:

**Phone:** 1-888-520-NEWS (6397)

**E-mail:** [Pontoons@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:Pontoons@wsdot.wa.gov)

**Website:** [www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge)



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

Materials can be provided in alternative formats for people with disabilities by contacting Shawn Murinko at 360-705-7097 or [murinks@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:murinks@wsdot.wa.gov). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact the Office of Equal Opportunity through the Washington Relay Service at 711.

### Title VI:

WSDOT ensures full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex in the provision of benefits and services resulting from its federally assisted programs and activities. For questions regarding WSDOT's Title VI Program contact Jonté Sulton at 360-705-7082 or [SultonJ@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:SultonJ@wsdot.wa.gov).