

LUBCHENCO REMARKS (AS PREPARED)

Recovery Act Press Conference

Telephone

June 30, 2009 at 11am EST

Dr. Lubchenco:

- This is a critical time when coastal habitats are under growing pressure from coastal development, climate change, and degradation. In a recent joint report between NOAA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, scientists made the startling revelation that from 1998 to 2004, coastal watersheds of the Great Lakes, Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico lost 59,000 acres of wetlands each year.ⁱ
- Likewise, unemployment rates are highest they have been in 60 years. To help jumpstart the economy, through these projects, NOAA will support 5,000 direct and indirect jobs for Americans who will use their skills to restore damaged wetlands, shellfish beds, coral reefs and reopen fish passages that boost the health and resiliency of our nation's coastal and Great Lakes communities. The economic benefits extend far beyond the projects alone. These efforts will also create jobs, generated by the industries that supply materials and by workers that provide administrative, clerical, and managerial services. Suppliers include those that may work for nurseries, lumber, steel, concrete and cement products, as well as miscellaneous professional services necessary for restoration projects.

- We also know that employees spend a portion of their wages earned while working in the area on things like clothing, food and other local goods and services, we know that these restoration projects will create a ripple-effect of job creation, when you take into account the wide variety of nearby businesses.
- In New England, NOAA funding will help hire local demolition and construction crews, engineers and nursery owners to remove dams and barriers and restore river habitat and passage for the area's many spawning fish such as the American shad and endangered Atlantic salmon.
- In Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, and the Mariana Islands, the agency is undertaking a set of unique coral recovery projects focused on reducing harmful algae and sediment runoff, as well as growing and reattaching coral to many threatened shallow reef systems. To manage these projects, NOAA and partners will hire local community members to learn new skills to construct and maintain new sediment reduction projects and manage underwater coral farms.
- In the Great Lakes, NOAA funding will support the hiring of people to remove dams and barriers for migrating fish, reconnect tidal wetlands and focus on shoreline restoration. Using a technique called "living shorelines," some of the Great Lakes projects will use natural restoration elements such as native plants and rocks to help stabilize Great Lakes shorelines.
- In the Pacific Northwest—where I am from – NOAA has invested Recovery Act funds to reconnect tidal wetlands, remove obsolete levees and cleanup marine debris by hiring dozens of off-season crab fisherman. In fact, in Alaska,

NOAA is focused on a massive state-wide marine debris removal effort which will put many people from the local fishing industry to work , cleaning up more than 693 tons of debris.

- In the Southwestern part of the country –where California is experiencing one of the highest unemployment rates nationwide—NOAA is using Recovery Act funds to take on some of its largest habitat restoration projects to date. In the San Francisco area, old commercial salt ponds will be restored to be reconnected to the ocean’s tides to fish spawning and rearing areas, and also supporting a wide variety of migrating birds. We’re also investing in a partnership with the California Conservation Corp, hundreds of people who work as a group to empower young citizens to care for their coastal environment.
- When complete, the projects will have restored more than 8,900 acres of habitat, and removed obsolete and unsafe dams that open more than 700 stream miles where fish migrate and spawn. The projects will also remove more than 850 metric tons of debris, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, as well as reduce pollution threats to 11,750 acres. Nearly all of these efforts directly benefit a wide variety of threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species, including salmon, migratory birds, seals, sealions and turtles — just to name a few.

Concluding Points – Transparency and Tracking Progress

- When President Obama signed the Recovery Act into law in February, he asked that the funds are spent in a transparent way. That the mysteries of the federal government be set aside for the sake of communicating the impacts this funding has on our national economy. NOAA has taken this directive to heart, even going as far as to set up a website –www.noaa.gov/recovery –where you can track the progress of each individual habitat restoration project.
- Using this website today, and in coming months, the public will be able to track these projects using an interactive Google-powered “Restoration Atlas” where you can actively view before, during and after images as well as video of each effort.
- In the near future, NOAA plans establish two “Recovery Cams” at selected sites around the country, where you can watch live and time lapse images of people at work on a variety of restoration projects around the country.

ⁱ “Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Coastal Watersheds of the Eastern United States: 1998-2004”