



News Release



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Erin Uloth, Tongass National Forest, (907) 228-6201 or euloth@fs.fed.us
Dustin Solberg, The Nature Conservancy, (907) 424-5101 or dsolberg@tnc.org

Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, partners to celebrate watershed restoration on Prince of Wales Island

CRAIG, Alaska – The U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, and partners are gearing up to celebrate the completion of a critical watershed restoration project on Prince of Wales Island.

The project, known as the Harris River Restoration Project, is an important large-scale effort by a broad-based partnership of local organizations and stakeholders, state and federal agencies, and conservation groups.

The seven-plus-year project includes more than 11 miles of stream restoration; eight miles of road work to improve fish passage and reduce erosion; over 400 acres of tree thinning for habitat improvement; and extensive trail and recreation enhancements.

Primarily a fish habitat improvement project, the years-long work also created excellent recreation opportunities for the public. These include improved fishing for salmon, dolly varden, and steelhead trout; picnic sites along stream gravel bars; and a half-mile trail with signs detailing the habitat restoration process. The new Harris River trail system also includes the three-mile Harris River Trail, which leads from the Hollis Highway to the Hydaburg Highway and crosses over streams and small bridges to numerous fishing holes.

“When you see salmon in a restored pool on Harris River, you’re seeing the benefits of watershed restoration firsthand,” said Randy Hagenstein, state director of The Nature Conservancy in Alaska. “A lot of dedicated people have worked hard to make this project happen, and I thank them for their long-term commitment to improving forest health.”

Tongass National Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole stressed the importance of collaborating with such a dedicated and diverse collection of stakeholders on this type of large-scale effort: “Working with partners has really become the way we’re doing business. The Harris River Restoration Project shows how partnerships can improve both forest and community health in ways that we could not accomplish alone.”

Cole continued, “We look forward to taking part in more of these collaborative projects.”

On Thursday, August 25, the public is invited to take part in the Prince of Wales Restoration Celebration, a day-long series of activities that will commemorate the completion of the Harris River project. First, a daytime tour of the extensive project site leaves Craig High School at 11:00 a.m. Lunch and transportation will be provided.

Then, at 5:00 p.m. at Craig High School, the evening events will feature dinner and an awards ceremony, followed by a performance by the Klawock Heenya Dancers and a slide presentation by acclaimed photographer Amy Gulick, author of the book, *Salmon in the Trees: Life in Alaska’s Tongass Rain Forest*. Gulick’s talk also marks the opening of an exhibition of photographs from her book at Craig High School. The entire event is free and open to the public.

For more information about the Prince of Wales Restoration Celebration, contact the Tongass National Forest, Craig Ranger District at (907) 826-3271 or visit www.myalaskaforests.com. Anyone interested in learning more about the Harris River Restoration Project can visit <http://nature.org/harrisriver> or see the interactive Google map and video at <http://go.usa.gov/Kqb>.