

News Release

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Build It and They Will Come: Juvenile Chinook Salmon Found at Delta Ponds and Heron Slough!

For the first time in over 60 years, juvenile spring Chinook salmon can swim freely through newly created side channels of the Willamette River at Delta Ponds and Heron Slough. With the completion of the major restoration work this past year, water can now flow through the ponds for 2.2 miles, before it meanders back into the river. Across the river from Delta Ponds is Heron Slough, a quarter mile of newly constructed stream-like side channel, where river water can also flow during high water events like Eugene has had over the past several weeks.

Slow-moving, side-channels such as those recently restored at Delta Ponds and Heron Slough provide areas of calm water during high winter flows. Here juvenile salmon are able rest, feed, and grow larger before migrating to the ocean. Although the Delta Ponds and Heron Slough projects provide benefits to multiple wildlife species, both projects were designed specifically to provide overwintering habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon.

A grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center has allowed the City of Eugene to hire a consultant to monitor fish in Delta Ponds and Heron Slough. The consultant has been running a rotary screw trap at the inlet at Delta Ponds. Since January, over 50 juvenile Chinook have been captured and released using the rotary screw trap. A handful of Chinook were also found in the interior ponds at Delta Ponds and hiding under some submerged tree roots in Heron Slough.

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