Impressive Funds for Salmon Recovery

Puget Sound was once home to many more Chinook salmon populations than what exists today. Only 22 of at least 37 historic Chinook populations remain. These Chinook salmon are at only 10% of their historic numbers, with some down lower than 1%.

The decline in salmon is closely associated with the decline in the health of Puget Sound and therefore requires a coordinated, ecosystem-wide restoration effort.

To date, Thurston County has been the lucky recipient of an impressive $26,244,672 in Salmon Recovery Projects.

One project located in my district is the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge Estuary Restoration.

Grant money for this project will be used to remove dikes, restoring 700 acres of estuary habitat. By removing the dikes, the natural processes of the estuary will be restored. This is the single largest estuary project in the Pacific Northwest.

This newly created estuary provides important feeding and rearing habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife, including Chinook salmon and Puget Sound steelhead.

Restoring 700 acres of estuary would increase salt marsh habitat in south Puget Sound by 46 percent.

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board is the main grantor of funding for this project, however, an additional $3.4 million was recently awarded from the federal economic stimulus money earmarked for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service projects across the country.

Intercity Transit celebrated Earth Day with notice that the first of six hybrid diesel-electric buses are on the assembly line.

This is because of congressional stimulus funds for the fuel-efficient buses, which will replace the oldest vehicles in Intercity Transit's 100-vehicle fleet.

Another reason for hybrids is their air pollution reduction. Studies have shown that transportation is Washington State's largest greenhouse gas producer, contributing as much as 68% of harmful emissions.

The benefits go on and on as hybrid buses use less fuel, produce lower emissions, are likely to require less maintenance, have a longer operational life cycle, and provide riders with a smooth, quiet ride.

As gas prices continue to fluctuate more people are considering transit options. Last year Intercity Transit provided over 5 million rides.

Every year Intercity Transit supports the Bicycle Commuter Contest during the month of May - an effort to get people out of their vehicles and onto a bicycle seat as an efficient, and healthy, mode of transportation.

Last year, about 1,500 Thurston County cyclists commuted by bike to work and school, logging 104,000 miles and saving an estimated 92,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions in the single month.

This year, we have 5 participants in our Commissioner’s office logging in the miles, including myself, and Commissioner Valenzuela.

Wish us luck!

For more information about Intercity Transit or the Bicycle Commuter Contest go to: http://www.intercitytransit.com