



## NOAA FISHERIES

Office of  
Habitat  
Conservation

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# Socio-economic Benefits of Habitat Restoration



Divers work in coral nurseries in the Florida Keys.

A healthy economy depends on a healthy environment. NOAA received \$167 million dollars from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009 to restore coastal areas throughout the country. The goal was to scale up NOAA's existing successful restoration efforts to include entire watersheds or landscape important to the environment and the economy. We analyzed data from 125 funded projects to examine their impact on local economies. This analysis determined that coastal restoration projects could provide significant long-term benefits through the rehabilitation and strengthening of the ecosystem services restored areas provide.

## Key Benefits

- Restored tidal wetlands, upland watersheds, and riverine habitats.
- Restored 25,584 acres of habitat, opened 677 miles of stream for fish to reach spawning habitat, and removed 433,397 tons of debris from coastal habitats.
- Expended \$154.1 million dollars on projects to generate \$260.5 million dollars in economic output (sales) annually.
- Contributed \$143.7 million dollars in new or expanded economic activity nationwide.
- The downstream socio-economic benefits of restoring rivers and coastal habitats ranged from \$9.1 to \$47.9 million dollars for recreation and ecosystem services such as flood control and clean water.

## Why is NOAA Fisheries involved?

The NOAA Restoration Center helps communities by removing fish passage barriers, restoring hydrologic reconnection to tidal wetlands and floodplains, rebuilding native oyster populations, and controlling invasive species to prevent loss of coral reef habitat. The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act projects restored a range of critical habitat types, including rivers, wetlands, and shellfish and coral reefs.

## Recovery Act restoration activities supported thousands of jobs

Restoration activities supported a total of 2,280 jobs. Of these, 65 percent were jobs directly created by ARRA funding for project implementation, also known as “direct jobs.” Examples of direct jobs include environmental consultants, engineers, construction workers, geologists, project managers, fishermen, biologists, and divers.

## Socio-economic benefits of healthier rivers and coastal habitats

Some of our ARRA project partners measured the downstream socio-economic benefits of restoration such as healthier rivers and coastal habitats. These benefits include the economic value of recreation (e.g., diving, angling) and ecosystem services such as flood control and clean water. The long-term benefits over the next 50 years represent a significant expansion on the economic return on investment to the economic impacts.

- Restored wetlands and stabilized shoreline along the south shore of Muskegon Lake, Michigan will generate a \$12 million dollar increase in property values, up to \$600,000 dollars in new tax revenue annually, and more than \$1 million dollars in new recreational spending with nearly 65,000 additional visitors annually over 15 years. The total value generated is nearly six times the initial investment.
- Sixty acres of restored freshwater tidal marsh and improved passage to 15 miles of high-quality habitat for chum, coho, threatened Chinook salmon in Washington’s Skagit Delta, are expected to generate an estimated \$21 million dollars in economic benefits by reducing the risk of flood damage and drainage maintenance costs over 50 years.
- Restored urban wetlands in Huntington Beach, California generated carbon storage and sequestration benefits of \$130,000 dollars per year over 50 years. The restoration investment also increased the extent of open water wetlands in the region, enhancing space and aesthetics as reflected in increased residential property values of \$36.3 million dollars.

## Habitat restoration enhanced a sense of community-level stewardship

- Restoration of coral reefs stimulated greater understanding of local history, resulted in a feeling of heightened personal ownership of the bay and its resources, and generated interest in future habitat restoration and conservation projects in the region.
- Residents in coastal Alabama strongly support oyster reef restoration and protection, and a majority would pay additional taxes to protect oyster reefs. Oyster reef habitats were recognized for their overall ecological importance, providing a service by filtering bay water (70 percent of respondents), and for protecting shoreline marsh habitats (80 percent of respondents).

