



PORT SUSAN BAY

IRREPLACEABLE HABITAT

The Nature Conservancy's 4,122-acre preserve encompasses much of the Stillaguamish River estuary. This saltwater nursery boasts marshes, vast mudflats and tidally influenced channels supporting hundreds of thousands of birds, several species of salmon, smelt and clams. Western sandpipers, dunlins and dowitchers swoop over the mudflats. Wrangel Island snow geese gather by the thousands in tidal marshes while hundreds of raptors add to the drama. The Stillaguamish River spills into the bay, mixing freshwater and saltwater, creating extensive estuarine marshes that produce a vast quantity of decaying organic matter. The abundant invertebrate life in the tideflats feed shorebirds and waterfowl, making Port Susan Bay and adjacent Skagit Bay important stops for migratory birds traveling along the Pacific Flyway.

COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION

Port Susan Bay is one of the largest undeveloped bays in Puget Sound with more than 7,000 acres owned by The Nature Conservancy and Whidbey Camano Land Trust. Key stakeholders, including nonprofit conservation, tribal, citizen, local government and industry groups, developed the Port Susan Bay Marine Stewardship Area Plan, identifying key actions for a healthier system. With strong support for conservation, Port Susan Bay has been designated a site of importance for shorebirds by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The preserve is also an important destination during community festivals and events. Collaboration among diverse interest groups and engagement of community members helps keep Port Susan Bay a treasure, valued by those who live near and far.

LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE

Estuary habitat is being restored at Port Susan Bay Preserve, creating a living laboratory for scientists to study:

- The changing marsh habitat and how shorebirds and waterfowl use various habitats.
- Sediment distribution and vegetation response after restoring 150 acres of once diked farmland to estuary habitat.
- Sea level rise and how the impact on Port Susan Bay can guide decisions in estuaries around the Pacific Northwest.
- How river flows and tides interact to create and sustain habitats throughout the range—from tidal freshwater to saltwater marshes.
- Estuarine restoration techniques, including building log jams in the intertidal channels to discover whether they improve habitat for juvenile salmon and other fish.



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KEY PARTNERS

- Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- North Puget Sound Spartina Task Force
- Priscilla Bullitt Collins Trust Northwest Conservation Fund
- Puget Sound Partnership
- Stillaguamish Flood Control District
- Stillaguamish Tribe
- Stillaguamish Watershed Council
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Western Washington University
- United States Geological Survey
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board

VISITING THE PRESERVE

The public is welcome to visit February through October, but prior arrangements are required. Contact Pat Hampton at phampton@tnc.org or (360) 419-3140 at least one week in advance. Visitors are required to complete a liability form prior to their visit.

PORT
SUSAN
BAY

PORT SUSAN
BAY PRESERVE

RESTORATION
PROJECT AREA

0 0.25 0.5 Miles 1:53,000

KEY SPECIES AT PORT SUSAN BAY PRESERVE

FISH

Coho salmon
Pink salmon
Chinook salmon
Chum salmon
Steelhead
Coastal cutthroat trout
Bull trout
English sole
Surf smelt
Three-spine stickleback



BIRDS

Great blue heron
Trumpeter swan
Snow goose
Blue-winged teal
Northern pintail
Northern shoveler
Killdeer
Greater yellowlegs
Long-billed dowitcher
Dunlin



Western sandpiper
Bald eagle
Peregrine falcon
Short-eared owl
Marsh wren

INVERTEBRATES

Baltic macoma clam
Softshell clam
Shore crab

MAMMALS

Coyote
River otter
Long-tailed weasel
Beaver
Muskrat
Townsend's vole
Harbor seal

PLANTS

American bulrush
Maritime bulrush
Lyngby's sedge
Needle spikerush
Seashore saltgrass
Sea arrow-grass
Pickleweed
Redtop
Red alder



JOIN US!

The future of Port Susan Bay Preserve and places like it here and around the world depend on your support. Together we can protect and restore treasured places for people and for nature.

The Nature Conservancy 

Protecting nature. Preserving life.

WashingtonNature.org/PortSusanBay

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