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### FHWA - Office of Public Affairs

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## Biden-Harris Administration Announces First-Ever Grants to Fix More Than 160 Fish Culverts Across the Country, Supporting Jobs, the Environment, Tribal communities, and Commercial Fishing

Wednesday, August 16, 2023

*As Part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's new culvert grant program will support and promote sustainable communities*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) today announced a total of \$196 million going to 59 Tribal, state, and local governments that will fix or remove 169 culvert barriers to improve fish passage. Outdated culverts and other infrastructure can cause roads to flood and severely restrict or altogether block fish passage, which is key to the health of fish runs and important to commercial and recreational fishing, and the health of Tribal communities. The projects also advance a key pillar of the America the Beautiful Initiative by increasing the ecological connectivity of rivers and streams and creating more climate resiliency in our landscapes and communities.

“In communities across the country where people depend on fishing for their livelihoods, culverts are vital infrastructure for ensuring fish passage,” said **U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg**. “Through this investment, we are repairing or removing hundreds of culverts nationwide, protecting jobs, mitigating the risk of flooding, and strengthening local economies.”

The grants announced today will improve approximately 550 miles of stream habitat, often in the watersheds that support iconic fish runs in ecosystems including Yakutat Bay, the Puget Sound, the Columbia River, the Rogue River, the Chesapeake Bay, and Plymouth Harbor. Several fish species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act are expected to benefit from access to pristine habitat as a result of restored passage.

9:00am-5:00pm ET, M-F

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FHWA’s Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) Program invests in healthy fisheries by helping communities remove, repair and redesign culverts and weirs – both engineered structures that impact the flow of water in rivers and streams. Barriers to freshwater migration are a major cause of declining populations of anadromous fish – such as native salmon, steelhead, river herring and lamprey – which are born in freshwater waterways, live primarily in the ocean, but return to freshwater streams to spawn.

“This first round of Culvert grant awards under the Biden-Harris Administration’s Infrastructure Law will improve resilience and reduce maintenance at these waterway crossings while providing ecological, cultural and conservation benefits to communities receiving grants,” said **Federal Highway Administrator Shailen Bhatt**. “The program’s many benefits to the natural environment will spill over into local economies that depend on growing fish populations to sustain tribal and local communities across the nation.”

The 59 awards announced today are located across ten states and include all 14 Tribal governments that applied.

**Culvert AOP Program Awards for Fiscal Year 2022**

State	Totals	
	Funding Amount	Number of Projects
Alaska	\$44,087,431	45
California	\$28,785,490	10
Idaho	\$7,029,950	9
Maine	\$35,119,271	27
Massachusetts	\$2,000,000	3
New Hampshire	\$421,600	1
North Carolina	\$472,000	1
Oregon	\$19,308,792	26

Virginia	\$434,400	1
Washington	\$58,218,424	46
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$195,877,358</b>	<b>169</b>

Grants to recipients in **Washington State** include \$4.2 million for the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe that will be used to replace two complete fish passage barriers on Chicken Coop Creek, in Clallam County, WA. Chicken Coop Creek is the heart of the traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering areas for the S’Klallam People and the project will restore access to 4 miles of spawning and rearing habitat.

Additionally, grant recipients in the Puget Sound watershed in Washington State will receive almost \$45.5 million to reconnect rivers and streams in more than 19 locations, providing safe passage for wild salmon and steelhead and other fish. Many of these projects will help to increase chinook salmon populations in Puget Sound, which will also assist the Endangered Species Act-listed Southern Resident Killer Whales that make Puget sound their home and are sacred to Tribal Nations in the region.

Ten projects in the Columbia River Basin will receive a total of approximately \$18.5 million to restore passageways that will benefit native salmon and steelhead by removing outdated culverts in tributaries that run into the Columbia River.

Grants to recipients in **Alaska** include a \$3.49 million grant for the Eyak Corporation that will be used to replace a failing weir at the outlet of Eyak Lake, Cordova. Both Alaska Native and rural residents of Cordova depend on the Eyak Lake salmon for their livelihoods. For these communities, the commercial value of Sockeye and Coho Salmon fishing in Eyak Lake is estimated at \$1.7-\$2.9 million each year.

The **Maine Department of Transportation** will receive \$9.2 million to replace nine barriers at road crossings in historic coastal fishing communities, which qualify as disadvantaged and underserved communities. This will benefit fish species that are culturally important to the five federally recognized Native American tribes in Maine. Replacing these barriers will improve access to 37 miles of habitat for fish.

There are roughly 68 million culverts carrying roadways that were built with design approaches dating from the 1950s, which did not consider the needs

of aquatic organisms to move up and downstream. The Culvert AOP Program represents a change in the state of practice toward a transformative and more holistic approach to water crossings that will result in more robust fish populations that are critical to local economies and Native communities, and safer, more resilient structures.

In total, FHWA received 102 applications in response to the Notice of Funding Opportunity, open October 2022-February 2023, requesting a total of \$345 million in funding.

More on the Culvert AOP Program is [available here along with a listing of grant awards](#).

President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law included over \$2 billion for fish passage investments across the country, along with other investments from his Investing in America agenda. To help support implementation of Investing in America funding for fish passage, the Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force was established in 2022 by collective agreement of its thirteen member agencies. The purpose of the Task Force is to act as the collaborative strategic entity responsible for coordination and implementation of these funds for fish passage projects across federal agencies to make the largest positive impact possible.

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