

Phase 3 Sauvie Island Restoration—North Management Unit

Columbia County, Oregon



The replacement of an undersized culvert with a refurbished rail car bridge provides fish passage and hydraulic connectivity; inset: initial conditions

Like much of the Lower Columbia, Sauvie Island was altered as it was settled and developed. Important hydrologic and sedimentation processes were interrupted by the influence of the Columbia River dams, installation and maintenance of a flood control levee system, and hydraulic modifications made for agriculture such as earth berms and tide gates. Biohabitats

joined the island restoration project to undertake the construction of the habitat restoration design.

At 26,000 acres, Sauvie Island is one of the largest river islands in the United States. Due to its location at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, Sauvie Island continues to provide important rearing habitat and food web

Over 65 acres of important salmonid rearing habitat was restored by lowering the marsh plain surface, reconnecting surface flows between lakes, and restoring water flows.

exchange for out-migrating juvenile salmonids. The Sauvie Island project site is located in the North Unit of the Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. Owned and managed by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, it provides wildlife habitat as well as opportunities for hunting, fishing, and recreational use. The wildlife area supports several species of salmonids including chum, Chinook, coho, steelhead, and coastal cutthroat. Working in the Sauvie Island wildlife refuge is complicated by remote project sites, presence of sensitive threatened and endangered species, lake and wetland environments, and diverse stakeholders that use the refuge for cattle ranching, hunting, fishing, and river recreation.

CREST oversaw the design, permitting, and implementation of restoration and enhancement actions that maximize habitat potential for juvenile salmon and other wetland-dependent species. Biohabitats was contracted to remove three artificial fish passage barriers and earthen berms, replace a dilapidated culvert with a refurbished rail car bridge, perform marsh plain lowering excavation and marsh and slough channel excavation, dispose and grade excavated materials, provide overall site erosion and sediment control, construct BMPs, and provide site seeding and revegetation services.

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