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Contact: Tony Ingersoll, USDA-NRCS,
Phone: 360/452-8994, Ext. 105 or
360/981-6064 (mobile)

Local Council lands \$1.6 million NASA grant

Dungeness and Elwha River Watersheds to benefit from imaging and stream flow forecast technology

PORT ANGELES, Wash., (April 11, 2006) – A \$1.6 million grant has been awarded to the North Olympic Peninsula Resource Conservation & Development Council (NOP RC&D), to develop and test a user network for a stream flow forecasting model developed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The grant, awarded by NASA, will be used to implement NASA's Hybrid hydrology model on the Dungeness and Elwha River Watersheds in an effort to enhance water usage decisions among all the water users. NOP RC&D is a private, non-profit organization serving Clallam and Jefferson Counties.

According to Tony Ingersoll, Council Coordinator, current stream flow forecasts only provide seasonal volume and statistics for monthly time step. "In order to meet the current and future management needs," Ingersoll said, "new daily management tools are needed to forecast peak and low flows, and to provide other critical water management information."

"This Hybrid-model is needed to improve long- and short-term decisions, such as in-season flow forecasting, water allocation, establishing in-stream flow requirements and groundwater reserves, and for protecting shellfish beds and salmon runs," Ingersoll said.

The grant project, a joint effort of 15 scientists and others from eight major partners, brings NASA imagery and computer modeling technology to two critical watersheds in western Washington. The planning and grant proposal process began a year ago.

"We're taking a model off the shelf – NASA's shelf – and putting it to use," Ingersoll said. "A working network is necessary to get the model functioning for a user group such as the Dungeness River Management Team, in order to be able to get reliable, usable information needed for critical water-use decisions on the river including irrigation, endangered salmon spawning, ground water recharge, etc.," he said.

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Local Council lands \$1.6 million NASA grant continued...

Council President, Mike Doherty, said that this was a local cooperative effort by representatives of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (Battelle) in both Sequim and Richland; Idaho National Lab in Idaho Falls, Idaho; the National Park Service Olympic National Park in Port Angeles; the USDA Natural Resources

Conservation Service's National Water and Climate Center in Portland, Oregon; the National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils in Washington, DC; the Dungeness River Management Team in Sequim; Peninsula College, and Clallam County, both in Port Angeles.

Other partners include the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe who are both members of the NOP RC&D Council.

Mike Doherty, President of the RC&D Council, and Clallam County Commissioner as well, is the Principal Investigator on the project. The council will be the Grant Administrator.

"I appreciate the effort that Tom Martin (a Battelle hydrologist with the Pacific Northwest National Lab in Sequim) and Tony Ingersoll (RC&D Coordinator with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Port Angeles) who put into this project," Doherty said. "They organized a great team of partners on this project," he said, "and they prepared and perfected the grant application."

Doherty also thanked Governor Gregoire, U.S. Senator's Murray and Cantwell, and Congressman Dicks who supported this grant application.

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