35th Anniversary of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
South Slough Reserve, Charleston, Oregon
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As Delivered

- It is a great pleasure to be back in Oregon to help celebrate the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Being on the Oregon coast triggers many fond memories – early morning low tides, quite moments watching a great blue heron stalk its prey, or a gray whale frolic in the kelp, excited students discovering a whole new world revealed at low tide, the unpredictable nature of wind, squalls and storms, the deep appreciation of coastal residents for 'their' coast, the sweetness of fresh Dungeness crab, albacore and salmon, the smell of the sea, and much more. Yes, I do miss the Oregon coast, but I'm greatly enjoying my new job as administrator of NOAA and part of President Obama's science team. The President has made it clear that be believes that good government depends on good science, and that he relies on NOAA for its stellar science, services and stewardship.

- NOAA is a big agency with many responsibilities, from weather and climate observations and forecasting, to ocean and coastal management. One of our outstanding programs is the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Today we celebrate the founding of the first reserve in the reserve system, which began right here at South Slough 35 years ago.

- We are especially fortunate today to have with us some of the founders of this reserve. In particular, I want to single out Bob Younker of the Coquille Tribe, who grew up on the shores of South Slough and was instrumental in guiding state and federal officials around the area as they went about the business of establishing the reserve.
- Some of those officials are here today as well: Bob Bailey, now the director of the Oregon Coastal Program; Carl Brenna now retired as finance director of the Division of State Lands; and Bill Bradbury, who recently ended his second term as Secretary of State, after previously serving 14 years in the Oregon Legislature.
- I would also like to take a moment here to acknowledge the important role of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umqua and Siuslaw, and the

Coquille Tribe. Chief Warren Brainard, Bob Garcia, and Mark Ingersoll – thank you for your contributions. We are so grateful and honored to have partnerships with these two nations and the rich cultural history they offer.

- These individuals and so many others have contributed to the success of the South Slough Reserve over the years. They continue to support the reserve and its work, because they know how important it is to understand and properly manage these vital coastal areas.
- Let me share a little of the history of this reserve. The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 directed NOAA to work with coastal states to create a network of estuarine sanctuaries to serve as living laboratories and classrooms for scientists, students and the public.
- About the same time, concerned citizens in the Coos Bay area were working on a plan to protect the South Slough. They enlisted state officials to endorse a proposed moratorium on development south of Valino Island. When NOAA published a Federal Register Notice in early 1974 seeking nominations for estuarine sanctuaries, Oregon was quick to respond. In June of 1974, NOAA awarded more than $800,000 in matching funds to create the first of what are now 27 reserves around the country.

- The 1987 revision of the Coastal Zone Management Act changed the name of the system from 'estuarine sanctuaries' to 'Estuarine Research Reserves'. But the original concept of a state-federal partnership for research, education and stewardship remained the same.

- Today, the 27 reserves protect more than 1.3 million acres of estuarine lands and waters in 21 states and Puerto Rico. Each reserve is managed by a state agency or university, with matched funding, program guidance and technical assistance from NOAA. Here in Oregon, our state partner is the Department of State Lands, under the leadership of Louise Solliday.

- South Slough Reserve has long been an effective leader in the Research Reserve system, thanks in large part to Mike Graybill, who has been manager here for 24 years, and his outstanding staff.

- South Slough's primary task is to learn about this estuary – how it works, what benefits it provides for fish, wildlife and humans, how it is changing, and what is needed to have it thrive. World class scientists like Dr. Steve Rumrill play a key role in leading the scientific studies. Here are a few examples of some of the research, education and training programs in the Reserve:

- As part of the national system, South Slough benefits from participating in national programs like the System-Wide Monitoring Program (called "SWAMP") that collects both long-term and real-time water quality and weather data.
- Northwest commercial shellfishers use South Slough's real-time "SWAMP" data to know when conditions are risky for harvesting shellfish due to low dissolved oxygen levels or harmful algae, for example.
- Long-term data, particularly as part of national data collection, can spot trends in water quality and other conditions that may help us to understand, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change on our coasts.
- The South Slough Reserve is also part of NOAA's Climate Monitoring Network. The Climate Program Office recently installed a climate station within the reserve that meets the protocols and standards for climate monitoring.
- The science conducted here is the basis for the reserve's education and training programs. Thousands of students and teachers take part in the reserve's educational programs each year. South Slough has contributed to

the development of robust estuarine science curricula available to teachers and students on the Web.

- The Reserve also participates in the system's Coastal Training Program, connecting local decision-makers with technology and science to support effective coastal management. Training programs are developed based on the expressed needs of local decision-makers and help translate reserve science for management purposes.
- The reserve's stewardship program also uses science to support adaptive management approaches to protecting and restoring the habitats and ecosystem processes associated with the South Slough Reserve. All this knowledge can also serve as a reference point for coastal management throughout the region.
- South Slough Reserve can take great pride in its 35 years of service to the region and the nation. But its work is needed now more than ever before.
- The Reserve System will play a crucial role in helping us understand and adapt to the effects of climate change. NOAA's Research Reserves and the National Marine Sanctuaries serve as sentinel sites monitoring changes in

sea level, salinity, acidity, water and air temperature as well as changes in the abundance of diversity of estuarine plants, animals and microbes.

- South Slough Reserve is one of only five reserves that are now intensively monitoring the wetland ecosystem and its relationship to local sea level. They are doing this by integrating monitoring infrastructure from "SWAMP," the National Geodetic Survey, and Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS). This integrated monitoring effort is providing information on the success of wetlands restoration projects and providing a model for monitoring climate change impacts.
- I am confident that South Slough Reserve will continue to lead the way, supporting wise coastal management through sound research and monitoring programs, robust education and training programs and exemplary stewardship, all grounded in solid science.
- The key to success here, past and future, is the strength of the partnerships between NOAA and the State of Oregon, and with all the local partners, including cities, counties, tribes and non-governmental organizations.
- On behalf of NOAA and the Obama Administration, and as a proud Oregonian, I salute you all for your contributions. Thank you.