



2026-2030
Action Agenda
for Puget Sound



2025 Canoe Journey. Credit: Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

TRIBAL LAND AND SOVEREIGNTY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Tribal nations (Tribes) have lived on and alongside the waters of Puget Sound. Families and Tribes of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and other Indigenous nations regularly traveled on canoes throughout Puget Sound and Salish Sea to trade and share their unique cultures. Tribal nations actively managed their ancestral homelands by creating habitat with prescribed burns, limiting fish and wildlife harvests, and sustainably harvesting trees. This management sustained millions of people and was done in accordance with each Tribe's unique values and teachings.

Since the mid-1800's, Puget Sound ecosystems have degraded and now only supply a fraction of the fish, wildlife, and plants that once supported the livelihoods, health, and culture of Tribes throughout the region. Today, nineteen federally recognized Tribes in the Puget Sound watershed continue to live, work, speak their languages, practice their cultures, and manage natural resources. From litigation to civil disobedience, Tribal governments and individuals have been at the forefront of recovering Puget Sound, salmon, and other treaty-protected resources.

Tribes continue to lead Puget Sound recovery efforts today and have made substantial investments. Tribes contribute traditional knowledge of natural resource management gained over thousands of years of living on and managing these lands. They also employ scientific experts who conduct research, monitoring, and evaluation. Scientific findings and monitoring data from Tribal governments have contributed significantly to the body of science that informs recovery efforts. Tribes develop and implement strategic plans that connect science with policy and action, which have contributed to hundreds of successful recovery projects.

As sovereign nations, federally recognized Tribes co-manage the natural resources (species, land, and water) of Washington state as agreed to under treaties negotiated with the Federal Government in 1854 and 1855. The Puget Sound region is covered by four treaties: the Medicine Creek Treaty, the Treaty of Neah Bay, the Treaty of Point Elliot, and the Treaty of Point No Point. Treaties are the Supreme Law of the Land under the U.S. Constitution. When Tribes ceded their land under the treaties, they reserved the right to fish at all usual and accustomed grounds and stations, along with the right to hunt and gather on open and unclaimed land.

United States v. Washington (often referred to as the Boldt Decision) and many other related cases affirmed the Tribes' role as co-managers of treaty-protected resources, such as salmon, and the habitat those resources rely on. The Boldt Decision also affirmed Tribes' right to half of the sustainably harvestable salmon and shellfish. As affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, implicit in this treaty right is the responsibility of Washington state, along with Tribal co-managers, to protect and restore salmon and the habitats needed for salmon to recover and thrive.

Without the persistent and vigorous efforts of Tribes to uphold and defend their treaty and sovereign rights, many salmon runs would be extinct. Threats to Tribes' treaty and sovereign rights remain because salmon, shellfish, and other wildlife populations continue to decline as their habitat is degrading faster than it can be restored and protected.

To learn more about the Puget Sound Partnership's work to partner with Tribes and honor the State's treaty obligations, visit our [Tribal Relations website](#).





LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Look around at the people, places, and natural resources throughout the Puget Sound and Salish Sea region today. What you see and experience are the results of decisions made decades ago – both good and not-so-good. People who came before us foraged foods from our shared waters, built homes and businesses that helped our region grow, and took actions that shaped a future they themselves did not see.

For decades, people across the region have figured out what needs to be done and – importantly – collaborated on solutions to complex challenges. This work has never been easy and rarely happens quickly. This 2026-2030 Action Agenda represents a deeply collaborative effort to restore the historical abundance of natural resources that have supported communities for millennia and to honestly present what it will take for future generations to experience what we value today.

At the heart of our shared work is people. While new to this role as Executive Director, I have witnessed and been a part of Puget Sound protection and recovery for decades. I have seen Tribes lead, innovate, and adapt to reduce impacts and enhance natural resources. As new residents move to our region, I have seen them connect to Puget Sound and each other by enjoying unique opportunities like fishing and shellfishing. And I have heard the squeals of joy when visitors spot their first orca.

Puget Sound, and its connected lands and waters, are truly unique and they always have been. Our region has been a place of abundance – and still can be for all communities. As we learn more about our collective impacts, we can adjust course. We already have in some ways. In fact, today we see incremental steps toward recovery that directly result from timely investments, political will, and public support – one shellfish bed, one protected healthy shoreline, and one riparian restoration project at a time.

Thank you to the hundreds of people representing Tribes, agencies, non-profits, businesses, and the public who shared their knowledge and helped shape the strategies and tactics in this Action Agenda. This sharpens the focus on what to work on next – and how to continue successfully working together.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL LETTER

To the People of Puget Sound,

Puget Sound is unique, beautiful, and resilient. However, the actions of humans locally and around the world are having profound impacts.

The human population in Western Washington is steadily growing, and each year brings changes in weather patterns that would have been unimaginable to previous generations. It is imperative that our region focuses our limited time and resources on the greatest challenges facing Puget Sound. The 2026-2030 Action Agenda is our updated, visionary recovery plan for Puget Sound. We mark its release with optimism that there is still time to protect and restore the ecosystem, but to do so, we must face these challenges head on.

In the 2025 State of the Sound, our Puget Sound Vital Signs – which measure the health of the ecosystem around us – tell us that there is more work to do to restore habitat, improve water quality, and strengthen communities. They also tell us that where we have built political will and made sustained investments, the ecosystem is improving:

- ▶ Estuaries and floodplains – key habitats for salmon and other species – are being reconnected;
- ▶ Summer chum salmon in Hood Canal and the Strait of Juan de Fuca are close to their recovery targets; and
- ▶ The condition of freshwater streams across the region is improving or remaining stable.

The Leadership Council is focused on supporting the Puget Sound Partnership to achieve its statutory goals: functioning habitat; thriving species and food webs; healthy water quality; healthy human population; and vibrant human quality of life. We do this by setting and advocating for federal, Tribal and state policy priorities, holding forums with our partners to help overcome barriers they are facing, and maintaining and mobilizing funding.

The Action Agenda grapples with both new and ongoing challenges to the ecosystem, and the plan focuses the collective Puget Sound community on specific commitments that benefit people, salmon, and the ecosystem. This plan is rooted in sound science, guided by robust Tribal consultation and community input, and supported by partners from across the recovery network.

This Action Agenda is intentionally aligned with the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan and generates hundreds of partner Commitments in the Puget Sound Implementation Plan. This system ensures joint implementation of both the Action Agenda and the Salmon Recovery Plan, helping us identify and advance the most impactful actions to benefit both strategic recovery plans.

As the governing board of the Puget Sound Partnership, we offer sincere thanks to the hundreds of partners who helped craft Strategies and Actions for the 2026-2030 Action Agenda along with the Commitments made by members of the recovery community to implement this recovery plan. The future of Puget Sound rests squarely on these contributions and the willingness of our partners to jump into implementation.

The Action Agenda charts the course for addressing the challenges we face to restore Puget Sound. It is up to all of us to commit to implementing this plan and preserving our shared home. We hope you will join us.

2026-2030 ACTION AGENDA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since time immemorial, the sparkling waters and dramatic mountain peaks of the Puget Sound region have been home to a thriving diversity of life, supporting healthy ecosystems and vibrant human communities. It has served as the epicenter of many communities' livelihood and culture. As more people have moved to the region seeking recreational and economic opportunities, human activity has increasingly begun to threaten and damage this critical biodiverse region. The Puget Sound recovery community is charged with finding ways to preserve and heal the region, so that it may continue to be a home to people and the natural environment in which we live.

The 2026-2030 Action Agenda provides a roadmap for the next four years of Puget Sound recovery, laying out Strategies and Actions that can be taken to protect and restore the region. It builds on more than a decade and a half of collaborative, science-driven planning and implementation, numerous local and regional recovery plans, Tribal consultation, input by experts and advisory groups, and feedback from a wide range of partners.

In 2007, the Washington State Legislature adopted a series of statutory goals for a healthy and safe Puget Sound ([RCW 90.71.300](#)): healthy human population, vibrant quality of life, thriving species and food web, functioning habitat, and healthy water quality. The Action Agenda articulates clear, actionable steps that can be taken to achieve these statutory goals. The Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) measures progress towards the statutory goals using [Vital Signs](#) and [Vital Sign Indicators](#), as well as progress on regional implementation using desired outcomes, [Progress Indicators](#), and tracking a variety of implementation activities.

The Action Agenda also fulfills the Partnership's statutory mandate and purpose articulated by the Clean Water Act's National Estuary Program (NEP).

This Action Agenda improves upon previous iterations by expanding the use of Vital Sign and Progress Indicators and targets. It incorporates Commitments and Ongoing Program Targets implementation, and captures a more comprehensive representation of the recovery community's ongoing work.

The Action Agenda organizes recovery priorities in two chapters:

- ▶ The Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery chapter focuses on the areas of work needed to achieve recovery. These include securing funding, conducting critical research and monitoring, building trust and relationships with local partners, strengthening leadership, and developing the green workforce. The guidance and principles of the Strategies and Actions in this chapter apply to all Topics in the Recovery Plan.
- ▶ The Recovery Plan outlines Actions—organized by Topics and Strategies—that can be carried out across the landscape and within institutions to support progress towards statutory recovery goals.

Together, these chapters lay the foundation for four more years of collaborative regional work to restore and protect Puget Sound.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION AGENDA IS GUIDED BY:

- ▶ 20 Recovery Plan Topics that define priority focus areas within Puget Sound recovery
- ▶ 87 collaboratively developed, science-informed Strategies
- ▶ 547 Actions with key opportunities

The Action Agenda Guides Adaptive and Coordinated Implementation

The Action Agenda's planning framework is based on the principles of adaptive management ([Appendix II](#)). The adaptive management framework describes the Partnership's approach for results-based management. The framework is applied by the Partnership and others implementing the Action Agenda with the goal of improving science-based recovery of the Puget Sound ecosystem. This approach helps to ensure that ecosystem recovery priorities are based on the best available information about the effectiveness of management investments.

Adaptive management is also supported through collaborative implementation pathways. For example, many of the Strategies in the Action Agenda are informed by the Implementation Strategies in Puget Sound.

New to the 2026-2030 Action Agenda, the Partnership developed an integrated [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) to advance two of the region's recovery plans: the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum ([Salmon Addendum](#)) and the Action Agenda. The Puget Sound Implementation Plan was created to better coordinate Puget Sound recovery efforts, help partners work more efficiently toward shared goals, and highlight activities and programs that benefit both ecosystem and salmon recovery efforts. It includes over 300 Commitments describing how partners will implement Actions in both the Action Agenda and the Salmon Addendum, allowing us to track progress and hold ourselves accountable.

COMMITMENTS ALLOW PARTNERS TO SHOW LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVELY HIGHLIGHT THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT ONE OR MORE ACTIONS FROM THE ACTION AGENDA. THEY ARE WRITTEN USING A SMART (SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE, RELEVANT, AND TIMEBOUND) FRAMEWORK.

Strategies and Actions Advance Shared Recovery Goals

The Action Agenda includes Strategies and Actions that, when implemented, move us closer to our statutory recovery goals.

Partners across the region implement projects, policies, and programs to recover Puget Sound. For these efforts to be the most effective, partners rely on a shared foundation that supports their work. Building and maintaining this strong foundation is one of the Partnership's primary roles in the recovery system. The Topics covered in the Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery chapter focus on the institutions, processes, resources, and people needed to achieve our shared recovery goals. Implementing the Strategies and Actions within these Topics will lead to an improved recovery network and result in more effective and efficient on-the-ground ecosystem restoration and protection.

Following the Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery chapter, the Recovery Plan includes Strategies and Actions designed to reduce pressures and stressors impacting the health of the ecosystem and communities. The Recovery Plan is organized into 20 Topics that represent the region's priorities for recovery partners. These Topics are further organized into themes:

- ▶ Healthy Communities focuses on human health by reducing exposure to toxic chemicals, improving public awareness of health hazards, protecting outdoor recreational spaces, and ensuring abundant and harvestable salmon, which are a vital species for the health of communities and cultures in the region. A healthy community is one that lives alongside and as part of nature, and that shares the landscape in a respectful and responsible way.
- ▶ Sustainable Land Use is centered on building a resilient and healthy region as the population continues to grow. Strategies in this theme focus on integrated planning across the region that protects working lands, strengthens shared priorities, and promotes sustainable development.
- ▶ Resilient Habitat prioritizes the health of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that are critical to the diverse species that live here. These habitats are supported by Strategies that increase monitoring and research, ensure the implementation of conservation and restoration projects, improve watershed-scale prioritization, and promote responsible community-based stewardship of key habitats.
- ▶ Clean Water and Harvestable Shellfish focuses on impacts to Puget Sound waterways, which affect the health of the entire region. This theme aims to reduce pollution from working lands runoff, wastewater systems, and vessels by increasing education, ensuring funding for incentive programs, and strengthening regulations where needed.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF PUGET SOUND RECOVERY ARE:

- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Research and Monitoring
- ▶ Good Governance
- ▶ Strategic Leadership and Collaboration
- ▶ Workforce Development
- ▶ Outreach and Behavior Change



Project partners conducting a site assessment to evaluate shoreline conditions and identify opportunities for habitat restoration. Credit: Chase Nuuhiwa

The Puget Sound Recovery Community Collaborates to Chart the Action Agenda

Intentional and robust collaboration with partners in the region—including state and federal agencies, Tribal governments, businesses, environmental nonprofits, and community organizations—helps shape a shared vision for Puget Sound’s recovery.

The Partnership maintains this collaboration by:

- ▶ Conducting formal Tribal consultation processes with all 19 federally recognized Tribes in the Puget Sound region.
- ▶ Briefing the Management Conference and asking for strategic guidance.
- ▶ Hosting workshops with over 300 subject matter experts and community members.

In the process to update the 2026-2030 Action Agenda, the Partnership engaged the support of over 300 subject matter experts through a series of workshops and two comment periods. These engagements also helped the Partnership identify and amplify local recovery priorities within the region, such as those laid out in Local Integrating Organization (LIO) Action Plans.

By engaging subject matter experts, Tribal co-managers, board members, and the public, the Partnership brings various perspectives and priorities together into a unified plan for Puget Sound recovery. This Action Agenda is also the first to complete an Environmental Justice Assessment, helping to ensure that the course we’re on is one that will equitably support communities across the region.

With defined priorities, robust science, and committed partners, the next four years present an opportunity to build on the progress and partnerships that have supported Puget Sound recovery over the last 20 years. By following through on the Actions outlined in this Action Agenda and adapting as needed, we can advance meaningful progress for the ecosystems and communities that depend on a healthy Puget Sound.

LIO ACTION PLANS

These locally focused plans for the Action Agenda Topics translate the broader recovery goals into specific and actionable projects and actions. They also identify common barriers across LIOs to address at the regional level.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Puget Sound: A National Treasure at Risk

Puget Sound is a unique place that supports our health, economy, environment, and quality of life. It makes up the southern half of the Salish Sea, which extends across the U.S.-Canada border. Tribal nations have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial and continue to co-manage them today with federal and state governments. The region's snowcapped mountains and sparkling waters attract people and businesses from around the world. But while it may look pristine, Puget Sound is in serious trouble.



Puget Sound is the second largest estuary in the United States and includes a complex mix of marine waters, wetlands, cities, rivers, farmlands, forests, and mountains. More than 5 million people live here across 13 counties (Figure 1). Life in Puget Sound evolved and adapted to thrive in the region's unique landscape and climate. The Salish Sea once supported a vast and balanced web of life, from tiny shellfish on the sea floor to eagles soaring overhead. Indigenous communities and Tribes have long called Puget Sound home, caring for the lands and waters that have sustained them.

Over the past 200 years, however, the ecosystem has been heavily damaged, putting many of our region's most iconic, cherished, and economically important natural resources at risk. Rapid economic growth led to overharvesting and widespread pollution. Many healthy habitats have been replaced by industrial centers, farms, homes, ports, businesses, and roads, often without considering the health of the broader ecosystem. What was once a balanced and connected environment is now degraded and fragmented.

Despite decades of recovery efforts, progress has not kept pace with ongoing pressures. As more people move to the Puget Sound region, we need stronger collaboration across sectors and communities to ensure that we protect the ecosystem while also creating affordable housing options, supporting good-paying jobs, and building healthy communities.



Figure 1. Map of the Puget Sound National Estuary Program area.

The Puget Sound Partnership

In 2007, the Washington State Legislature created our state agency, the Puget Sound Partnership, with bipartisan support. Our responsibilities include:

- ▶ Protecting and restoring Puget Sound as a treasured place that supports a high quality of life, local communities, and the natural environment.
- ▶ Bringing people and organizations together to address pollution, habitat loss, and other urgent challenges.
- ▶ Providing transparent, science-based leadership that tracks progress and ensures public funds are spent responsibly.
- ▶ Creating and carrying out a shared Action Agenda that serves as our regional Puget Sound recovery plan, measures results, and guides recovery efforts across the region (RCW 90.71.300).

Today, we serve as a backbone organization in the region's ecosystem recovery efforts, providing strategic leadership and coordination. As a Washington state agency that works closely with federal partners like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), we lead the development and implementation of the Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan—two key regional plans that unite hundreds of partners around shared goals. These planning tools also satisfy both federal and state requirements.

We bring together Tribes, government agencies, nonprofits, academic institutions, and community groups to ensure recovery efforts are based in science and reflect the needs and interests of communities across Puget Sound. We also play a central role in identifying funding needs, supporting partner projects, and advocating for state and federal investments.

In addition to coordination, we build trust and accountability by coaching organizations to adapt recovery strategies and actions to fulfill their unique needs. This encourages learning from setbacks and a culture of shared responsibility. Together, these efforts strengthen long-term commitments to restoring the health of Puget Sound.

State statute defines our structure, which includes an Executive Director, staff, and three boards: the Leadership Council, the Ecosystem Coordination Board, and the Science Panel. Our work is also guided by several advisory councils, including the Salmon Recovery Council, the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP), and the Partnership Tribal Co-management Council. Together, these groups support the development of shared goals, ensure accountability across the recovery network, and encourage implementation of the Action Agenda. Board decisions rely on best-available science, Indigenous and other local knowledge, evaluation and monitoring efforts, as well as policy and economic considerations. The role of each of these boards and councils is described in more detail in [Appendix III](#).

We also work with local watershed groups, such as the Hood Canal Coordinating Council, the designated local management board for the rehabilitation of the Hood Canal (RCW 90.88.020), to support recovery efforts (RCW 90.71.260). We created Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs) to identify local recovery priorities and implement priority actions aligned with both local and regional recovery goals found in the Action Agenda. LIOs bring together Tribal and local governments, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and communities to strengthen relationships, coordinate projects, find funding, share research, and identify science-based ecosystem recovery strategies and actions that reflect community needs and values. There are currently 10 active LIOs across the Puget Sound. A more detailed description of LIOs and the role they play in Puget Sound recovery is in Appendix III.



2025 Puget Sound Day on the Sound. Credit: Jon Bridgman



Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. Credit: Randall Williams

The National Estuary Program

In 1987, Congress established the National Estuary Program (NEP) through amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) to address pollution, development, and overuse in the nation's estuaries. The NEP is a non-regulatory program administered by the EPA, which recognizes that "the Nation's estuaries are of great importance for fish and wildlife resources and recreation and economic opportunity."

Since our founding, we have worked closely with the NEP to protect and restore the water quality and ecological integrity of Puget Sound, one of the original 11 estuaries identified for priority consideration. Today, there are 28 estuaries of national significance located along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts and in Puerto Rico.

The CWA authorizes the EPA to provide grants to local NEPs to develop and implement Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs), and to award competitive grants for projects that "are best able to address urgent, emerging, and challenging issues that threaten the ecological and economic well-being of the estuaries" or relate to coastal resiliency of the estuaries.

Each of the 28 estuaries in the NEP has its own local estuary program, governed by a management conference. These conferences consist of federal agencies (such as the EPA), state and local governments, Tribes, industry, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the public. Section 320 of the CWA requires management conferences to guide the protection and restoration of estuaries of national significance. The management conference is also responsible for assessing trends in water quality, natural resources, and uses of the estuary; collecting and evaluating data on toxics, nutrients, and natural resources to identify the causes of environmental problems; and examining how both point and nonpoint sources impact the health of the estuarine zone. Based on this work, the management conference develops a CCMP that recommends priority actions to restore and maintain the estuary, and tracks progress of the actions over time.

We rely on our management conference (Figure 2) to fulfill our statutory responsibilities and to identify the challenges, priorities, and issues facing the Puget Sound estuary. These are captured in the region's CCMP—the Action Agenda—which is developed through a collaborative, partner-driven process. The Action Agenda reflects shared expertise and perspectives of the management conference and ensures that recovery priorities are grounded in shared regional knowledge and aligned with the requirements of Section 320.

Federal funding, including required non-federal matching funds, will not be used for activities that are determined to be inconsistent with statutory requirements, administration priorities, or existing Executive Orders.

We also work closely with three Strategic Implementation Leads (SILs) to coordinate our work and develop the Action Agenda. The EPA is responsible for investing NEP and Puget Sound Geographic funds towards strategic investments and projects that implement the Action Agenda (CWA Section 320(g)), such as the Habitat, Shellfish, and Stormwater SILs. These investments help build relationships, institutional capacity, and the scientific foundation needed to overcome barriers to recovery. A more detailed description of SILs and the role they play in Puget Sound Recovery is in Appendix III.

PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP AND THE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

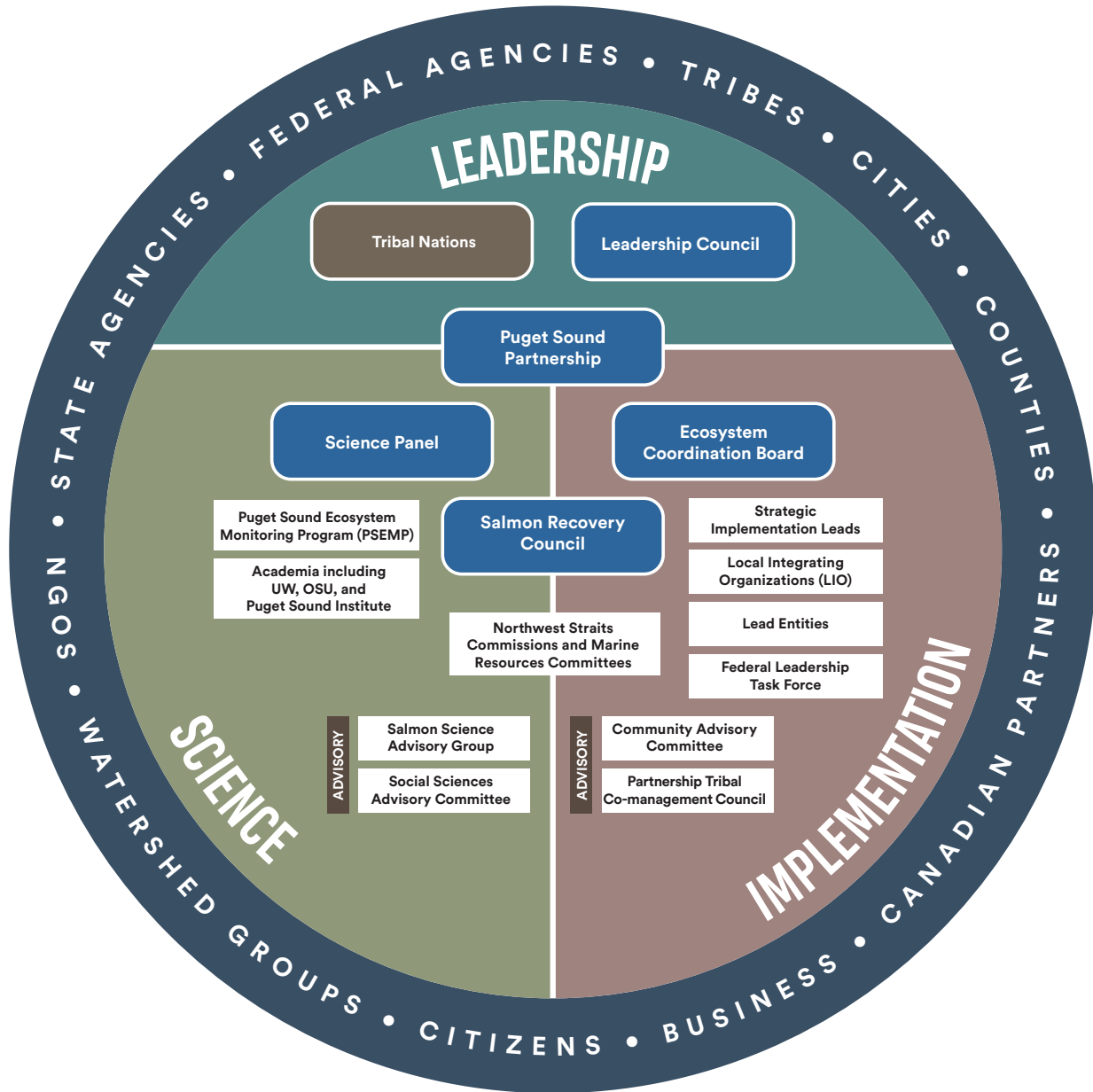


Figure 2. Puget Sound Partnership serves as a backbone organization that coordinates diverse stakeholders to accelerate Puget Sound recovery. The Partnership works closely with Tribes and its boards to provide leadership, collect and share science, and coordinate efficient implementation of priority actions. Leadership, Science, and Implementation are continually informed by on-the-ground recovery partners, local governments, federal partners, and residents across the region.



Local partners executing complex habitat enhancement projects to support regional recovery goals. Credit: Jesse Barham, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Action Agenda

The Action Agenda is the region’s shared plan to restore and protect Puget Sound. It fulfills our statutory responsibilities under state law, federal requirements established under Section 320 of the CWA, and the accompanying CCMP guidance developed by the EPA National Estuary Program. Under state law (RCW 90.71.310), we must develop and regularly update the Action Agenda for the Washington State Legislature. The Action Agenda must meet federal requirements and policies so it can serve as Puget Sound’s CCMP. By meeting these dual mandates, the Action Agenda acts as the central roadmap for Puget Sound recovery—aligning state priorities, federal requirements, and the collaborative work of partners across the region.

The Action Agenda also guides the work of the Puget Sound Federal Leadership Task Force (Task Force), established under Section 126 of the CWA. Section 126 created the Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office within the EPA to coordinate federal efforts and ensure they align with and support implementation of the Action Agenda. The Program Office’s director works across agencies to align priorities and achieve measurable outcomes under the Action Agenda (CWA Sections 126(b)(2)(A)(i)–(ii)).

Under Section 126(b)(4), the director also:

- ▶ Coordinates EPA activities related to Puget Sound recovery.
- ▶ Aligns EPA actions with the Action Agenda, Salmon Recovery Plans, the Treaty Rights at Risk Initiative, and the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program.
- ▶ Serves on the Task Force.
- ▶ Tracks EPA’s progress toward Action Agenda and Federal Action Plan objectives.
- ▶ Acts as a liaison with Canadian and international partners on Salish Sea restoration.

The Task Force, formally established in Section 126(c), encourages federal agencies to align their work with Puget Sound recovery priorities. It also updates a Puget Sound Federal Action Plan every five years to advance the goals and actions in the Action Agenda and related efforts.

The 2026–2030 Action Agenda builds on previous versions and charts the next phase of Puget Sound recovery. Key changes from the 2022–2026 Action Agenda are outlined in [Appendix I](#). Developed collaboratively and grounded in science and partner input, this Action Agenda defines the statutory goals, outcomes, strategies, and actions needed to reduce key pressures and strengthen Puget Sound’s resilience. It reflects the shared input and priorities of Tribes, federal and state agencies, local governments, community organizations, and other partners, and is designed to guide funding and policy decisions, and support the leadership needed to accelerate recovery efforts.

Companion plans to the Action Agenda

New to the 2026-2030 Action Agenda, we developed an integrated [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) (Implementation Plan) to support two of the region's recovery plans—the [2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum](#) (Salmon Addendum) and the 2026-2030 Action Agenda (Figure 3). The Implementation Plan is designed to better coordinate and combine the many ongoing and emerging recovery efforts across Puget Sound, helping partners work more efficiently toward shared goals. It also responds to the EPA's 2024 Program Evaluation by strengthening how salmon recovery is integrated within broader ecosystem efforts. In addition, 20 priority Actions from the Salmon Addendum are incorporated in related Action Agenda Topics in the Recovery Plan.

TURNING PLANS INTO ACTIONS

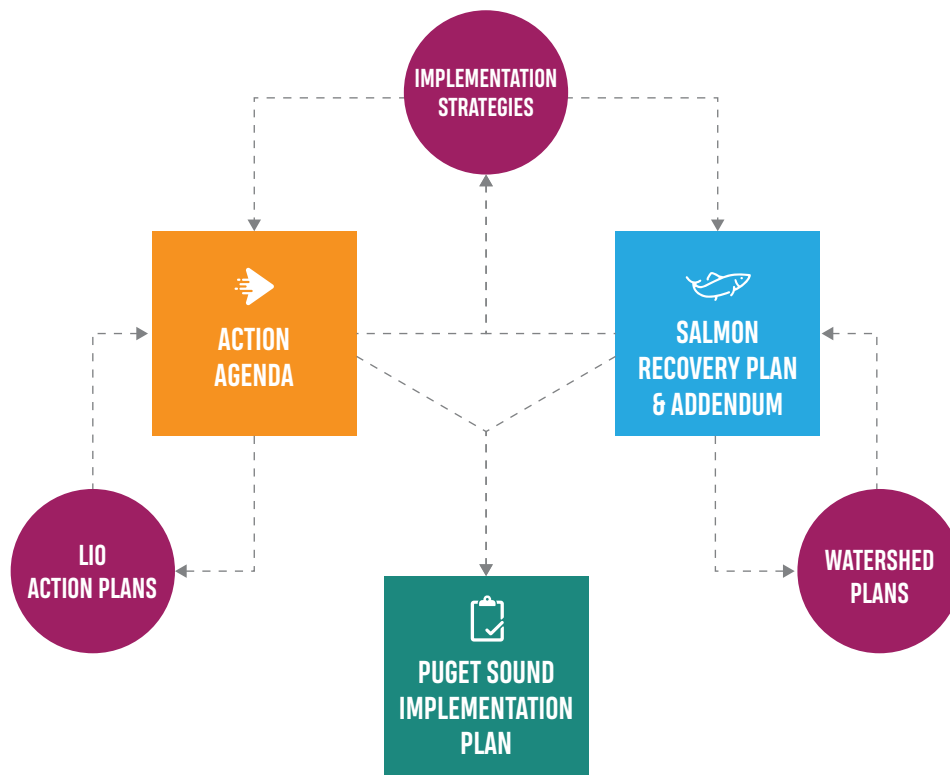


Figure 3. Implementation Strategies inform the Action Agenda and the Salmon Recovery Plan & Addendum. Actions from those two plans turn into Commitments in the Puget Sound Implementation Plan. They also inform location-specific plans in watersheds across the Puget Sound—LIO Action Plans for ecosystem recovery and Watershed Plans for salmon recovery.

The Implementation Plan includes more than 300 Commitments made by dozens of partners to implement Actions described in the Puget Sound recovery plans. Each Commitment is a short statement written using a SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound). Every Commitment in the plan implements one or more of the Actions in one or both recovery plans. The Implementation Plan is organized by Action Agenda Topic and the online Action Agenda Explorer displays all relevant Commitments for each Topic.

Commitments will be tracked annually through a survey of Commitment owners, and progress will be shared in the [Action Agenda Explorer](#). Our Planning and Salmon Teams will also work with partners to update existing Commitments and add new ones over time.

We track progress of the Action Agenda by producing the [State of the Sound](#) report every two years, the most recent of which was released in 2025. The State of the Ecosystem chapter of the 2025 State of the Sound provides the latest updates on Vital Signs and their indicators, which track the status and trends of key parts of the ecosystem to understand how Puget Sound's health is changing over time (Figure 4). The State of the Recovery Effort chapter reports the progress of the 2022-2026 Action Agenda and helps us understand how our region's investments, advocacy, and policy changes are helping to restore the ecosystem.

SUMMARY OF THE 2025 STATE OF THE SOUND



Figure 4. The State of the Sound is Puget Sound Partnership's biennial report on the region's collective effort to protect and restore Puget Sound. These findings were published in November 2025.



Restoring ecosystem health ensures that future generations can continue to engage with and learn from our region's vital nearshore habitats.. Credit: Chase Nuuhiwa

Puget Sound Recovery Vision and Guiding Statutory Goals

In 2018, our Leadership Council adopted the following vision for Puget Sound recovery:

“We are people who care about Puget Sound. We span borders and boundaries, sectors, and strata. We envision a future in which generations can hear the calls of whales, witness the spawning of salmon, taste locally harvested shellfish, swim in clean water, and experience the unique cultural fabric that ties our region together. Our vision includes a resilient ecosystem—one that can adapt to the impacts of climate change and the pressures of a growing human population, while meeting the needs of its native creatures. Our vision includes a thriving economy, sustainable farms and forests, and human communities with high quality of life and the businesses that support them. And most importantly, our vision includes a broad community of engaged citizens who commit to save Puget Sound.”

This vision continues to guide our work to meet both state and federal goals. In 2007, the Washington State Legislature adopted the following statutory goals for a healthy and safe Puget Sound ([RCW 90.71.300](#)):

- ▶ Healthy human population. A healthy population supported by a healthy Puget Sound that is not threatened by changes in the ecosystem.
- ▶ Vibrant quality of life. A quality of human life that is sustained by a functioning Puget Sound ecosystem.
- ▶ Thriving species and food web. Healthy populations of native species in Puget Sound, including a vast food web.
- ▶ Functioning habitat. A healthy Puget Sound where freshwater, estuary, nearshore, marine, and upland habitats are protected, restored, and sustained. An ecosystem that is supported by groundwater levels, as well as by river and streamflow levels that can sustain people, fish, and wildlife, and the natural functions of the environment.
- ▶ Healthy water quality. Fresh and marine waters and sediments that are high enough quality to support water that is safe for drinking, swimming, and other human uses and enjoyment, and are not harmful to the native marine mammals, fish, birds, and shellfish.



CHAPTER 2: RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

The Action Agenda describes Strategies and Actions that, if implemented, will help improve and protect water quality, protect habitat, reduce habitat conversion, increase shellfish and salmon populations, adapt to extreme weather events, and engage the public through education, outreach, and stewardship. The Action Agenda's planning framework is based on the principles of adaptive management ([Appendix II](#)). Two companion chapters support the Action Agenda: Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery and the Recovery Plan.

The Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery chapter focuses on essential—but often underrecognized—areas of work needed to achieve recovery. These include securing funding, conducting critical research and monitoring, building trust and relationships, strengthening leadership, developing the workforce, and supporting outreach. The guidance and principles of Strategies and Actions in this chapter apply to all Topics in the Recovery Plan and improve all Vital Signs. Implementers should consider how these Strategies and Actions can guide, support, and strengthen their efforts to advance Puget Sound recovery. Integrating these Strategies and Actions into ecosystem recovery activities enhances the overall effectiveness of on the ground projects and program implementation.

The Recovery Plan outlines the actions that must be carried out to improve the physical, biological, ecological, and chemical conditions of Puget Sound. The Recovery Plan articulates what we need to achieve to see improvements in the Vital Signs. The Strategies and Actions in the Recovery Plan should guide natural resource investments and policies for the Puget Sound.

Targets (listed in [Appendix I](#)) are used to provide a vision for long-term recovery and identify near-term waypoints that will help us improve our Vital Signs. Targets help us to meet our state and federal statutory obligations to monitor, assess, improve, and communicate progress towards recovering and protecting Puget Sound. They provide an agreed-upon way to evaluate conditions and serve as a tool to hold ourselves and partners accountable.

The 2026-2030 Action Agenda is organized into five core elements:

1. Measurable Goals and Monitoring Outcomes
2. Strategic Planning
3. Coordinated Implementation
4. Performance Reporting
5. Adaptive Management and Updates



HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

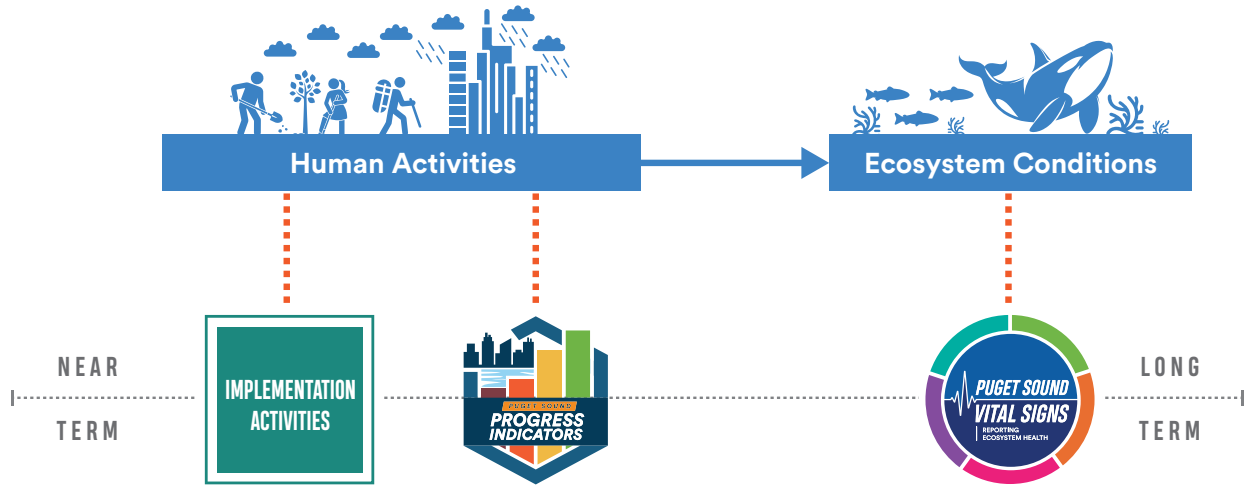


Figure 5. The Puget Sound Partnership tracks implementation activities and Progress Indicators, which are changes to human activities that can be observed in the short term. Over long periods of time, improved human activities will lead to improvements in ecosystem conditions, which PSP tracks and measures using Puget Sound Vital Signs.

1. Measurable Goals and Outcomes

To meet the urgency and magnitude of the challenge we face, the Action Agenda emphasizes a multi-benefit approach. We measure progress towards Puget Sound statutory goals using [Vital Signs](#) and [Vital Sign Indicators](#), and progress on regional implementation using desired outcomes, [Progress Indicators](#), and Implementation Activities (Figure 5).

Statutory goals are defined by the Washington State Legislature and adopted by the management conference. The five statutory goals are healthy human population, vibrant quality of life, thriving species and food web, functioning habitat, and healthy water quality (Figure 6).

Vital Signs measure Puget Sound’s ecosystem health and assess progress toward our statutory goals. Each of these goals are expressed with one or more of the 23 Vital Signs that represent important parts of the ecosystem (for example, marine water, economic vitality, and local foods). The Puget Sound Vital Signs capture the values of the recovery community and are measured by one or more corresponding Vital Sign Indicator.

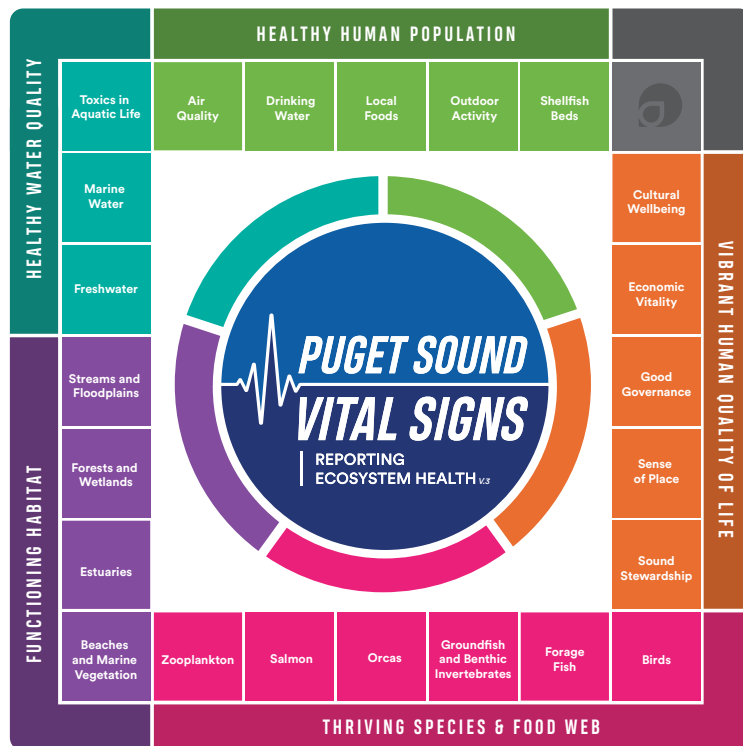


Figure 6: Vital Signs track ecosystem health and are grouped (by color) according to five statutory goals.

Vital Sign Indicators are monitored and reported on by a variety of partners and help us understand the status and trends for each Vital Sign. The Partnership tracks the condition of the Vital Signs with the use of 73 Vital Sign Indicators (for example acres of harvestable shellfish), some of which are yet to be developed. Vital Sign Indicator reports are summarized and communicated in the biennial [State of the Sound](#) and on [Puget Sound Info](#).

Vital Sign Indicator Targets assess progress towards achieving our statutory goals. Six targets for Vital Sign Indicators were adopted in 2022 and provide a measurable vision for long-term recovery. The Vital Sign Indicator Targets are:

- ▶ Number of Southern Resident killer whales: By 2030, increase the Southern Resident killer whale population from 74 individual whales in 2021 to 86 individuals. By 2050, increase the population to 110 individuals.
- ▶ Chinook salmon abundance: By 2050, two or more populations of natural origin Chinook salmon in each biogeographic area meet their abundance recovery goals to achieve self-sustaining, harvestable salmon runs and we see sustained, measurable increases in natural-origin Chinook salmon abundance in all populations.
- ▶ Toxics in aquatic life: By 2030, 95 percent of the samples gathered across Puget Sound habitats exhibit a declining trend of contaminant levels or are below thresholds of concern for species or human health. By 2050, 95 percent of the samples gathered across Puget Sound habitats exhibit monitored contaminant levels below thresholds of concern for species or human health and show no increasing trends.
- ▶ Eelgrass site status: By 2030, see no significant difference between the number of sites with increases and declines in eelgrass area in each of three sub-regions of Puget Sound (no net loss). By 2050, sites with long-term increases in eelgrass area significantly outnumber sites with declines in each of three sub-regions of Puget Sound.
- ▶ Shellfish beds: Beginning in 2022, achieve an annual net improvement of at least 500 classified commercial shellfish acres in Puget Sound, based on a three-year rolling average.
- ▶ Swimming beaches: Beginning in 2022, 95 percent of core beaches meet safe swimming standards annually.

Desired outcomes describe the changes in human activities needed to improve Vital Sign Indicators. In the 2022-2026 Action Agenda, 11 desired outcomes were identified that benefit multiple Vital Signs. Work that progresses any of these 11 desired outcomes will result in improvements to multiple Vital Sign Indicators.

The multi-benefit desired outcomes that the Action Agenda seeks to achieve are:

1. Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
2. Protect agricultural lands and working forests from conversion
3. Restore natural flows, fish passage, flooding, and tidal inundation to freshwater and marine systems by removing structural barriers or altering their management (including from major infrastructure)
4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator
7. Prevent spills of oil and hazardous substances
8. Ensure sustainable harvest of native wild fish and shellfish populations and support treaty-reserved fishing rights
9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities
10. Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance
11. Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and that populations and communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes

Progress Indicators track the implementation of Strategies and Actions within a Topic and assess the advancement of desired outcomes. The development, monitoring, and assessment of Progress Indicators help the recovery community understand barriers to recovery, focus planning efforts, and adaptively manage plans. Progress Indicators are the bridge between our shorter-term planning documents, and longer-term statutory goals and Vital Sign Indicator Targets. Progress Indicators describe reductions in harmful effects on the ecosystem and changes in human activities that are necessary to support ecosystem recovery and achieve statutory goals. The status of Progress Indicators is reported in biennial State of the Sound reports and online on Puget Sound Info.

Progress Indicator Targets quantitatively define short- and medium-term success for recovering Puget Sound. They also assess Puget Sound and salmon recovery progress. We are actively developing a portfolio of targets for Progress Indicators, which will serve as implementation tracking and adaptive management tools for the Action Agenda. This Action Agenda has Progress Indicator Targets for four of the Topics in [Appendix I](#), with more under development.

2. Strategic Planning

The Action Agenda includes Strategies and Actions that, when implemented, achieve our desired outcomes, improve multiple Vital Signs, and move us closer to our statutory recovery goals. The Strategies and Actions are organized by Topic, with each Topic supporting specific Vital Signs and their associated statutory goals. (Figure 7).

Themes describe the desired future conditions that the Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery and the Recovery Plan are working towards—Healthy Communities, Sustainable Land Use, Resilient Habitats, and Clean Water & Harvestable Shellfish. The Topics within each Theme highlight the primary challenges and opportunities that must be addressed to move toward these conditions.

HIERARCHY OF TOPIC, STRATEGY, ACTION, COMMITMENTS

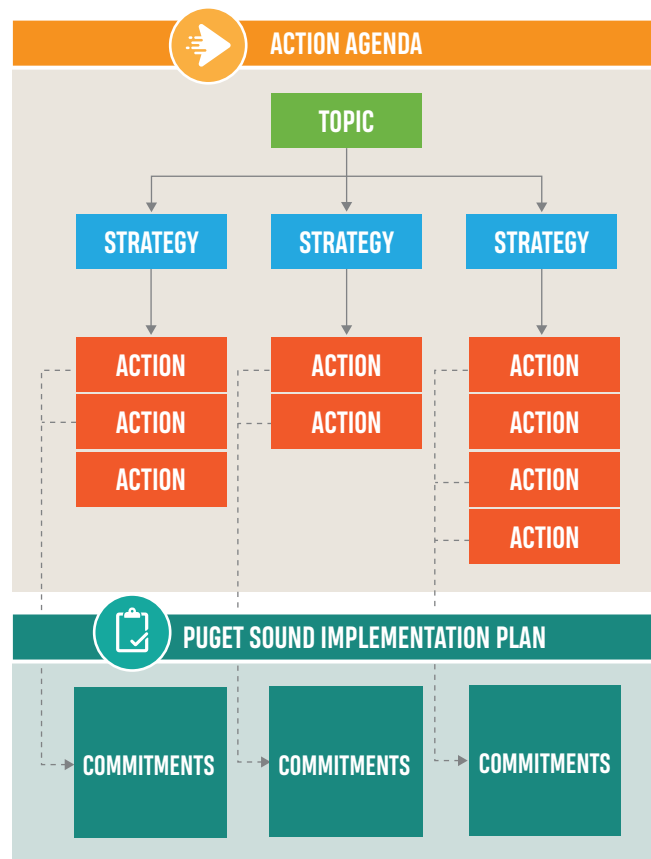


Figure 7. Each Topic in the Action Agenda contains multiple recovery Strategies, and Strategies contain groupings of related Actions. Recovery partners make Commitments to complete specific Actions by 2030. Commitments from both the Action Agenda and the Salmon Addendum are published in the Puget Sound Implementation Strategy.

Topics are organized into priority focus areas that have broad, established communities of practice working to advance recovery. The Foundations of Recovery chapter has six Topics covering issues such as funding, leadership, and research needs. The Recovery Plan in this Action Agenda includes 20 Topics that organize our work into the themes of Healthy Communities, Sustainable Land Use, Resilient Habitats, and Clean Water & Harvestable Shellfish. Each Topic benefits multiple Vital Signs (Table 1) and includes three to seven Strategies for reducing pressures on the ecosystem and advancing one or more of the statutory objectives. Some Topics highlight cross-topic implementation success stories to showcase how a project can be multi-beneficial.

Strategies describe effective approaches for advancing progress toward desired outcomes. Each Strategy either addresses underlying stressors on the ecosystem or improves our ability to address a stressor. Strategies include four to ten Actions that work together to advance the Strategy. There are 23 Strategies in the Foundations of Recovery chapter and 87 Strategies in the Recovery Plan.

Actions describe the activities that need to be implemented to advance a Strategy. Actions guide partner implementation and innovation. They inform the focus of public and private funding and implementation support by the Boards and regional partners. Actions include restoration and acquisition of habitat, program development and improvement, education, outreach, research, and policy improvements. There are 172 Actions in the Foundations of Recovery chapter and 551 Actions in the Recovery Plan. These Actions were written by the recovery community to address the most pressing issues impacting Puget Sound. As new threats emerge, the recovery community will adaptively manage the Action Agenda, which may include developing and pursuing new Actions.

Throughout the Recovery Plan, there are some Actions that we identified as either an Adaptation Action or an Outreach Action. These Actions are identified with an icon. Adaptation Actions incorporate changing environmental conditions and improve the long-term resilience of ecosystems and communities to adapt to extreme weather events. Outreach Actions educate and engage the public about both the challenges facing Puget Sound and how they contribute to recovery efforts. A handful of Actions in the Research and Monitoring Topic were also included to comply with state laws and may not be eligible for federal funding.



OUTREACH

Actions that increase public education and awareness of the ecological health and water quality conditions of the estuary



ADAPTATION

Actions that address the effects of recurring extreme weather events on the estuary, including the identification and assessment of vulnerabilities in the estuary and the development and implementation of adaptation strategies



WA STATE COMPLIANCE

Actions that are designed to fulfill Washington State legal requirements and are ineligible for federal funding.



		HEALTHY COMMUNITIES					SUSTAINABLE LAND USE				RESILIENT HABITAT					CLEAN WATER AND HARVESTABLE SHELLFISH					
		Abundant and Harvestable Salmon	Human Health	Toxic Chemical Prevention	Shared Landscapes	Smart Growth	Agricultural Land Protection	Working Forest Land Protection	Marine Vegetation	Healthy Shorelines	Floodplains and Estuaries	Riparian Areas	Freshwater Availability	Fish Passage Barriers	Invasive Species	Stormwater Runoff	Agricultural Land Runoff	Forest Roads Runoff	Fecal Pollution	Wastewater Treatment Plants	Vessel Impacts
HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATIONS	Air Quality		●	●																	
	Drinking Water		●				●				●			●	●	●	●	●			
	Local Foods	●	●	●	●	●		●					●					●	●		
	Outdoor Activity	●	●	●	●		●	●						●				●	●		
	Shellfish Beds		●													●		●	●		●
VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	Cultural Wellbeing	●	●	●				●													
	Economic Vitality					●	●						●								
	Good Governance																				
	Sense of Place			●	●	●															
	Sound Stewardship			●				●	●					●							●
THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	Birds						●			●											●
	Forage Fish			●				●	●												●
	Groundfish and Benthic Invertebrates			●				●		●				●							
	Orcas	●																			●
	Salmon	●		●				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●						●
	Zooplankton																				
FUNCTIONING HABITAT	Beaches and Marine Vegetation					●		●	●		●		●	●							●
	Estuaries					●			●	●			●								
	Forests and Wetlands					●	●				●			●		●					
	Streams and Floodplains					●				●	●	●	●	●							
HEALTHY WATER QUALITY	Freshwater						●			●	●	●			●	●	●	●			
	Marine Water			●											●	●		●	●		●
	Toxics in Aquatic Life		●	●											●	●		●	●		

Table 1. Vital Signs improved by the implementation of Strategies and Actions in each Topic.

3. Coordinated Implementation

As a regional, collaboratively developed plan, the Action Agenda is implemented by many partners, with notable leadership from several key groups (Figure 2). More than 250 state and federal programs contribute to Puget Sound recovery through their day-to-day work. Just over half of these primarily focus on planning, science, coordination, and technical assistance, while roughly one third concentrate on ecological restoration of habitat and species. The remaining programs emphasize education, incentives, and compliance activities. More information on the state and federal programs can be found online in the [Ongoing Programs Portal](#).

Tribes and their work remain central to Puget Sound recovery work. Strategic Implementation Leads (SILs) steward EPA investments to advance many Action Agenda Topics. The Puget Sound Federal Leadership Task Force aligns its Puget Sound Federal Action Plan with the Action Agenda. Ten Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs) support local scale recovery work and develop LIO Action Plans to implement the Action Agenda. Lead Entities guide watershed based salmon recovery planning and implementation. For more details on these groups and their respective plans, see [Appendix III](#).

Partners in the broader recovery community and at state agencies, including the Partnership, have also made implementation statements for the 2026-2030 Action Agenda. These implementation statements come in the form of Commitments, which are cataloged and tracked in the [Action Agenda Explorer](#).

Commitments are activities that partners and the Partnership pledge to do to advance the Action Agenda and related Salmon Recovery Plans. They are written using a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound) framework. Commitments allow partners to show leadership and actively highlight their efforts to implement the 2026-2030 Action Agenda. Commitments may implement a single Action or multiple Actions.

The [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) includes more than 300 Commitments describing how partners will implement Actions in both the Action Agenda and the Salmon Recovery Plan, another regional recovery plan updated and managed by the Partnership. This joint implementation plan is designed to highlight activities and programs that benefit both ecosystem and salmon recovery efforts.

Ongoing Programs form the foundation of Puget Sound recovery, providing the funding, oversight, expertise, and hands on work that sustain progress across the region. State, federal, local, Tribal, and nongovernmental programs make up this essential base of implementation, and continued investment in them remains a priority for the Partnership. We rely on our ongoing program partners to actively align their work with the Action Agenda Strategies and Actions and tell us what they need to advance their work. The Partnership maintains an inventory of state and federal ongoing programs and their budgets in the Ongoing Programs Portal. However, the state and federal ongoing programs inventory should not be considered comprehensive of all work being done to recover Puget Sound. While we recognize the importance of local, Tribal, and nongovernmental ongoing programs, we do not currently maintain an inventory of those programs due to the complexity of inventorying and tracking budgets of such a vast and ever-changing number of programs. The Partnership is committed to reviewing and updating the ongoing program inventory with state partners every four years when the Action Agenda is revised. It was updated in 2026, as part of the 2026-2030 Action Agenda update.

[Program Targets](#) are quantitative goals that an Ongoing Program will aim to achieve in the next four years. They are measurable, bold, yet achievable program accomplishments. Program Targets are short-term successes for accelerating progress toward one or more of the Strategies and Actions in the Action Agenda. The Program Targets will be monitored and evaluated to provide the recovery community with a transparent way to assess and address program needs, remove barriers, and promote increased support for programs to help achieve targets. This Action Agenda has 22 Program Targets spread across 10 Topics.

[PUGET SOUND INFO \(REFERRED TO AS PS INFO\) IS THE ONLINE HUB FOR DATA ABOUT RESTORATION, PROTECTION, AND RECOVERY PROJECTS ACROSS PUGET SOUND. IT GUIDES RECOVERY PLANNING AND THE ACTION AGENDA TRACKER, AND INCLUDES:](#)

- ▶ [Vital Signs](#) and associated targets
- ▶ [Progress Indicators](#) and associated targets
- ▶ [National Estuary Program Atlas](#)
- ▶ [Ongoing Programs portal](#)
- ▶ [Recovery Funding Tool](#)
- ▶ [Geospatial tools](#)

4. Performance Reporting

As the Action Agenda is implemented, the Partnership tracks and reports on progress towards our long-term statutory goals via the Vital Sign Indicators and Targets. This information is shared in the State of the Ecosystem chapter of the biennial [State of the Sound](#) report.

The State of the Recovery chapter describes the status of state and federal funding decisions, legislation, Progress Indicators, and Program Targets. The State of the Sound offers key messages, an assessment of efforts, and results of those efforts for many Action Agenda Topics.

The Partnership also tracks a variety of resources on [PS Info](#) (Figure 8). PS Info is a dynamic and interactive website. Users can explore data collected by the Partnership to assess progress at multiple timescales for all the Topics in the Action Agenda.

TRACKING IMPLEMENTATION

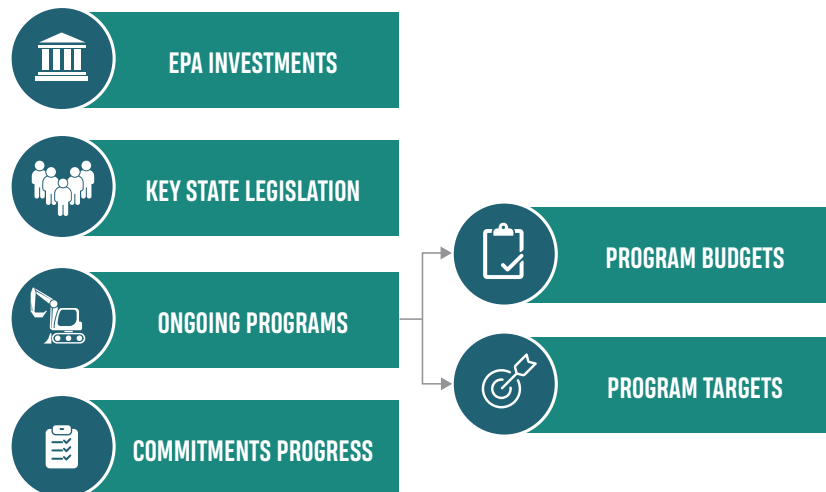


Figure 8. To monitor implementation, Puget Sound Partnership tracks EPA Investments, relevant state legislation, ongoing programs, and partners' progress toward fulfilling commitments.

5. Adaptive Management and Updates

As Commitments are implemented and budgets are set, the Partnership and the management conference will monitor our progress, identify barriers to success, and incorporate emerging research into our plans. When the Action Agenda is updated, the Partnership convenes adapt and learn workshops, which bring together hundreds of subject matter experts, management conference members, and implementors. Workshop attendees discuss lessons learned over the past four years of implementation, assess progress, and review and update the Strategies and Actions in the Action Agenda. Through this adaptive management framework, the Partnership can improve the implementation of various Actions and respond to new threats and changing conditions.

When updating the Action Agenda, the Partnership also:

- ▶ Initiates multiple formal Tribal consultations with all 19 federally recognized Tribes in the Puget Sound watershed.
- ▶ Briefs our management conference and asks for strategic guidance.
- ▶ Hosts workshops with community members and organizations to solicit public input.

By engaging the management conference, subject matter experts, Tribal co-managers, board members, and the public, the Partnership brings various perspectives and priorities together into a unified plan for Puget Sound recovery – the Action Agenda.

DESCRIPTION OF APPENDICES FOR THE 2026-2030 ACTION AGENDA

The 2026-2030 Action Agenda reflects decades of experience developing plans and monitoring systems to assess plan implementation and effectiveness. As this body of work has grown in the Puget Sound, it has also become more complex and intricate. As such, we are using Appendices to provide more details for each Topic and to meet certain CCMP requirements. Below are short descriptions and links to each Appendix for the 2026-2030 Action Agenda, how these Topics will be implemented (via Commitments and Ongoing Programs and their Program Targets).

[Appendix I – Detailed and Technical Descriptions of CCMP Objectives and Actions](#)

The Action Agenda, which serves as the CCMP for Puget Sound, has a four-year horizon and includes Strategies and Actions organized by Topics to help achieve our statutory goals and objectives. The content of each Topic describes the priorities for both the Partnership and our partners in the recovery community to focus on over the next four years. To meet the requirements of the CCMP, Appendix I includes detailed technical explanations for each Topic in the Action Agenda, how these Topics will be implemented (via Commitments), and what goals this work helps to achieve. Appendix I includes Targets and Performance Metrics for each Topic.

[Appendix II – Adaptive Management System](#)

Adaptive management is a learning and decision-making process. The Partnership's efforts to employ adaptive management improve the effectiveness of the Action Agenda. The 2026-2030 Action Agenda builds on more than 15 years of collaborative, science-driven planning and implementation informed by past Action Agendas, numerous local and regional ecosystem recovery plans, input by experts and advisory groups, and feedback from a wide range of partner organizations and individuals with an interest in Puget Sound recovery. This Action Agenda also improves upon previous Action Agendas by expanding the use of Puget Sound Indicators and Targets, incorporating implementation Commitments, and capturing a more comprehensive representation of the ongoing work of partners and the recovery community. This Appendix describes the steps in the adaptive management system and the various components of our recovery system associated with each step.

[Appendix III – Partners in Recovery](#)

Ecosystem recovery is only possible with the important work and partnership of many organizations and leaders committed to the future of Puget Sound. Government agencies (federal, Tribal, state, and local), private sector institutions, academia, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and members of the broader public have all contributed to Puget Sound recovery efforts for decades. The Partnership was created to coordinate, guide, and accelerate the work of this broad set of partners. This Appendix describes our partners and their plans to contribute to Puget Sound Recovery.

[Appendix IV – Finance Strategy](#)

To address challenges and achieve our recovery goals for Puget Sound, we need funding for large capital projects, ongoing programs, and essential activities such as research, monitoring, project maintenance, hiring staff, outreach, and communications. Priority Puget Sound recovery programs are consistently—and significantly—underfunded which is one of the biggest barriers to recovering Puget Sound. Insufficient funding slows progress, increases costs, leads to inefficient projects, limits potential ecological and quality of life benefits, and stifles opportunities to support local jobs and economy. Appendix IV outlines a strategy for long-term financial sustainability to implement the CCMP through diverse resources and partners.

[Appendix V – Monitoring Plan](#)

The Partnership uses Vital Sign Indicators to monitor the status and trends of regional ecosystem conditions. These indicators track progress toward Puget Sound statutory recovery goals and evaluate the success of Action Agenda strategies and actions. Appendix V, which serves as Partnership's EPA-required "Monitoring Plan," outlines how the Partnership analyzes and reports on Vital Sign Indicators and assesses the effectiveness of interventions to protect and restore the Puget Sound ecosystem.

CHAPTER 3: FOUNDATIONS OF PUGET SOUND RECOVERY

Governments, businesses, nonprofits, and other partners across the region implement projects, policies, and programs to recover Puget Sound. For these efforts to be effective, efficient, and coordinated, partners rely on a strong, shared foundation that supports their recovery efforts. Building and maintaining this foundation is one of the Partnership's primary roles in the recovery system. The Topics in this chapter focus on the institutions, processes, resources, and people needed to achieve our shared recovery goals. Implementing the Strategies and Actions within these Topics benefit all Vital Signs, lead to an improved recovery network, and result in more effective and efficient on-the-ground work to restore and protect the ecosystem.

The Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery are:

1. Funding
2. Research and Monitoring
3. Good Governance
4. Strategic Leadership and Collaboration
5. Workforce Development
6. Outreach and Behavior Change



WA STATE COMPLIANCE

Actions that are designed to fulfill Washington State legal requirements and are ineligible for federal funding.

The guidance and principles in the Strategies and Actions in this chapter also inform and guide the implementation of the Recovery Plan (page 46). Implementors should consider how these foundational Strategies and Actions can guide, support, and strengthen their efforts to advance Puget Sound recovery. Integrating these Strategies and Actions into ecosystem recovery activities improves the overall success of on-the-ground projects and program implementation.





David Troutt, natural resources director for the Nisqually Indian Tribe and member of the Partnership's Ecosystem Coordination Board, speaking at the Smith Island tidal reconnection celebration. Credit: Jon Bridgman

A. Funding

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Create an efficient and equitable funding system by increasing awareness of funding needs, expanding capacity to pursue funding, improving the use of existing funding, and creating new funding sources to accelerate Puget Sound recovery.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

All

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

All

STRATEGIES

A.01. INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL FUNDING NEEDS, BOLSTER COORDINATION AMONG LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND TRIBAL PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS, AND EXPAND CAPACITY TO ACQUIRE FUNDING.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ A.01.01. Compile funding needs identified in the 2026-2030 Action Agenda and engage partners to further understand these needs.
- ▶ A.01.02. Establish a place to document funding needs not captured through other recovery planning processes.
- ▶ A.01.03. Improve coordination among local and regional partners and Tribes when determining funding needs and pursuing opportunities.
- ▶ A.01.04. Increase coordination between funding strategies identified in Puget Sound recovery plans.
- ▶ A.01.05. Provide technical assistance to Tribes and local partners to find and apply for funding through the Partnership's Strategic Funding Team.
- ▶ A.01.06. Advocate for additional funding for Tribal co-managers and local partners, particularly organizations that represent or serve communities impacted by pollution and environmental degradation, to increase their capacity to acquire and manage funding.

A.02. ADDRESS BARRIERS TRIBES AND LOCAL PARTNERS HAVE IN ACQUIRING FUNDING TO CREATE A MORE EFFICIENT, EQUITABLE FUNDING SYSTEM THAT INCREASES FUNDING AND ACCELERATES PUGET SOUND RECOVERY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ A.02.01. Identify and implement administrative improvements in state and federal funding programs for efficiency, including: match modernization; streamlined and standardized applications and timelines; budget requirements; invoicing and reporting requirements; and common application questions, definitions, and metrics.
- ▶ A.02.02. Address additional funding barriers identified by project sponsors.
- ▶ A.02.03. Ensure accountability and effectiveness in how Puget Sound recovery investments are implemented.
- ▶ A.02.04. Maintain and expand [Puget Sound RAFT – Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#), a centralized repository for funding sources applicable for Puget Sound recovery, which reduces demand on Tribes and partners when looking for funding opportunities.

A.03. INCREASE AND DIVERSIFY SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE, AND DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCES TO FULLY FUND PUGET SOUND RECOVERY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ A.03.01. Continue to advocate for the established federal and state funding sources relied on for Puget Sound recovery work.
- ▶ A.03.02. Increase coordination on state and federal budget requests with local and regional partners, Tribes, community-based organizations, universities, and others.
- ▶ A.03.03. Analyze the funding landscape to identify alignments and gaps between funding needs and funding sources for Puget Sound recovery.
- ▶ A.03.04. Advocate for state and federal funding programs to address misalignments between funding needs and funding sources.
- ▶ A.03.05. Establish new, stable, and equitable funding sources needed to fully implement restoration projects, programs, and recovery plans.
- ▶ A.03.06. Build broad support for the establishment of new funding sources, particularly during the state legislative session, by educating the public and decision makers on the scale, benefits, and urgency for Puget Sound recovery funding.
- ▶ A.03.07. Advocate for non-traditional funding sources, such as transportation and hazard mitigation grants, to expand the eligibility criteria to include restoration projects.
- ▶ A.03.08. Ensure that Puget Sound recovery funding streams are adapted and sustained to support engagement and priorities of newly engaged communities, communities directly impacted by Puget Sound degradation, and Tribal sovereignty.

A.04. EXPAND THE USE OF DIVERSE PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES (SUCH AS PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS, BUSINESSES, INDIVIDUALS, AND MARKET-BASED MECHANISMS) TO FUND AND EXPEDITE PUGET SOUND RECOVERY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ A.04.01. Research the economic sectors and businesses that could be affected by poor Puget Sound ecosystem functions and create a private sector platform.
- ▶ A.04.02. Develop a business strategy and private sector engagement plan to recruit private investment capital and target philanthropic funders.
- ▶ A.04.03. Establish the processes and mechanisms that enable private sector funding to flow to restoration projects and programs, particularly those that benefit newly engaged communities.
- ▶ A.04.04. Administer and expand the Partnership Nearshore Credit Program to accelerate the pace of project implementation and use of funds from credit purchases.
- ▶ A.04.05. Expand the use of revolving loan funds to leverage private capital to finance recovery projects on private property.
- ▶ A.04.06. Pilot pay-for-success contracting to support large-scale ecosystem recovery work.
- ▶ A.04.07. Explore the feasibility and potential impact of a Puget Sound regional transfer of development rights program.
- ▶ A.04.08. Explore Puget Sound recovery as a vehicle for blue carbon investments.



Monitoring work in South Puget Sound. Credit: Washington State Department of Ecology

B. Research and Monitoring

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Coordinate and invest in research and monitoring and use scientific information (in concert with Indigenous and local knowledge) to support Puget Sound recovery.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

All

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

All

STRATEGIES

B.01. FUND SCIENCE, MONITORING, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT PUGET SOUND RECOVERY.


Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ B.01.01. Fund investigations that address priority research and monitoring objectives through [Partnership science funding programs](#) (for example, Puget Sound scientific research, Salmon Science Investigations, Monitoring to Accelerate Recovery, and Social Science for Puget Sound) in 2025-2027, 2027-2029, and 2029-2031. Prioritized research needs for several Action Agenda Topics are documented in the [Grand Uncertainties Matrix](#) regional database.
- ▶ B.01.02. Encourage partners who fund science to make awards and commit staff resources to carry out investigations that align with research and monitoring priorities from the Action Agenda, the [Science Work Plan](#), and the Grand Uncertainties Matrix. This includes partners who receive Puget Sound Geographic Funds through EPA, including Strategic Implementation Leads, Tribal implementers, and federal agencies.
- ▶ B.01.03. Increase funding and staff capacity for long-term monitoring programs and effectiveness assessment throughout the Salish Sea.
- ▶ B.01.04. Extend research and monitoring collaborations to better facilitate cross-institutional integration of scientific efforts (for example, the Partnership and Washington Sea Grant research collaboration, federal and state science program coordination through the Puget Sound Federal Leadership Task Force, transboundary coordination with Canadian scientists and institutions, and the Science Hub for Agriculture and Ecosystems).

- ▶ B.01.05. Encourage and support research and monitoring plans that include clear evaluation components (for example, community impact assessments) and/or facilitate partnerships and fund for independent evaluators to assess project outcomes.
- ▶ B.01.06. Encourage and support assessments of how research and monitoring are informing decision making.

B.02. COORDINATE EFFORTS TO ASSESS AND REPORT ON ECOSYSTEM CONDITIONS AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ECOSYSTEM RECOVERY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ B.02.01. Provide additional monitoring resources and capacity to better integrate data and new information across sectors and socio-ecological system management plans.
- ▶ B.02.02. Implement [Vital Signs](#) assessment and reporting, including program improvements, as detailed in the Partnership's Monitoring Plan.
- ▶ B.02.03. Expand the use of innovative techniques and tools (including appropriate applications of machine learning and artificial intelligence) for data generation, gathering, interpretation, reporting, and management.
- ▶ B.02.04. Promote a more inclusive, diverse Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) network that is responsive to the needs of Tribes and communities historically impacted by environmental degradation.
- ▶ B.02.05. Assist [PSEMP](#) in their efforts to support data gathering and the integration of monitoring information that can inform decision making and support a thriving, resilient Puget Sound.
- ▶ B.02.06. Promote integration of human health epidemiologists and toxicologists into the PSEMP network and promote efforts to more fully address the links among environmental, animal, and human health.
- ▶ B.02.07. Promote well-funded, long-term community monitoring programs (for example, programs that engage community members in scientific work) that are maintained, regionally respected, and designed to generate data for ecological monitoring while also offering accessible opportunities for public education through community involvement.
- ▶ B.02.08. Ensure equitable inclusion and compensation for community members' involvement in monitoring and evaluation programs.
- ▶ B.02.09. Conduct robust studies specifically designed to test effectiveness of different recovery efforts. Coordinate effectiveness study approaches with PSEMP Work Groups and implementers to support adaptive management of the Action Agenda (Appendix I).
- ▶ B.02.10. Review and extend the quality, depth, and breadth of monitoring and assessment efforts.
- ▶ B.02.11. Review the networks, norms, and policies that scientists use to collaborate with each other and to engage policy makers and program managers. Adapt these systems as needed to improve collaboration and communication.
- ▶ B.02.12. Analyze and synthesize existing information, especially using the Partnership's suite of Vital Sign, Salmon Habitat, and Progress Indicators, to evaluate and report on the ecosystem conditions, human health, impacts to quality of life, and the effects of recovery efforts. Give greater attention to inequities in the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits in recovery efforts.
- ▶ B.02.13. Foster exploration and discovery through coordination of subject matter experts, comprehensive assessments (such as cumulative effects evaluations), and inter- and transdisciplinary investigations.
- ▶ B.02.14. Develop, fund, and maintain an online searchable database or curated repository of scientific findings for use by the Puget Sound protection and recovery community. This includes data-oriented repositories such as the data visualization system hosted by the Northwest Association of [Networked Ocean Observing Systems \(NANOOS\)](#) and repositories of findings as in the [Encyclopedia of Puget Sound](#) hosted by [UW's Puget Sound Institute](#).
- ▶  B.02.15. Collaborate across local, regional, and state-wide organizations to create a comprehensive, widely accessible network of climate, environmental, and social-ecological system experts and data, information, resources, best practices, and shared strategies.
- ▶ B.02.16. Ensure that reporting systems are Beta tested and will work for a variety of partners who will use them, such as LIOs.






B.03. CONTINUE IMPROVING INTEGRATION OF ECOLOGICAL HEALTH, HUMAN HEALTH, AND HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ B.03.01. Continue investments in understanding linkages and interactions between the shared environment and human and other species populations.
- ▶ B.03.02. Prioritize research, monitoring, and evaluation that considers interactions between environmental, human, and other species' health and wellbeing, and that supports and incentivizes collaborations of biophysical and social scientists.
- ▶ B.03.03. Extend monitoring efforts to include measurable adverse human health outcomes (for example, physical, mental, social, occupational) stemming from exposures to toxic pollutants and infectious pathogen contaminants.
- ▶ B.03.04. Increase funding for and ensure integration of findings from social science research priorities identified in the Puget Sound Social Science research agenda. Prioritized research needs for several Action Agenda topics are documented in the Grand Uncertainties Matrix regional database.
- ▶ B.03.05. Extend monitoring efforts to assess human exposures to biologic and toxic contaminants in Puget Sound's air, water, and food, and adverse human health outcomes.
- ▶ B.03.06. Support research to better understand how ecosystem change and recovery affect the wellbeing of different social groups.

B.04. IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CLIMATE IMPACTS, MANAGEMENT, AND INTERACTIONS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

-  ▶ B.04.01. Support research to understand how large-scale global climate variations and trends will affect all elements of the Puget Sound social-ecological system.
-  ▶ B.04.02. Study the interaction between regional climate impacts, management, and policy actions.
- ▶ B.04.03. Continue the Future Scenarios work to explore connections among human and non-human elements of Puget Sound.
-  ▶ B.04.04. Increase the technical capacity of the recovery community to better understand impacts of climate change and variability, and advance adaptation to reduce vulnerabilities of the Puget Sound socio-ecological system. Increase the availability of necessary data, tools, and training for this work.
- ▶ B.04.05. Increase monitoring, research, and assessment of sea level rise, ocean acidification, sea surface and stream temperature, and other changes associated with climate impacts, along with their compounding effects on social and ecological systems.
- ▶ B.04.06. Increase monitoring of human and animal health outcomes affected by changing ecosystem conditions.
-  ▶ B.04.07. Adopt data-driven criteria or a framework that support evidence-based climate actions and prioritization of multi-benefit investments.
-  ▶ B.04.08. Conduct cost-benefit analyses of climate actions, including increasing monitoring, research, and assessment of economic consequences of climate change and opportunities to build climate resilience.
- ▶ B.04.09. Increase research and share information about innovative technologies that abate emissions, increase sequestration, and advance adaptation.

B.05. COLLABORATE WITH TRIBAL NATIONS AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT PUGET SOUND ECOSYSTEM RECOVERY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ B.05.01. Support and elevate Indigenous knowledge as we collectively build more inclusive, equitable, diverse, and holistic knowledge networks that support Puget Sound recovery.
- ▶ B.05.02. Support, broaden, and facilitate more Tribal-led research and Tribes' participation in all research in Puget Sound.
- ▶ B.05.03. Follow Tribal leadership to identify approaches to combine Indigenous knowledge with Western science within the Puget Sound knowledge network, while understanding and respecting data sovereignty.
- ▶ B.05.04. Develop capacity for Tribes and others to bring Indigenous knowledge into decisions on scientific processes, investments, and applications.
- ▶ B.05.05. Enhance networking across sectors, disciplines, and among different types of programs and diverse groups across Puget Sound and the entire Salish Sea.
- ▶ B.05.06. Improve linkages among Indigenous knowledge and science programs by investing in research and monitoring projects that ethically and responsibly integrate Indigenous knowledge to collectively understand ecosystem relationships and systems thinking.
- ▶ B.05.07. Increase understanding of how Indigenous groups have been, and continue to be, excluded from access to and control over resources across their territories (including on-and off-reservation), and how this impacts their wellbeing.
- ▶ B.05.08. Raise awareness and create opportunities for Indigenous knowledge systems and governance (such as traditional knowledge, Indigenous science, and Coast Salish legal orders) to be meaningfully used in ecosystem recovery.

B.06. INTEGRATE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND PARTICIPATION IN SCIENTIFIC EFFORTS FOCUSED ON PUGET SOUND RECOVERY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ B.06.01. Prioritize community-identified research needs, particularly within communities experiencing disproportionate impacts from pollution, habitat loss, or other environmental pressures.
- ▶ B.06.02. Integrate diverse ways of knowing into evidence-based recovery and monitoring for Puget Sound by supporting and acknowledging Indigenous knowledge systems (passed down through generations) and local experiential knowledge (developed through lived experience).
- ▶ B.06.03. For specific scientific endeavors, consider how the framing or implementation of research questions might benefit some communities to the exclusion, or even the expense, of other communities.
- ▶ B.06.04. Increase knowledge in the Puget Sound recovery community around residents' senses of place and the role of place attachment in recovery, including the connection to environmental stewardship and diverse residents' place attachments. Include a particular focus on populations and communities experiencing disproportionate impacts from pollution, habitat loss, or other environmental pressures.
- ▶ B.06.05. Adopt frameworks connecting human health, quality of life, and ecosystem health. Use these frameworks to evaluate the impacts of environmental change and ecosystem health on holistic health, including mental, emotional, and physical health of Puget Sound residents and its diverse communities.
- ▶ B.06.06. Utilize community-based research methods to ground-truth and clarify environmental health disparities and monitor biophysical and human wellbeing indicators in the context of Puget Sound recovery.
- ▶ B.06.07. Support research to better understand how different communities and their values are represented in political and decision-making processes, how representation impacts recovery outcomes, and how different communities are affected by these outcomes.

B.07. ENSURE DECISION MAKERS HAVE ACCESS TO DECISION-CRITICAL SCIENCE AND ENSURE SCIENTISTS UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF DECISION-MAKERS BY SUPPORTING STRENGTHENED, SUSTAINED SCIENCE-POLICY INTERACTIONS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ B.07.01. Encourage collaboration between scientists and decision-makers in science-policy interactions to reach agreement on goals, objectives, decision points, and knowledge gaps associated with decisions under consideration. This includes identifying decision-makers and understanding the decision situations in which they operate.
- ▶ B.07.02. Work through boundary-spanning science organizations to connect, coordinate, and facilitate conversations between the science community and decision makers (for example, the [University of Washington's Puget Sound Institute](#), [Washington Sea Grant](#), Center for One Health Research, [Conservation Commission's Science Hub for Agriculture and Ecosystems](#), Washington Stormwater Center, and other schools and centers in academic institutions including University of Washington's Earth Lab and Center for Nature and Health, and Oregon State University's Human Dimensions Lab).
- ▶ B.07.03. Support partners in ecosystem recovery with exploring a resilience focus that encourages adoption of adaptive approaches that evolve with new information over time, rather than continue with more rigid, pre-determined tactics.
- ▶ B.07.04. Identify opportunities when decision making windows are open and when knowledge can be linked to action.
- ▶ B.07.05. Engage decision-makers in the production and sharing of policy- and management-relevant information. This includes science-management collaboration in the development of the Science Work Plan, [social science research agendas](#), and research needs for specific recovery plans (for example, through the Grand Uncertainties Matrix coordinated by [UW's Puget Sound Institute](#)).
- ▶ B.07.06. Communicate scientific research and monitoring information on a regular basis to decision makers, program managers, and the public at large to achieve greater and sustained support for inclusive, critical, and evidenced-based policy and management decisions.
- ▶ B.07.07. Foster partnerships that support access to the full range of communication approaches and tools that build and sustain the case for Puget Sound recovery (for example, the PSEMP Communications Strategy).
- ▶ B.07.08. Develop strategies and undertake work to address the spread of mis/disinformation that conflicts with findings from research and monitoring.
- ▶ B.07.09. Develop and use Future Scenarios approaches to enable recovery partners and the public to consider the many ways the future may unfold and how strategies can be made more robust, resilient, responsive, and effective.
- ▶ B.07.10. Increase understanding of how power and politics effects decision-making processes and actions in Puget Sound, and which groups benefit or are left out as a result.



Governor Bob Ferguson (second from right) at the 2025 Centennial Accord.. Credit: Office of Governor Bob Ferguson

C. Good Governance

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Promote accountable and effective governance by ensuring transparent implementation of laws and treaties, creating fair opportunities for public participation, strengthening agencies’ ability to work with communities and coordinate efficiently, and building broader public trust in environmental and natural resource decisions.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

All

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

All

STRATEGIES

C.01. ENGAGE COMMUNITY GROUPS, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PRACTITIONERS, AND COMMUNICATION SPECIALISTS TO CO-CREATE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ C.01.01. Develop pathways for information exchange with diverse natural resource users across the region, particularly those historically excluded from environmental governance, to engage with government agencies on decision-making opportunities and barriers related to Puget Sound recovery.
- ▶ C.01.02. Translate public-facing materials into languages other than English to engage new communities. Use audience-specific communication approaches that are culturally appropriate, locally relevant, clear, concise, and not overly technical.

The Partnership heard from several community groups, Tribal co-managers, state agency staff, and subject matter experts that the lack of enforcement is a major issue for Puget Sound. Therefore, 12 Topics have either a Strategy or Action emphasizing the need to increase compliance and enforcement efforts: **Abundant and Harvestable Salmon, Toxic Chemical Prevention, Smart Growth, Marine Vegetation, Healthy Shorelines, Floodplains and Estuaries, Riparian Areas, Freshwater Availability, Stormwater Runoff, Agricultural Lands Runoff, Fecal Pollution, and Vessel Impacts.** The Partnership is exploring how we can further address this critical need for Puget Sound recovery in future iterations of the Action Agenda.

- ▶ C.01.03. Expand outreach efforts to build relationships with new audiences and organizations, particularly communities currently impacted by environmental degradation and those directly impacted by natural resource policies.
- ▶ C.01.04. Develop communication materials that highlight the human health and quality of life benefits of ecological restoration and protection projects; adaptation to changing conditions such as sea level rise, flooding, drought, and extreme weather events; and other environmental stressors.
- ▶ C.01.05. Enable practitioners and ecosystem managers to engage with government agencies on opportunities and barriers affecting their work on the ground.
- ▶ C.01.06. Provide clear explanations about the level of engagement offered with each decision-making opportunity, using tools such as the [King County Community Engagement Continuum](#).

C.02. IMPROVE CAPACITY, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITIES IMPACTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND UNDER-ENGAGED COMMUNITIES TO MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE WITH AND PARTICIPATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ C.02.01. Explore needs, barriers, and best practices for building capacity and opportunities for impacted communities to engage in environmental and natural resource decision making by engaging directly with communities and community-based organizations.
- ▶ C.02.02. Identify regional objectives and project priorities that restore natural ecosystem processes and meet community needs. Increase the share of funding allocated to community-identified priorities and locally led projects, improving the accessibility and timely distribution of resources to highly impacted areas.
- ▶ C.02.03. Identify pathways to change aspects of the governance system that are not serving Puget Sound recovery.
- ▶ C.02.04. Increase funding and technical assistance to coalitions and individuals who serve, represent, or collaborate with under-engaged communities and youth, so that they may meaningfully participate in decision making.
- ▶ C.02.05. Expand pathways for listening to the concerns, interests, and needs, as well as the current strengths, activities, and programs of impacted communities in Puget Sound recovery efforts.
- ▶ C.02.06. Increase participation of impacted or under-engaged communities in Puget Sound recovery governing and advisory boards.
- ▶ C.02.07. Strengthen federal, Tribal, state, and municipal governments' capacity to collaborate with impacted communities and youth so that they may meaningfully participate in decision-making.
- ▶ C.02.08. Empower LIOs and LEs to expand opportunities for new community organizations or members to participate in local decision-making.
- ▶ C.02.09. Integrate feedback and information provided by communities into decision-making and report back to communities about how their feedback was used.
- ▶ C.02.10. Assess current levels of resource access and availability across impacted communities. Engage new and under-represented communities by listening to their needs and delivering tailored support such as local representation, educational materials, technical assistance, and targeted funding.

C.03. IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING AND UPHOLDING OF TRIBAL NATIONS' TREATY RIGHTS, INHERENT RIGHTS, SOVEREIGNTY, AND CO-MANAGER STATUS WHEN IMPLEMENTING PUGET SOUND RECOVERY PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ C.03.01. Ensure that Tribes' treaties and sovereign rights are upheld and their role as co-managers of natural resources within Washington state are explicitly recognized.
- ▶ C.03.02. Develop consultation frameworks with individual Tribes and Tribal consortia to communicate and collaborate on natural resource management actions to foster meaningful government-to-government collaboration. Ensure consistent, coordinated, and appropriate Tribal consultation protocols across state agencies.
- ▶ C.03.03. Increase opportunities and capacity for Tribes to participate in Puget Sound recovery governing and advisory boards.
- ▶ C.03.04. Provide opportunities for the public to learn more about Tribal treaties and cultures, particularly educational and outreach efforts led by Tribes and Indigenous-led organizations.
- ▶ C.03.05. Expand trainings for non-Tribal partners (such as federal and state agencies, local governments, nonprofits) to increase recognition and understanding of the legal obligations to uphold Tribes' treaty rights and sovereign authority.
- ▶ C.03.06. Strive to obtain "free, prior, and informed consent" from Tribes prior to taking actions that directly and tangibly affect Tribes, Tribal lands, or Tribal rights, including treaty rights.

C.04. STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY, COORDINATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN THE RECOVERY SYSTEM TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION AGENDA.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ C.04.01. Increase the representation of impacted or new communities and other under-represented groups in government agency leadership and staff to further center perspectives from communities impacted by environmental degradation in agencies' institutions and processes.
- ▶ C.04.02. Improve government agency coordination to make it easier for new or impacted communities, community-based organizations, and Tribal governments to engage in decision-making processes.
- ▶ C.04.03. Collaborate with state agencies to leverage strategic plans, funding requests, and staffing plans to advance shared Puget Sound recovery goals as described by Action Agenda Topics, Strategies, and Actions. Encourage state agencies to make specific Commitments to how they will implement the Action Agenda.
- ▶ C.04.04. Identify laws and policies related to public health, land use, habitat protection, and water quality that have poor compliance and remain under-enforced. Determine needed resources to improve compliance and increase enforcement.



Puget Sound Federal Task Force meeting. Credit: Chase Nuuhiwa

D. Strategic Leadership and Collaboration

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Strengthen strategic leadership and collaboration to support Puget Sound recovery and resilience.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

All

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

All

STRATEGIES

D.01. ELEVATE PUGET SOUND RECOVERY AS A CONSISTENT TOP PRIORITY FOR LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ D.01.01. Develop clear and targeted communication of Puget Sound recovery risks, including potential future ecological conditions, population growth, and other factors, and the specific policy needs to mitigate these pressures.
- ▶ D.01.02. Communicate the economic, health, cultural, and social benefits of recovering Puget Sound and implementing the Action Agenda.
- ▶ D.01.03. Elevate Puget Sound and salmon recovery legislative and funding priorities for the governor and state legislature.
- ▶ D.01.04. Engage and provide resources and tools for city and county elected officials to advance Puget Sound, salmon, and ecosystem recovery.
- ▶ D.01.05. Support the EPA's Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office with engaging Puget Sound regional leaders to implement the Federal Leadership Task Force Action Plan.
- ▶ D.01.06. Elevate priorities that require federal actions through Puget Sound Day on the Hill, Puget Sound Day on the Sound, and through discussions with Puget Sound Board leaders.
- ▶ D.01.07. Support the Congressional Puget Sound Recovery Caucus and build relationships with congressional offices outside of Puget Sound to ensure durable and broad support for Puget Sound recovery priorities.

D.02. DIVERSIFY AND DEEPEN THE COALITION DEMANDING A HEALTHY PUGET SOUND.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ D.02.01. Partner with new or impacted communities and under-represented groups to understand their priorities and values for Puget Sound recovery. Provide compensation for their involvement.
- ▶ D.02.02. Address barriers, such as lack of capacity, accessibility, and sense of belonging, to the participation of new or impacted and under-represented communities in decision-making bodies (for example, Partnership Boards, LEs, LIOs, and other forums).
- ▶ D.02.03. Diversify agency staff and leadership by promoting recruitment and hiring best practices for agencies, boards, and organizations within communities that are under-represented in decision-making processes.
- ▶ D.02.04. Recruit new organizational, community, and governmental partners to expand and diversify memberships of LIOs.
- ▶ D.02.05. Build capacity (for example, leadership, community awareness, and education) for communities impacted by environmental degradation to participate in Puget Sound recovery and advocacy efforts.
- ▶ D.02.06. Support the capacity of and remove barriers for local partners (for example, LIOs, LEs, and community-based organizations) to elevate local priorities by developing and implementing LIO Action Plans, strengthening regional learning networks, and convening forums with the management conference to address specific local challenges.
- ▶ D.02.07. Provide funding, training, and other tools to leaders within the recovery community so they can better understand and communicate the impacts of environmental changes on Puget Sound and the resources and actions needed to adapt and build resilience within communities and the ecosystem.
- ▶ D.02.08. Convene decision makers, relevant experts, youth, community-based organizations, business owners, and unions to discuss ecological degradation within communities and identify resources or actions needed to address disparities.
- ▶ D.02.09. Expand relationships with local health jurisdictions of Puget Sound counties and regional schools of public health to increase participation of public and environmental health experts on the Partnership's boards.
- ▶ D.02.10. Create opportunities to elevate community voices, including youth voices, by engaging with community and youth leaders in decision-making and advocacy.
- ▶ D.02.11. Build and deepen relationships with the private sector by identifying opportunities for businesses, business groups, unions, and entrepreneurs to support Puget Sound recovery.

D.03. STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AND UNDERSTANDING TO ENHANCE COLLABORATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ D.03.01. Ensure non-Tribal decision makers and recovery partners understand Tribes' unique role as natural resource co-managers, recognize Tribal sovereignty, uphold Tribal treaties and inherent rights, and strive to obtain "free, prior, and informed consent" from Tribes before developing and implementing actions that directly and tangibly affect Tribes, Tribal lands, or Tribal rights, including treaty rights.
- ▶ D.03.02. Increase transparency and foster partnerships between local, state, Tribal, and federal partners; community-based organizations; and the research community to share information and collaborate on projects.
- ▶ D.03.03. Advance local leadership by investing in long-term partnerships, capacity building, and community-driven policy and decision-making processes.
- ▶ D.03.04. Fund education for local collaborative efforts about Puget Sound recovery and resilience, and determine information needed to fill data gaps, identify priorities, and address barriers.
- ▶ D.03.05. Increase practitioner and decision-maker understanding of the needs and assets of communities impacted by environmental degradation to ensure the equitable distribution of risks, rewards, and responsibilities in program, policy, and decision-making processes.
- ▶ D.03.06. Maintain and strengthen transboundary coordination with the Canadian and British Columbia governments, First Nations, and Tribal governments to address issues of importance across the Salish Sea through forums like the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference.



AmeriCorps members improving a trail. Credit: Laura Schlabach, Washington State Conservation Corps

E. Workforce Development

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Ensure that students, especially those from new communities or those impacted by environmental degradation, have multiple pathways into careers in the natural resources industry, including environmental sciences, restoration, fisheries, agriculture, forestry, and the green economy.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

All

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

All

STRATEGIES

E.01. INCREASE COORDINATION AND PLANNING EFFORTS BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS TO REDUCE BARRIERS AND PREPARE STUDENTS FOR A NATURAL RESOURCES CAREER.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ E.01.01. Coordinate planning and implementation across educational and restoration partners by assembling a diverse team of policy and technical representatives including educational partners, agency staff, natural resource businesses, environmental groups, and other relevant partners.
- ▶ E.01.02. Develop a plan to address barriers that limit or prevent low-income students and those from communities impacted by environmental degradation from pursuing natural resource careers.
- ▶ E.01.03. Implement incentives for state agency staff and educators to collaborate on workforce development programs and hands-on learning opportunities (such as Career and Technical Education programs) to help students explore natural resource career opportunities.
- ▶ E.01.04. Partner with relevant employers to identify workforce development needs and determine key employment skills needed for their workforce. Develop resources (such as dual-language assignment pay), trainings, or certification programs to prepare students for success in a natural resource career.

- ▶ E.01.05. Develop progress measures to monitor workforce preparedness as demographics, technology, and environmental needs change over time.

E.02. INCREASE FUNDING TO SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ECOSYSTEM RECOVERY PARTNERS, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGERS, AND EDUCATORS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ E.02.01. Identify and apply for funding from federal, state, or philanthropic sources aimed at supporting education and workforce development related to Puget Sound recovery sectors.
- ▶ E.02.02. Hire education coordinators to set up successful collaborations between restoration partners, natural resource managers, educational institutions, teachers, and students.
- ▶ E.02.03. Provide professional learning and associated clock hours to teachers for supporting students' access to opportunities that engage students in natural resources fields.
- ▶ E.02.04. Secure funds to compensate student interns and workers to promote the inclusion of students who otherwise may not be able to afford to participate in unpaid internships and programs.
- ▶ E.02.05. Prioritize funding that benefits youth and workers who are from new communities, those under-represented in natural resource careers, and most impacted by environmental degradation.
- ▶ E.02.06. Increase funding for projects that engage students in real-world learning opportunities related to Puget Sound recovery by including education and workforce development components in calls for proposals and proposal evaluation criteria.

E.03. EXPAND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES, INTERNSHIPS, AND MENTORSHIPS TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR JOBS IN THE NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ E.03.01. Review successful programs and materials that have been used elsewhere, and disseminate lessons learned and tips to local educators through a "toolkit."
- ▶ E.03.02. Develop and implement a holistic program approach for Career and Technical Education programs in K-12 classrooms that encompasses key concepts and skills relevant to both STEM-focused and trade-focused natural resource jobs.
- ▶ E.03.03. Enable partnerships between schools and employers to provide "earn while you learn" apprenticeships and other paid training opportunities for students, particularly those from low-income and impacted communities.
- ▶ E.03.04. Establish mentorship programs between students and current natural resource professionals. Leverage existing networks, resources, and programs (such as Envirothon) to connect students and professionals through technical skill building.
- ▶ E.03.05. Expand project opportunities and resources for programs like the Student Conservation Association, AmeriCorps, Washington Conservation Corps, Youth Conservation Corps, and Youth Maritime Collaborative to sustain youth involvement in ecosystem restoration.
- ▶ E.03.06. Support and expand training and educational programs for adults (such as young professionals starting off in their careers, workers who are transitioning career, and new residents who are seeking stable and fulfilling employment in their new home) to improve their current skills or gain new ones for a natural resources career.
- ▶ E.03.07. Develop an online directory for students and young professionals to access jobs, internships, and training opportunities in the natural resources and restoration field.
- ▶ E.03.08. Improve visibility of paid opportunities and mentorship programs to youth through strategic and audience-specific promotional activities.



Nagessa Dube (right), program director for Serve Ethiopians Washington, at a volunteer park planting event. Credit: Jon Bridgman

F. Outreach and Behavior Change

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Cultivate individual and collective behavior changes among residents to benefit the Puget Sound ecosystem.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

All

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

All

STRATEGIES

F.01. INVEST IN SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS BEHAVIOR CHANGE EFFORTS THROUGH 1) CAPACITY BUILDING, 2) POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT, AND 3) RESEARCH AND EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ F.01.01. Fund research to evaluate the effectiveness of stewardship and behavior change programs across different demographic groups, community needs, and priority outcomes to identify which strategies work best in varying contexts.
- ▶ F.01.02. Fund research to identify the barriers that limit participation in stewardship and behavior change programs, particularly for low-income communities and those impacted by environmental degradation. Develop actionable solutions to improve equitable access and inclusion.
- ▶ F.01.03. Invest in the capacity of residents, community-based organizations, and local governments to design and implement culturally relevant and accessible stewardship and behavior change programs, particularly for communities impacted by environmental degradation.
- ▶ F.01.04. Advance landscape-scale conservation by increasing funding and strengthening cross-jurisdictional, interagency collaboration for locally-led voluntary landowner stewardship programs.
- ▶ F.01.05. Support research and monitoring efforts that link volunteer and stewardship efforts to human health, quality of life, and environmental outcomes, including bolstered support for community science programs.

- ▶ F.01.06. Bolster and expand voluntary environmental programs for local businesses, K-12 schools, universities, and private landowners, particularly those in, serving, or working with communities impacted by environmental degradation.
- ▶ F.01.07. Fund collaboration between community-based organizations and communication experts to develop and implement effective outreach and engagement campaigns for priority recovery and resilience initiatives.

F.02. CULTIVATE BEHAVIOR CHANGE THROUGH EDUCATION AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS, INCENTIVES, AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT PROGRAMMING AND OUTREACH.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ F.02.01. Expand outreach and engagement efforts to reach new audiences and communities to increase their awareness of and participation in volunteer and stewardship activities. Ensure that these new engagement efforts have culturally relevant materials and are translated into other languages when needed and accessible formats that best reach new audiences.
- ▶ F.02.02. Connect residents and visitors to volunteer opportunities for Puget Sound stewardship activities that strengthen community-based stewardship and volunteer networks.
- ▶ F.02.03. Provide technical assistance and educational opportunities to residents to enhance their ability to implement stewardship activities.
- ▶ F.02.04. Sustain, improve, and advance projects and programs that support individual behavior changes among residents to reduce their personal impact on the health of Puget Sound.
- ▶ F.02.05. Improve awareness of resources and accessibility of relevant information (for example, language translation and open-source resources) to empower residents to protect communities from ecological degradation. Conduct targeted adult and K-12 education campaigns to raise awareness of how sea level rise, ocean acidification, drought, warmer air and water temperatures, decreased snowpack, extreme weather events, and loss of ecological function have and will continue to impact Puget Sound.
- ▶ F.02.06. Advance and incentivize individual behavior change and environmental awareness among Puget Sound residents and visitors through increased collaboration with outdoor and tourism industries.
- ▶ F.02.07. Develop and implement effective social marketing (behavior change) campaigns to highlight solutions that reduce adverse impacts of human behavior on the environment, wildlife, human health, and quality of life.
- ▶ F.02.08. Fund and coordinate training opportunities that teach stewardship practices rooted in culturally connected practices, particularly for land managers and stewardship program organizers.
- ▶ F.02.09. Raise awareness among residents about the challenges that Puget Sound faces and connect them to stewardship opportunities or behavior change resources to address these challenges in culturally relevant ways.
- ▶ F.02.10. Increase education and awareness about the ecological benefits of capital projects (such as culvert replacements) that may cause disruptions in services (such as road closures) to reduce public frustration with construction delays.
- ▶ F.02.11. Support community-led investigations into the needs of communities impacted by environmental degradation. Incorporate solutions from these investigations to inform and improve volunteer stewardship and behavior-change programs.

CHAPTER 4: RECOVERY PLAN

The Recovery Plan includes Strategies and Actions designed to reduce the pressures and stressors impacting the health of the ecosystem and communities. The Recovery Plan is organized into 20 Topics that represent the region's priorities for recovery partners. These Topics are organized into themes of Healthy Communities, Sustainable Land Use, Resilient Habitats, and Clean Water and Harvestable Shellfish. Although they are grouped under different themes and Topics, many of the Strategies in the Recovery Plan depend on the successful implementation of other Strategies and Actions.

This Recovery Plan draws on content from various plans and partners, building on more than a decade of collaborative, science-driven planning for the Action Agenda. Many of the Strategies in the Action Agenda's Recovery Plan are informed by various Implementation Strategies ([Appendix III](#)). It also adapts and improves upon previous Action Agendas. Partners across the region have made Commitments to implement various Actions over the next four years, allowing us to track progress towards recovery and hold ourselves accountable. These Commitments can be found in [Appendix I](#), online in the [Action Agenda Explorer](#) and the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#).



OUTREACH

Actions that increase public education and awareness of the ecological health and water quality conditions of the estuary



ADAPTATION

Actions that address the effects of recurring extreme weather events on the estuary, including the identification and assessment of vulnerabilities in the estuary and the development and implementation of adaptation strategies

Puget Sound shoreline and mountains. Credit: Brandon Sawaya

		TOPIC	STRATEGY
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES	1. ABUNDANT AND HARVESTABLE SALMON	01.01. Account for changes in the environment and emerging data when adaptively co-managing salmon hatcheries and fisheries.	
		01.02. Reduce displacement, competition, and predation of salmon and their prey caused by native or invasive species.	
		01.03. Ensure abundant, harvestable salmon and steelhead populations through an ecosystem-based approach to hatchery management.	
		01.04. Sustainably harvest natural- and hatchery-origin salmon while supporting treaty-reserved fishing rights, Tribal fisheries, and recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.	
		01.05. Promote accurate and timely data for salmon harvest monitoring and reporting to improve in-season management of fisheries.	
	2. HUMAN HEALTH	02.01. Protect and prevent people from consuming locally harvested contaminated fish and shellfish.	
		02.02. Limit people's recreation exposures to harmful air pathogens and biotoxins in fresh and marine waters.	
		02.03. Limit people's exposures to harmful air pollution.	
		02.04. Protect drinking water from contamination.	
		02.05. Conduct integrated, co-produced community-based planning to address needs and inform solutions for future ecological conditions, pollution, and human health.	
	3. TOXIC CHEMICAL PREVENTION	03.01. Expand our knowledge on the range and magnitude of CECs to identify new human and ecosystem health hazards.	
		03.02. Inventory and prioritize areas, sources, and risks of suspected or emerging toxic contamination from stormwater or wastewater pathways with significant impacts to the environment, aquatic species, or human health and improve access to that information.	
		03.03. Reduce and replace priority toxic chemicals in products with safer alternatives.	
		03.04. Support effectiveness research and stormwater and wastewater treatment actions in priority areas to reduce or eliminate toxic loads to fresh and marine waters.	
		03.05. Implement regulatory requirements and non-regulatory tools to reduce or eliminate sources of priority toxic chemicals.	
		03.06. Increase compliance with consumer and environmental regulations for priority toxic chemicals.	
		03.07. Engage with and assist upland landowners, Tribes, and impacted communities to holistically address toxic contamination in priority areas.	
		03.08. Inform, support, and engage communities to lower the risk of human exposure and health impacts from toxic chemicals.	
	4. SHARED LANDSCAPES	04.01. Expand equitable, safe, and inclusive access to parks, green spaces, and natural areas across Puget Sound. Address transportation, safety, and other barriers to accessing these areas, especially for low-income communities and those with limited access and resources.	
		04.02. Create more accessible green spaces and multi-use outdoor areas, particularly in communities with limited access to outdoor recreation.	
04.03. Develop co-management plans and regulations that reduce or limit the impact of recreation on ecologically sensitive, culturally important, or Treaty-protected resources.			
04.04. Engage with communities to identify, enhance, and expand opportunities for local, non-commercial access to and cultivation of food.			
04.05. Engage with outdoor recreation communities and tourists to promote responsible and safe recreation practices and provide education on the impact recreation can have on the ecosystem and Tribes' treaty and sovereign rights.			

	TOPIC	STRATEGY
SUSTAINABLE LAND USE	5. SMART GROWTH	05.01. Improve the Growth Management Act (GMA) and local land use planning to effectively channel growth and prevent conversion of ecologically important lands.
		05.02. Build Puget Sound-wide support to prevent conversion of forests, farms, shorelines, and natural areas and increase funding for protection incentives.
		05.03. Increase demand for and reduce barriers to infill and redevelopment in high-growth areas.
		05.04. Conduct watershed-scale and land use planning to protect and restore water quality and habitat.
	6. AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION	06.01. Support landowners for the long-term viability and sustainability of agricultural lands to prevent loss of farmland to development.
		06.02. Support the expansion of market mechanisms to increase long-term viability and reduce conversion pressure for agricultural lands.
		06.03. Reduce regulatory and economic barriers to viable agriculture in Puget Sound.
	7. WORKING FOREST LAND PROTECTION	07.01. Support the long-term viability and sustainability of working forests to reduce pressure for conversion to a more developed use.
		07.02. Increase the overall acreage and resilience of working forestland in the Puget Sound basin to respond to warmer summers, warmer winters, warmer stream temperatures, and increasing drought.
		07.03. Expand market mechanisms to increase long-term viability and reduce conversion pressure for working forests.

RESILIENT HABITAT	8. MARINE VEGETATION	08.01. Implement targeted research and monitoring initiatives to understand changes in marine vegetation, with consideration of ecological and community benefits.
		08.02. Evaluate and improve implementation of existing shoreline, nearshore, water quality, and land use regulations, programs, and policies to enhance protections for marine vegetation.
		08.03. Protect marine vegetation in existing and new reserves, refuges, and protected areas that respect Tribal treaty and sovereign rights.
		08.04. Use effective restoration methods to accelerate recolonization and expansion of marine vegetation at sites shown to possess suitable ecological and sociocultural conditions.
		08.05. Expand and promote responsible stewardship, local food harvest, and outdoor recreation to strengthen community connections with marine vegetation and support human health and quality of life while upholding and honoring Tribal treaty and sovereign rights.
	9. HEALTHY SHORELINES	09.01. Increase and improve shoreline regulation implementation, compliance, enforcement, and communication to protect existing intact nearshore habitat and reduce hard armor.
		09.02. Expand and improve incentives and education for residential property owners to motivate voluntary actions for healthy shorelines.
		09.03. Improve long-term strategic planning to reduce shoreline armoring, increase coastal resilience, and improve appropriate public access to restored shorelines.
		09.04. Increase and improve coastal process-based design and technical training to improve the region's capacity to implement restoration projects.
		09.05. Implement restoration and protection to improve beach processes, structure, and function identified through strategic planning at multiple geographic scales.

		TOPIC	STRATEGY
RESILIENT HABITAT	10. FLOODPLAINS AND ESTUARIES	10.01. Increase and accelerate implementation of habitat acquisition and restoration projects as prioritized in watershed salmon recovery plans.	
		10.02. Incorporate the economic risks and costs of development into land use planning in floodplain and estuary habitats.	
		10.03. Maintain and expand a regional framework to build public and political support, develop partnerships, secure funding, simplify permits, and monitor progress to improve outcomes for fish populations, reduce flood risk, and support agricultural viability (fish, flood, farm).	
		10.04. Prioritize, design, and implement reach-scale restoration and protection projects within a river basin, watershed, and/or estuary.	
		10.05. Expand floodplain and estuary habitat protection through regulations and incentives.	
	11. RIPARIAN AREAS	11.01. Increase coordination and capacity to improve effectiveness of integrated riparian programs across Puget Sound.	
		11.02. Increase local community engagement with riparian restoration through programs that support voluntary conservation.	
		11.03. Build long-term community stewardship mechanisms, increase resilience, and improve adaptive management of riparian areas.	
		11.04. Establish and implement science-based regulatory programs.	
	12. FRESHWATER AVAILABILITY	12.01. Develop and expand water education and voluntary conservation programs.	
		12.02. Increase local government actions and regulatory compliance to address water quantity.	
		12.03. Understand and plan for all future water needs in the context of population growth and potential future ecological or environmental conditions.	
		12.04. Ensure human communities have access to sufficient water resources, including drinking water that meets required standards.	
	13. FISH PASSAGE BARRIERS	13.01. Inventory, assess, and prioritize fish passage barriers (culverts, dams, bridges, causeways) for removal and mitigation.	
		13.02. Fund, implement, and monitor fish passage barrier correction or removal in watersheds.	
	14. INVASIVE SPECIES	14.01. Continue to refine integrated planning and removal approaches to prevent, manage, and mitigate the introduction and spread of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, including (but not limited to) European green crab, invasive fish, and invasive plants.	
		14.02. Develop, sustain, and fund coordinated outreach and education programs that raise awareness, encourage behavior change, and motivate action for Puget Sound residents to reduce the spread of invasive species.	

CLEAN WATER AND HARVESTABLE SHELLFISH

TOPIC	STRATEGY
15. STORMWATER RUNOFF	15.01. Encourage stormwater retrofits and restoration.
	15.02. Increase local stormwater management capacity (including funding, staffing resources, and management tools and information).
	15.03. Incentivize redevelopment in residential and mixed-use areas lacking effective stormwater management.
	15.04. Reduce impacts from residential and built environment stormwater.
	15.05. Adjust stormwater permitting requirements or other local government programs.
16. AGRICULTURAL LANDS RUNOFF	16.01. Increase voluntary BMP implementation among agricultural producers and landowners.
	16.02. Support pathways for agricultural producers and landowners to achieve regulatory compliance.
	16.03. Increase monitoring and evaluation efforts to assess the effectiveness of programs and BMPs at providing affordable and effective solutions to protect the environment and agricultural viability.
17. FOREST ROADS RUNOFF	17.01. Develop a Puget Sound forest runoff strategy.
	17.02. Address runoff from forest roads.
	17.03. Increase research on forest runoff.
	17.04. Support current and develop new programs that provide voluntary incentives.
18. FECAL POLLUTION	18.01. Fund, develop, and implement effective local and Tribal nations PIC programs.
	18.02. Support watershed cleanup plan implementation and development to limit fecal pollution, such as TMDLs and other strategies.
	18.03. Effectively manage OSS and LOSS.
19. WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS	19.01. Reduce nutrient discharge and other pollutants from wastewater treatment facilities.
	19.02. Prevent and reduce impacts from combined sewer overflows (CSO).
	19.03. Integrate wastewater and land use planning.
	19.04. Improve End-Product Management.
	19.05. Address contaminants of emerging concern/toxics and microplastics in wastewater.
20. VESSEL IMPACTS	20.01. Reduce the abandonment of vessels and expand and accelerate derelict vessel removal programs.
	20.02. Improve our understanding of risk and consequences of oil spills and toxic pollution discharge, assess the effectiveness and feasibility of mitigation measures, and support additional prevention efforts.
	20.03. Strengthen the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and spill preparedness of all partners, including federal, Tribal, state, and local governments, oil spill response organizations, and transboundary partners.
	20.04. Improve early local response to spills by increasing capacity for local engagement and training programs.
	20.05. Educate the public about the risks and impacts of marine oil spills in Puget Sound and encourage participation in forums that influence policy and decision making for regional oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response.
	20.06. Promote implementation of and compliance with laws and guidelines for boaters, ship operators, ports, and others to protect Southern Resident orcas from underwater noise and vessel disturbance.
	20.07. Promote responsible boating by increasing enforcement and educating boaters about regulations, programs, and resources to reduce the impact of recreational boating on water quality, marine debris, and sensitive wildlife and habitat.



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Puget Sound ecosystems have supported large and diverse human communities since time immemorial. Today, people continue to rely on a healthy environment to support their physical, mental, spiritual, and cultural health. The Topics in this section are focused on improving the health and quality of life for the many human communities that call Puget Sound home today. This includes restoring salmon runs, protecting public health, preventing toxic pollution, and sharing the outdoor spaces people access and enjoy. Implementing the Strategies and Actions in this section supports not just the recovery of Puget Sound, but also the health of the people and communities who rely on a healthy ecosystem.

A public path winding through Tacoma. Credit: Tim Rue



A Swinomish Tribal fisherman catches sockeye salmon in the San Juan Islands. Credit: Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

1. Abundant and Harvestable Salmon

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Support co-managers to implement adaptive management and conservation actions related to fisheries, hatcheries, and food webs consistent with salmon recovery goals.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 8. Ensure sustainable harvest of native wild fish and shellfish populations and support treaty-reserved fishing rights

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Local Foods, Outdoor Activity	Cultural Wellbeing	Salmon, Orca		

STRATEGIES

01.01. ACCOUNT FOR CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT AND EMERGING DATA WHEN ADAPTIVELY CO-MANAGING SALMON HATCHERIES AND FISHERIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:



- ▶ 01.01.01. Integrate adaptation and resilience strategies in salmon and steelhead hatchery and fisheries management to advance recovery efforts.
- ▶ 01.01.02. Continue research into factors affecting marine and estuarine survival of salmon. Use this information to inform conservation, restoration, harvest, and hatchery management decisions.
- ▶ 01.01.03. Ensure sustainable support for monitoring of local and regional fisheries, hatcheries, and ecosystems—including fish-in/fish-out and offshore monitoring—to evaluate and prioritize management decisions grounded in accurate assessments of current and projected future conditions.
- ▶ 01.01.04. Encourage communication and coordination among co-managers and recovery partners around research, monitoring, and management efforts aimed at increasing the resilience of salmon populations.



CONNECTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

The following Action from the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum was selected as a focus for the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) and relates to this Action Agenda Topic:

- ▶ Low Smolt 2.6. Study and support ongoing conversations to determine pinniped population management.

01.02. REDUCE DISPLACEMENT, COMPETITION, AND PREDATION OF SALMON AND THEIR PREY CAUSED BY NATIVE OR INVASIVE SPECIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 01.02.01. Secure sustainable funding for pinniped population assessments and diet studies in the Puget Sound.
- ▶ 01.02.02. Further support, assess, and implement pinniped management following recommendations from collaborative scientific efforts, such as the Washington Academy of Sciences' [Pinniped Predation on Salmonids report](#) and Salish Sea Marine Survival Project.
- ▶ 01.02.03. Advance discussions with co-managers and decisionmakers about science-supported options for reducing pinniped predation and impacts on salmon populations. This includes nonlethal deterrents, removal/alterations of infrastructure that creates predation bottlenecks, and removal efforts that comply with Congressional authority, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Endangered Species Act.
- ▶ 01.02.04. Implement, assess, and learn from pinniped deterrence pilot studies in Puget Sound and removals in the Columbia River.
- ▶ 01.02.05. Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive, non-native fish species (such as smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern pike) that are known to displace, compete with, and/or prey on imperiled native salmonids, hindering recovery. Support efforts to remove and control established populations of invasive fish species.
- ▶ 01.02.06. Support the protection and expansion of forage fish populations to improve food web functionality and salmon recovery. Efforts include shoreline armor reduction and prevention programs, protection and restoration of forage fish spawning habitat, adaptive management of forage fish harvest activities, and forage fish monitoring and research that integrates Indigenous knowledge (for example, natural supplementation of spawning habitat).

01.03. ENSURE ABUNDANT, HARVESTABLE SALMON AND STEELHEAD POPULATIONS THROUGH AN ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH TO HATCHERY MANAGEMENT.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 01.03.01. Continue to improve evaluation practices and facilities to more consistently implement best practices for hatchery management, including through implementation of Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs), which describe potential risks and benefits of hatchery production.
- ▶ 01.03.02. Evaluate program objectives and implement state and Tribal hatchery production to support critical ecosystem services, including prey availability for Southern Resident orca.
- ▶ 01.03.03. Respect Tribal sovereignty and weigh the needs of salmon-reliant communities when making management decisions for salmon recovery.
- ▶ 01.03.04. Assess resilience of Puget Sound hatcheries by evaluating their vulnerability to large-scale threats and prioritizing necessary actions.
- ▶ 01.03.05. Secure sustainable funding to support necessary hatchery infrastructure and maintenance, including water supply and facility upgrades.
- ▶ 01.03.06. Fund experiments to evaluate and adapt hatchery rearing strategies and methodologies to ensure ongoing success.



01.04. SUSTAINABLY HARVEST NATURAL- AND HATCHERY-ORIGIN SALMON WHILE SUPPORTING TREATY-RESERVED FISHING RIGHTS, TRIBAL FISHERIES, AND RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL FISHING OPPORTUNITIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 01.04.01. Improve audience-specific communication about harvest limits and regulations among fishery co-managers, the scientific community, the salmon recovery community, and pertinent industries.
- ▶ 01.04.02. Build support for upholding treaty obligations by deepening awareness and understanding of Tribes' treaty and sovereign rights and their co-manager relationship among the recovery community and public.
- ▶ 01.04.03. Use the best-available science to promote ecosystem-based planning that coordinates actions for habitat protection and restoration with salmon harvest and hatchery management.
- ▶ 01.04.04. Work to restore and improve habitat conditions for salmon stocks that are the most constraining on fisheries.



01.05. PROMOTE ACCURATE AND TIMELY DATA FOR SALMON HARVEST MONITORING AND REPORTING TO IMPROVE IN-SEASON MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 01.05.01. Improve monitoring methods with the development of new tools and techniques. Approaches may include implementing electronic catch reporting for all fisheries to improve in-season management and data quality. Account for catch-and-release encounters for wild steelhead released in sport fisheries and for non-target salmon species or size classes in recreational fisheries.
- ▶ 01.05.02. Develop, fund, and assess projects and programs to reduce illegal fishing and promote increased voluntary compliance with fishing regulations.



Alki Beach in Seattle. Credit: Randall Williams

2. Human Health

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Protect human health, while considering disproportionate impacts on some populations, through programs that reduce exposure to harmful water pollution, contaminated fish and shellfish, air pollution, and contaminated drinking water.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- 10. Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance
- 11. Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and that populations and communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Air Quality Drinking Water, Local Foods, Outdoor Activity, Shellfish Beds	Cultural Wellbeing			Toxics in Aquatic Life

STRATEGIES

02.01. PROTECT AND PREVENT PEOPLE FROM CONSUMING LOCALLY HARVESTED CONTAMINATED FISH AND SHELLFISH.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 02.01.01. Develop a strategy that (1) includes objectives which support improvements to the Local Foods Vital Sign; (2) connects with fecal pathogen and toxics reduction actions in Shellfish Beds and Toxics in Fish Implementation Strategies; and (3) supports safe consumption of fish and shellfish from Puget Sound waters. State agencies should develop this in coordination with state and local health authorities and current laws and programs.
- ▶ 02.01.02. Identify and address gaps in current state and local programs for toxics surveillance in waters where people, particularly communities that consume more fish and shellfish than average, are catching fish or harvesting shellfish. Develop health advisories and recommendations about species that are caught and consumed in Puget Sound, how the food is prepared, how often it is eaten, and contamination levels of fish and shellfish from under-monitored locations.
- ▶ 02.01.03. Provide data to fish advisory decision-makers based on regional and local studies that support the development of human health thresholds, and understanding toxic exposure risks, from consuming fish and shellfish.
- ▶ 02.01.04. Fund and support the Sound Toxins program and pursue research that helps forecast and provide health information to shellfish growers and consumers.
- ▶ 02.01.05. Support local health jurisdictions for effective and culturally relevant communication, outreach, and engagement with communities that harvest and consume local foods (for example, fish, shellfish, marine vegetation). Focus on populations that may not be regularly communicated with, such as smaller jurisdictions, rural and low-income communities, and non-English speaking communities.

02.02. LIMIT PEOPLE'S RECREATION EXPOSURES TO HARMFUL AIR PATHOGENS AND BIOTOXINS IN FRESH AND MARINE WATERS.

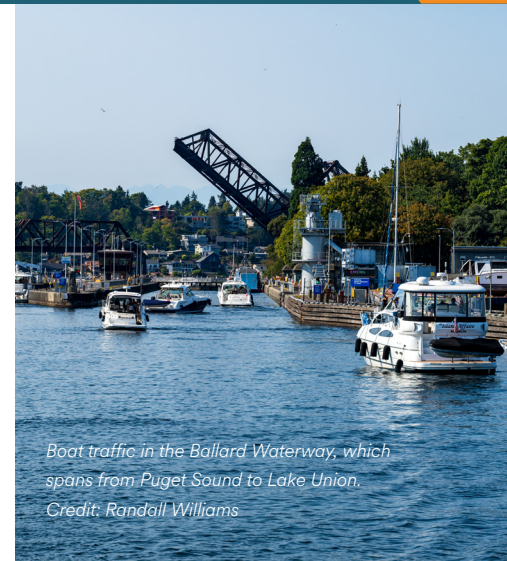
Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 02.02.01. Over time, evaluate and monitor the demographic and geographic distribution of human vulnerabilities—illness, hospitalizations, death, and disabilities from exposures to biological pathogens (for example, bacteria, algae, viruses, and parasites)—to better understand exposure and prioritize response efforts.
- ▶ 02.02.02. Develop a community-level and culturally relevant communication, education, and/or outreach campaign in multiple languages to reduce exposure to water pollutants.
- ▶ 02.02.03. Ensure that fresh and marine water is monitored and tested for safe swimming and recreational use, especially in impacted communities.
- ▶ 02.02.04. Maintain and expand community outreach, education, and signage to prevent people's exposure to harmful water quality in fresh and marine swimming and recreational areas.

02.03. LIMIT PEOPLE'S EXPOSURES TO HARMFUL AIR POLLUTION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 02.03.01. Expand air pollution monitoring to include (1) adverse human health outcomes (for example, illness, hospitalizations, deaths, and disabilities) and (2) priority areas historically impacted by poor air pollution, low-income areas, and in communities with poor health outcomes.



Boat traffic in the Ballard Waterway, which spans from Puget Sound to Lake Union.
Credit: Randall Williams

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

HUMAN HEALTH

VESSEL IMPACTS

The Puget Sound No Discharge Zone (NDZ), created in 2018, was the result of years of research, community engagement, Ecology state rulemaking, U.S. EPA approval, and federal litigation. The NDZ is the largest of its kind and prohibits discharge of sewage from all vessels in Washington marine waters—from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Lake Washington and Lake Union. The Department of Ecology works closely with Washington Sea Grant, Washington State Parks (Clean Vessel Act program), local governments, nonprofits, and other state and federal agencies to educate the public and boaters through the “Pumpout, Don’t Dump Out” campaign and other resources like the [Pumpout Washington website](#). Since the NDZ was established, 700 acres of shellfish beds have been reopened. There have also been noticeable improvements in boater awareness, boater compliance, and protections for swimming beaches.

- ▶ 02.03.02. Support air pollution mitigation and protection actions, especially in areas historically impacted by poor air pollution, low-income areas, and in communities with poor health outcomes.
- ▶ 02.03.03. Expand programs to reduce particulate air pollution (for example, wood stoves, diesel engines), particularly in low-income and rural households.
- ▶ 02.03.04. Expand programs to reduce the formation of ground-level ozone, including reducing vehicle miles powered by internal combustion.
- ▶ 02.03.05. Increase air quality monitoring and mitigation studies on the impact emissions from airplanes and jets have on workers at and communities living near airports and military bases.
- ▶ 02.03.06. Support air quality studies on contaminants impacting communities to inform air pollution mitigation and protection actions.
- ▶ 02.03.07. Evaluate interventions to develop best practices and improve the effectiveness of air pollution protection actions.
- ▶ 02.03.08. Use existing data sources to evaluate the demographic and geographic distribution of human vulnerabilities to air pollution to understand and prioritize response efforts. For example, strengthen and use the Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map to assess impacts to populations.
- ▶ 02.03.09. Develop, implement, and support real-time air quality information and short-term forecasts to warn communities about potentially harmful conditions. For example, expand air quality messaging in smartphone weather applications and develop complementary approaches to reach communities that are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, such as those living close to industrial areas, airports, seaports, and in rural areas.
- ▶ 02.03.10. Support investments in nature-based solutions that can effectively improve air quality, and provide other environmental benefits (for example, water quality, shade, temperature).
- ▶ 02.03.11. Require permitting agencies to consider cumulative impacts when assessing air quality impacts.

02.04. PROTECT DRINKING WATER FROM CONTAMINATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 02.04.01. Expand outreach and education efforts to inform communities about the source, management, and quality of their drinking water.
- ▶ 02.04.02. Fund research on disparities in drinking water across geographies and demographics in the region (for example, water quality, water source, water shut offs).
- ▶ 02.04.03. Develop a drinking water strategy that incorporates human health objectives and the applicable [Vital Signs](#).
- ▶ 02.04.04. Invest in improvements to drinking water systems to ensure they are resilient to modeled future ecological conditions. Ensure that drinking water systems also meet standards across the entirety of Puget Sound.

02.05. CONDUCT INTEGRATED, CO-PRODUCED COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING TO ADDRESS NEEDS AND INFORM SOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS, POLLUTION, AND HUMAN HEALTH.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 02.05.01. Work with local and impacted communities to design and carry out effectiveness monitoring programs that focus on exposures and health outcomes. These programs should evaluate the effectiveness of resilience planning and guide improvements over time.
- ▶ 02.05.02. Work with LIOs and Tribal, state, county, and local governments to build and strengthen resilience against future ecological degradation. Use multi-benefit approaches and build capacity for communities to address local priorities.
- ▶ 02.05.03. Conduct research and raise public awareness about how anticipated ecological and environmental changes may impact human health. This will help the public understand future risks and support resilience actions.
- ▶ 02.05.04. Quickly make public health data readily available during and after extreme weather events (for example, heat waves and wildfire smoke events).



Chemicals, like those from tires, are released on roads and washed into local bodies of water where they harm salmon and other aquatic life. Credit: iievgeniy

3. Toxic Chemical Prevention

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Prevent, reduce, or eliminate the risk of toxic chemical pollution in the environment, aquatic species, and people by understanding where toxic chemicals come from, improving regulatory frameworks and incentives, developing new tools and safer alternatives to toxic chemicals, addressing human health impacts, and cleaning up toxic chemical contamination.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- 11. Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and that populations and communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Air Quality, Local Foods, Outdoor Activity		Salmon Forage Fish, Groundfish and Benthic Invertebrates		Toxics in Aquatic Life, Marine Water

STRATEGIES

03.01. EXPAND OUR KNOWLEDGE ON THE RANGE AND MAGNITUDE OF CECS TO IDENTIFY NEW HUMAN AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH HAZARDS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.01.01. Identify chemicals and toxic substances that are hazardous to environmental and human health. Develop new methods of testing and lab analysis if necessary and monitor toxic chemicals in products, processes, and the environment (including local foods, air quality, and drinking water).
- ▶ 03.01.02. Expand ecosystem and human health monitoring data and knowledge to inform the development or implementation of actions to reduce exposure to hazardous chemicals and toxic substances.
- ▶ 03.01.03. Increase efficiency of screening tools (policies, methods, or equipment) to identify priority toxic chemicals or CECS in products, processes, and the environment (including local foods, air quality, and drinking water).
- ▶ 03.01.04. Fully fund toxics surveillance and monitoring for water quality, air quality, and aquatic species to identify toxic contaminants and hotspots, especially in areas where suspected legacy contamination is impacting human health.
- ▶ 03.01.05. Increase our regional understanding of the sources, pathways, and impacts of macro, micro, and nano plastics on environmental and human health.

03.02. INVENTORY AND PRIORITIZE AREAS, SOURCES, AND RISKS OF SUSPECTED OR EMERGING TOXIC CONTAMINATION FROM STORMWATER OR WASTEWATER PATHWAYS WITH SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT, AQUATIC SPECIES, OR HUMAN HEALTH AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO THAT INFORMATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.02.01. Develop a structured decision-making framework to identify exposure risk and contaminated sites and provide that information through a user-friendly mapping service to inform financial and management decisions for prevention, treatment, or protection activities (for example, Canada's Pollutants Affecting Whales and their Prey Inventory Tool).
- ▶ 03.02.02. Develop a spatial framework with decision criteria related to land use, transportation, stormwater, or other infrastructure to identify potential sources and pathways of toxic chemicals that impact aquatic species.
- ▶ 03.02.03. Develop decision criteria of new or emerging contamination that represent potential sources (high-risk dangerous waste generators) or known legacy contaminated sites and a risk of mobilizing toxic contamination due to runoff from upland areas. Criteria should also include considerations for flooding, sea level rise, and other extreme high-water events.



Hazardous materials being pulled from an abandoned building. Credit: Washington State Department of Ecology

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

TOXIC CHEMICAL PREVENTION

SHARED LANDSCAPES

STORMWATER RUNOFF

HUMAN HEALTH

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a class of synthetic chlorinated chemicals, are among the most significant toxic chemicals in Puget Sound. They impact humans, salmon, orcas, and many other organisms in the region. While PCBs have been banned in many consumer goods for decades, they are common in the paint, finishes, caulk, and sealants in older buildings. Older buildings release these toxic chemicals as they age, weather, and degrade, or when they are renovated or demolished. If building owners and contractors do not take the appropriate steps, PCBs can be released into the environment and can contaminate stormwater, soil, sediments, and water bodies. With grants from the Department of Ecology and the EPA, the Seattle and Bellevue 2030 Districts are leading an outreach and education campaign to promote tools and resources on PCBs in Building Materials. This will help property owners and managers, construction companies, municipalities, and affordable housing providers manage PCBs and prevent them from entering the environment during renovation and demolition work.

- ▶ 03.02.04. Develop decision criteria that incorporate existing community risk metrics, spatial data, human health goals, and the HEAL Act guidance.
- ▶ 03.02.05. Use decision criteria to monitor and prioritize cleanup and remediation of toxic hotspots, especially in areas impacting human health.

03.03. REDUCE AND REPLACE PRIORITY TOXIC CHEMICALS IN PRODUCTS WITH SAFER ALTERNATIVES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.03.01. Identify opportunities to encourage, incentivize, or require the use of less toxic or non-toxic alternative materials in building construction. Consider solutions such as updating building codes, implementing market incentives, identifying alternatives, and pursuing third-party certification.
- ▶ 03.03.02. Advance the identification, research, and development of safer alternatives for hazardous chemicals by supporting green chemistry or similar programs with financial incentives and regulatory requirements in alignment with Safer Products for WA.
- ▶ 03.03.03. Identify opportunities and implement solutions for safer alternatives that reduce micro and nano plastic pollution, including tire wear particles.

03.04. SUPPORT EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH AND STORMWATER AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT ACTIONS IN PRIORITY AREAS TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE TOXIC LOADS TO FRESH AND MARINE WATERS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.04.01. Fund pilot projects to evaluate source control and treatment technologies to remove toxic chemicals in wastewater or stormwater toxic hotspots. Create incentives to deploy those technologies.
- ▶ 03.04.02. Identify hazards such as sea level rise, floods, and extreme weather events, and assess risks to current infrastructure in Puget Sound. Develop recommendations for toxic hotspots, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management considerate of extreme weather, sea level rise, and floods.
- ▶ 03.04.03. Implement multi-beneficial remediation and mitigation efforts that clean up toxic hotspots and support water quality, current and future hydrology, salmon recovery, natural ecosystem function, public health, and local community and Tribal interests.
- ▶ 03.04.04. Identify barriers to initiating legacy toxic cleanup actions in publicly owned buildings and residential spaces (especially where toxic exposure risk for children is high). Address those barriers to facilitate cleanup and prevent contamination from toxic hazards in new construction or renovation.



03.05. IMPLEMENT REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS AND NON-REGULATORY TOOLS TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE SOURCES OF PRIORITY TOXIC CHEMICALS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.05.01. Pursue public-private partnerships to create market-based programs like eco-labeling and third-party certifications, financial penalties, or incentives for research and development.
- ▶ 03.05.02. Help local businesses and public agencies understand which products contain hazardous toxic chemicals and find safer alternatives. Provide support with standards and guidance, product replacement, preferred purchasing, and product stewardship programs.
- ▶ 03.05.03. Implement industry actions to prevent or reduce CECs or priority toxic chemicals in Puget Sound.
- ▶ 03.05.04. Develop a regional microplastics strategy with both short- and long-term prevention solutions.
- ▶ 03.05.05. Develop pilot programs to advance legacy PCB cleanup related to electrical infrastructure, which can catalyze further cleanup throughout Puget Sound.
- ▶ 03.05.06. Continue to fund and implement Chemical Action Plans, action plans for hazardous materials (such as 6PPD), Safer Products for Washington, and other tools to reduce toxic chemical contamination in Puget Sound.

03.06. INCREASE COMPLIANCE WITH CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS FOR PRIORITY TOXIC CHEMICALS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.06.01. Increase product compliance testing by increasing funding, requesting manufacturer ingredient disclosure, expanding lab capacity, and increasing sample method development.
- ▶ 03.06.02. Strengthen existing collaboration with regional partners (e.g., agencies, local governments, community-based organizations, or nonprofits) and develop new partnerships with other states to ensure consistency.

03.07. ENGAGE WITH AND ASSIST UPLAND LANDOWNERS, TRIBES, AND IMPACTED COMMUNITIES TO HOLISTICALLY ADDRESS TOXIC CONTAMINATION IN PRIORITY AREAS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.07.01. Address barriers that prevent or limit community-based organizations, Tribes, and impacted communities from engaging in cleanup planning and identification efforts. Increase engagement and inclusion of impacted communities to ensure engagement of diverse partners in planning, cleanup, and remediation activities for toxic hotspots or legacy contamination.
- ▶ 03.07.02. Engage and collaborate with Tribal co-managers in planning, cleanup, and remediation activities for toxic hotspots or legacy contamination sites on Tribal land or impacting treaty protected resources.
- ▶ 03.07.03. Develop tools and other outreach programs for public and private landowners of upland sites to manage toxic air pollution, stormwater runoff, groundwater contamination, and other risks in priority areas.
- ▶ 03.07.04. Create opportunities to bring training, jobs, and economic benefits (including short-term economic stimulus from cleanup investments) to communities through legacy contamination work.
- ▶ 03.07.05. Provide tools and information for Puget Sound residents to understand the toxic chemical contamination risks that may be associated with local food production (i.e., home gardens or local shellfish or fish harvests) or recreational exposures (i.e., crumb rubber turf fields or toxic chemical exposure from air or water pollution).

03.08. INFORM, SUPPORT, AND ENGAGE COMMUNITIES TO LOWER THE RISK OF HUMAN EXPOSURE AND HEALTH IMPACTS FROM TOXIC CHEMICALS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 03.08.01. Educate residents and businesses about commercial or industrial products with hazardous toxic chemicals and safer alternatives to empower individuals to make healthy purchasing choices.
- ▶ 03.08.02. Increase resources and remove barriers to meaningfully engage and compensate impacted local communities, Tribes, and community-based organizations in planning, communications (including reducing language barriers), and decision-making to develop toxic chemical prevention regulations and incentive programs
- ▶ 03.08.03. Educate agricultural workers about chemical pesticide and herbicide applications, providing information and resources on how to reduce their exposure and impacts to their health.
- ▶ 03.08.04. Research and monitor human health impacts from priority toxic chemicals. Integrate solutions for data uncertainties and gaps and hazards for classes of chemicals, exposure pathways, and health thresholds into regulatory programs.
- ▶ 03.08.05. Support community education and coordination among communicators at multiple scales (e.g., schools and public health agencies) to promote safer alternatives to hazardous toxic chemicals and prevent further human health exposures.
- ▶ 03.08.06. Bring training, jobs, and economic benefits to communities through toxic chemical pollution management, removal, and incentive programs. Engage with communities, including local youth and young-adult programs, to foster leadership and facilitate the transition to toxic-free living and working environments.



Hiking in the Pacific Northwest. Credit: Zargodesign

4. Shared Landscapes

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Expand and promote equitable, respectful, and responsible outdoor recreation, local food harvesting, and cultural practices across the region while protecting ecologically sensitive areas and honoring treaty-protected resources and sites.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 8. Ensure sustainable harvest of native wild fish and shellfish populations and support treaty-reserved fishing rights
- 10. Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance
- 11. Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and that populations and communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Outdoor Activity, Local Foods,	Sense of Place, Cultural Wellbeing, Sound Stewardship			

STRATEGIES

04.01. EXPAND EQUITABLE, SAFE, AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO PARKS, GREEN SPACES, AND NATURAL AREAS ACROSS PUGET SOUND. ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION, SAFETY, AND OTHER BARRIERS TO ACCESSING THESE AREAS, ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES AND THOSE WITH LIMITED ACCESS AND RESOURCES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 04.01.01. Promote and subsidize public transportation options (particularly for communities with limited access to outdoor areas) to urban and suburban green spaces and shorelines.
- ▶ 04.01.02. Promote and expand safe walking and biking routes to nearby parks and trails. Improve multi-lingual signage, appropriate lighting, and crosswalk infrastructure.
- ▶ 04.01.03. Support community-led shuttles or rideshare programs to parks, public lands, and other recreation areas that are not impacted by heavy recreation use. Encourage shuttles to operate on weekends and holidays when public transportation options are limited.
- ▶ 04.01.04. Develop and expand programs that reduce access barriers for community members to participate in outdoor recreation activities throughout the year, not just the summer.
- ▶ 04.01.05. Conduct safety audits of public green spaces, in partnership with community members, to identify and address safety risks (e.g., lighting, visibility, maintenance, litter, policing presence, etc.).
- ▶ 04.01.06. Increase the number of lifeguards at popular public beaches to improve safety.
- ▶ 04.01.07. Ensure access for people with disabilities by investing in ADA-compliant trails, facilities, and transit links at appropriate outdoor recreation areas.
- ▶ 04.01.08. Increase funding for culturally relevant programming in parks and green spaces. Co-develop programming with local communities and Tribes.
- ▶ 04.01.09. Expand local capacity for parks and recreation planning and maintenance, particularly in under-resourced communities.
- ▶ 04.01.10. Include community voices, particularly from under-represented groups, in park and green space planning to ensure spaces reflect diverse needs and values.
- ▶ 04.01.11. Implement multilingual and culturally appropriate outreach to raise awareness about safe and accessible transportation to natural areas.



04.02. CREATE MORE ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACES AND MULTI-USE OUTDOOR AREAS, PARTICULARLY IN COMMUNITIES WITH LIMITED ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 04.02.01. Assess distribution of outdoor recreational and cultural opportunities throughout Puget Sound to identify communities and areas in need of more green spaces, programming, and other investments.
- ▶ 04.02.02. Support the ongoing maintenance of existing facilities (including bathrooms, trails, boat ramps, and fishing docks) and stewardship of parks and multi-use outdoor spaces, particularly in low-income communities. Create opportunities for community members to participate in maintenance and stewardship actions.
- ▶ 04.02.03. Support land acquisition to either expand or create parks, green spaces, and multi-use outdoor areas, particularly for communities that lack green space. Ensure that new green spaces in urban and suburban areas can be accessed by public transportation routes.
- ▶ 04.02.04. Ensure that information, public signage, and other communications about public recreation spaces are culturally relevant, multilingual, and reflect the needs and values of diverse communities.



- ▶ 04.02.05. Increase funding, coordination, and support for community-based organizations and research efforts (in both urban and rural areas) that directly involve poorly represented communities and populations in the outdoor recreation demographics to identify assets, understand barriers, and expand access to outdoor activities. These efforts should foster a sense of place, promote responsible recreation, and reflect the cultural values and needs of diverse communities.
- ▶ 04.02.06. Develop and fund incentive programs and co-manager agreements for private landowners (especially shoreline property owners) to increase access to their property for recreational and/or food harvesting purposes.

04.03. DEVELOP CO-MANAGEMENT PLANS AND REGULATIONS THAT REDUCE OR LIMIT THE IMPACT OF RECREATION ON ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE, CULTURALLY IMPORTANT, OR TREATY-PROTECTED RESOURCES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 04.03.01. Support the continuation of federal, Tribal, and state co-manager forums to develop access and management strategies that reduce the negative impacts of recreation on important resources and sites.
- ▶ 04.03.02. Engage local governments and private landowners to develop management techniques that divert recreation pressure away from sensitive areas.
- ▶ 04.03.03. Consider implementing seasonal closures and/or quota systems in areas significantly impacted by excessive recreation. Co-develop these programs and policies in partnership with Tribes to uphold and respect treaty rights and Tribal sovereignty. As closures and quotas are implemented, create opportunities for groups and communities with limited resources to ensure that these policies do not worsen existing inequities in access and use.
- ▶ 04.03.04. Provide community-based planning opportunities when setting priorities for land acquisition and the protection, management, and restoration of open/green space. Consider culturally relevant information, the outdoor recreation needs of local communities, and potential impacts to Tribes.






04.04. ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES TO IDENTIFY, ENHANCE, AND EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL, NON-COMMERCIAL ACCESS TO AND CULTIVATION OF FOOD.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 04.04.01. Support financing and affordability programs for local governments and community-based organizations and members to acquire farmland for communal, local food production (e.g., community gardens or food forests).
- ▶ 04.04.02. Support Tribal members' Treaty-protected rights to access and harvest shellfish on all tidelands in Washington, including private land, with co-manager agreements between Tribes and private tideland owners.
- ▶ 04.04.03. Identify opportunities to support existing urban food networks, including community gardens, food banks, master gardener programs, and youth engagement programs.
- ▶ 04.04.04. Increase understanding of the physical, spiritual, mental, and cultural health benefits and risks associated with harvesting local shellfish to better inform outreach and engagement efforts with shellfish harvesters, particularly from immigrant and non-English speaking communities.
- ▶ 04.04.05. Co-create and improve culturally relevant, multilingual materials on the safe and responsible harvest of crab, shrimp, clams, mussels, fish, squid, plants, berries, and mushrooms. Partner with communities that are highly engaged in harvesting and particularly vulnerable to associated risks (e.g., health, safety in access), including non-English-speaking populations.
- ▶ 04.04.06. Engage with and support immigrant communities that may experience challenges with accessing culturally relevant food from their home countries. Support their access to local food networks and communal growing spaces where they can cultivate and harvest culturally relevant food.

04.05. ENGAGE WITH OUTDOOR RECREATION COMMUNITIES AND TOURISTS TO PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE AND SAFE RECREATION PRACTICES AND PROVIDE EDUCATION ON THE IMPACT RECREATION CAN HAVE ON THE ECOSYSTEM AND TRIBES' TREATY AND SOVEREIGN RIGHTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

-  ▶ 04.05.01. Co-create trainings and workshops with Tribal governments for outdoor recreation groups to increase their awareness of Tribal communities, cultures, sovereignty, treaties, and their role as co-managers. Include information about how outdoor recreation can impact resources important to Tribes and the importance of managing/limiting recreation access to protect these resources.
-  ▶ 04.05.02. Identify and support community outreach and engagement programs that effectively promote place-based, culturally relevant, and responsible recreation principles. Promote regional collaborations that expand outreach and education programs to new audiences, considering language interpretation and other needs.
-  ▶ 04.05.03. Work with tourism agencies and local businesses to promote responsible recreation principles and educate visitors about relevant rules and restrictions.
-  ▶ 04.05.04. Develop conservation marketing programs that educate recreationalists about the effects of improperly disposed of human and pet waste on the environment. Provide resources to reduce the impact of waste from recreational activities.
-  ▶ 04.05.05. Develop educational campaigns and/or marketing programs for dog owners about responsibly recreating with pets, particularly emphasizing the importance of leashes and bagging pet waste.

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

Puget Sound is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. As more people move to Western Washington, we need to plan for this growth in a sustainable way. Washington state has long been a leader in land use planning, which prevents the worst effects of urban sprawl and protects working lands like farms and forests. The Topics in this section are focused on balancing the needs for housing, working lands, and the environment. Implementing the Strategies and Actions in this section supports our region's goals to provide more housing, support rural economies, and protect the environment through smart and sustainable land use planning. These three Topics along with those focused on Resilient Habitats compose the Habitat Protection and Restoration plan requirement of the CCMP.



Farmland in Snohomish County. Credit: Jon Bridgman



Dense housing channels growth into urban areas. Credit: PhilAugustavo

5. Smart Growth

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Ensure smart development and protect working lands, intact habitats, and natural processes by directing population growth into areas intended for more intense development (such as transit-oriented cities, urban growth areas) while maintaining easy access to natural spaces.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

1. Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
2. Protect agricultural lands and working forests from conversion
10. Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS		Sense of Place		Forest and Wetlands, Streams and Floodplains, Estuaries, Beaches and Marine Vegetation	

STRATEGIES

05.01. IMPROVE THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA) AND LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING TO EFFECTIVELY CHANNEL GROWTH AND PREVENT CONVERSION OF ECOLOGICALLY IMPORTANT LANDS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 05.01.01. Support local governments with capacity, training, and guidance to improve the implementation of comprehensive plans, shoreline master programs, surface water management, and Critical Areas regulations.
- ▶ 05.01.02. Incorporate salmon recovery plans, habitat connectivity goals, and watershed ecosystem functions into the GMA, regional infrastructure plans, and local land use plans.
- ▶ 05.01.03. Involve Tribes in mapping ecologically important lands to establish a baseline, so that ecological improvements can be applied and measured.
- ▶ 05.01.04. Fund programs for effectiveness monitoring of land use regulations. Programs should identify policies, rules, compliance, and other potential legislative/institutional barriers that need improvement.
- ▶ 05.01.05. Compile, promote, distribute, and support the use of the best available science including high resolution spatial data, and make it available and accessible to local governments and other organizations.
- ▶ 05.01.06. Review existing permit support tools to identify gaps about the risks and hazards of developing in areas that are vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding, and wildfires; address gaps and distribute related resources. Develop permit support tools and clear communication about the risks, hazards, and SMA guidelines regarding siting new development in areas that are vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding, and wildfire.



05.02. BUILD PUGET SOUND-WIDE SUPPORT TO PREVENT CONVERSION OF FORESTS, FARMS, SHORELINES, AND NATURAL AREAS AND INCREASE FUNDING FOR PROTECTION INCENTIVES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 05.02.01. Engage and educate the public and decision makers on opportunities to direct growth away from ecologically important areas.
- ▶ 05.02.02. Permanently protect habitats with high ecological value, and working lands, through transfer of development rights, conservation easements, and fee simple acquisitions.
- ▶ 05.02.03. Increase the participation in and access to transfer of development rights and the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP) receiving areas across Puget Sound.
- ▶ 05.02.04. Use basin-scale modeling to help local and regional decision makers understand the environmental impacts of development in different areas.
- ▶ 05.02.05. Develop an understanding of the socioeconomic costs, benefits, and tradeoffs of development across different areas, along with the effects on impacted populations.
- ▶ 05.02.06. Co-create a vision of natural lands stewardship for the 21st century.
- ▶ 05.02.07. Review economic and administrative measures and local water availability for opportunities to limit growth in ecologically important lands.
- ▶ 05.02.08. Incentivize demand for growth in city centers with an emphasis on public transportation.
- ▶ 05.02.09. Provide potential buyers with accurate information about critical areas, encumbrances, and other land use restrictions so they are informed of land development limitations prior to purchase.
- ▶ 05.02.10. Identify important natural and cultural rural areas. Support public ownership or open space benefit taxation programs to protect these places.



- ▶ 05.02.11. Increase access to recreation areas by public transit, walking, and biking to support public health, recreation, cultural value, and connection to natural areas.
- ▶ 05.02.12. Develop and implement guidance that protects existing tree canopy, accessible green space, and functional habitats.
- ▶ 05.02.13. Incentivize the incorporation of native habitat in public spaces such as parks, schools, and roadsides.

05.03. INCREASE DEMAND FOR AND REDUCE BARRIERS TO INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT IN HIGH-GROWTH AREAS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 05.03.01. Reduce regulatory barriers to infill development outside of riparian zones or other ecologically critical areas by improving planning and zoning within UGAs.
- ▶ 05.03.02. Improve the desirability of living in high-growth areas by increasing access to amenities, services, and affordable housing.
- ▶ 05.03.03. Ensure effective and consistent regulations to encourage development in preferred high-growth areas.
- ▶ 05.03.04. Engage low-income communities and those vulnerable to gentrification in the co-development and decision-making of smart growth and development plans, anti-displacement policies, affordable housing initiatives, and urban forest restoration and management efforts.
- ▶ 05.03.05. Incentivize redevelopment in residential and mixed-use areas that lack effective stormwater management.
- ▶ 05.03.06. Develop guidance and provide financial support to protect existing urban tree canopy and increase tree canopy in areas with low tree canopy cover.
- ▶ 05.03.07. Provide financial support for infrastructure improvements (both grey and green) to accommodate infill and redevelopment in preferred high-growth areas.

05.04. CONDUCT WATERSHED-SCALE AND LAND USE PLANNING TO PROTECT AND RESTORE WATER QUALITY AND HABITAT.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 05.04.01. Incentivize planning coordination on growth, water resources, and water quality between Tribal governments, state agencies, and local departments and jurisdictions. Provide guidance, training, funding, and capacity support for jurisdictions to align goals and outcomes and participate in ongoing collaborative processes.
- ▶ 05.04.02. Develop flexible regional funding approaches for mitigation that crosses jurisdictional boundaries.
- ▶ 05.04.03. Publicly recognize successful collaborations in local, regional, and national forums.



Seahurst Beach Park in Burien. Credit: GMC3101

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

SMART GROWTH

FLOODPLAINS AND ESTUARIES

STORMWATER RUNOFF

The success of Puget Sound recovery efforts can depend on coordinating land-use decisions across entire river basins. How and where communities grow affects habitat, working lands, Tribal treaty rights, pollution, flooding, housing affordability, and the health of fish and wildlife populations. Several integrated planning efforts are emerging across Puget Sound. For example, the City of Duval has worked to incorporate watershed conditions into zoning decisions, and Kitsap County has launched a Natural Resources Asset Management Program to integrate ecosystem services into comprehensive planning. At the regional level, the Stormwater, Shellfish, and Habitat Strategic Initiatives have created planning tools, such as Building Cities in the Rain, a guide to prioritize stormwater retrofits to facilitate infill development and restore salmon habitat, and the Sound Choices Checklist for cities and counties updating comprehensive plans. These tools help municipalities balance growth with ecological health and coordinate planning across multiple jurisdictions.



CONNECTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

The following Actions from the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum were selected as a focus for the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) and relate to this Action Agenda Topic:

- ▶ 05.04.04. Integrate planning processes at the watershed scale by identifying and prioritizing shared goals and co-benefits across jurisdictions and planning domains, including land use, stormwater, transportation, parks, wastewater, and others.
- ▶ 05.04.05. Support integrated and timely interventions in planning processes to address environmental priorities and identify multi-benefit opportunities (e.g., early cross-jurisdictional review of Capital Improvement Plans, feasibility assessments, and/or initial project designs). Provide more opportunities for Tribal consultation and local engagement in these processes.
- ▶ 05.04.06. Consider multiple human and environmental priorities when developing plans. This includes increasing ecological resilience to changing environmental conditions, legal requirements (such as those in the Clean Water Act), salmon recovery efforts, and current disparities impacting low-income communities and those affected by environmental degradation.
- ▶ 05.04.07. Identify and fund models to distribute financial resources across jurisdictional boundaries to support watershed-scale water quality, water resources, and habitat goals (such as Community-Based Public Private Partnerships, stormwater control transfers, memorandums of understanding, watershed outcomes banking, or others).
- ▶ 05.04.08. Update and improve zoning ordinances and development codes across jurisdictions and watersheds to maintain and protect existing stream function, salmon populations, other water resources, and habitat connectivity from further impairment.
- ▶ 05.04.09. Conduct basin-scale modeling to help regional and local decision makers understand costs, benefits, and tradeoffs of development, with a focus on the effects on water quality, habitat function, and communities impacted by environmental degradation.
- ▶ 05.04.10. Accelerate retrofit planning and implementation, particularly for regional facilities in infill areas and transit hubs where significant development is expected. Planning processes should include funding for administrative capacity and evaluating site-specific opportunities for multiple benefits.

- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 1.3. Identify and recommend changes to the Growth Management Act (GMA), Ecology's Shoreline Master Program guidelines under the Shoreline Management Act (SMA), and/or other relevant land use and growth management laws and implementing regulations that improve our ability to protect critical salmon and forage fish habitat and Tribal treaty rights by integrating salmon recovery and land use planning, incentivizing a net gain in ecosystem function and habitat connectivity, and channeling growth to prevent habitat conversion.
- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 1.5. Identify and address factors that incentivize and enable continued conversion of lands—including both lands outside of UGAs and lands designated as critical areas—for low-density development and sprawl.
- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 1.6. Work with the Puget Sound Regional Council and other Metropolitan Planning Organizations, counties, and cities to adopt salmon recovery plans to integrate salmon recovery priorities in long-term planning.
- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 2.2. Increase funding and support for local permit and code enforcement strategies (for example, incentives, educational workshops, community engagement, development of standard operating procedures, site visits) and monitoring (for example, permit implementation and compliance monitoring, permit effectiveness monitoring, ecological validation monitoring) to identify and correct activity that leads to detrimental impacts to salmon habitat.
- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 2.5. Educate the public on the co-benefits to communities of habitat protection to encourage behavior changes.
- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 3.5. Develop and provide tools (for example, reach-scale mitigation calculator, salmon habitat restoration priority GIS layers) that local governments can incorporate into planning processes and decisions.



Tulip fields in the Skagit Valley. Credit: Lowestock

6. Agricultural Land Protection

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Reduce pressure for agricultural land conversion by supporting the long-term viability and sustainability of agricultural lands, including large and small parcel farms, small market farms, and urban farms, through resilience and succession planning, improved incentives, market mechanisms, and improved regulations.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 2. Protect agricultural lands and working forests from conversion
- 10. Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Local Foods	Economic Vitality, Sense of Place			

Dave Hedlin runs a family farm in the Skagit Valley. Credit: Craig Harrold

STRATEGIES

06.01. SUPPORT LANDOWNERS FOR THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS TO PREVENT LOSS OF FARMLAND TO DEVELOPMENT.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 06.01.01. Increase capacity for farm succession planning so that farmland remains in agriculture with the next generation of farmers.
- ▶ 06.01.02. Secure long-term, stable funding for programs that offer culturally appropriate technical assistance for farmers to maintain agricultural operations.
- ▶ 06.01.03. Incorporate the best available science on future climatic scenarios, extreme weather probabilities, and weather patterns into local regulations, education, and technical assistance to help farmers build resilience to changing ecological conditions.
- ▶ 06.01.04. Increase funding for cost-share programs for landowners to implement BMPs in critical areas that improve riparian connectivity, freshwater availability, and other conservation goals.
- ▶ 06.01.05. Consistently fund programs to develop and maintain relationships and assist with the long-term viability of farms.
- ▶ 06.01.06. Increase capacity for research that quantifies the potential benefits and impacts of working farms on communities and ecosystems.
- ▶ 06.01.07. Support education for policymakers and the public to understand the value of local agriculture, including the needs of farmers to be successful in providing the public benefits of food production and environmental stewardship.
- ▶ 06.01.08. Provide resources such as trainings, grants, technical support, and incentive programs for farmers to include value-added products in their operations.

06.02. SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF MARKET MECHANISMS TO INCREASE LONG-TERM VIABILITY AND REDUCE CONVERSION PRESSURE FOR AGRICULTURAL LANDS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 06.02.01. Evaluate the economic value of potential carbon sequestration on agricultural lands in Puget Sound to appropriately value their contributions.
- ▶ 06.02.02. Increase agricultural landowners' access to ecosystem services markets, including carbon, water, habitat protection, and development rights, as a pathway towards economic viability.
- ▶ 06.02.03. Expand transfer of development rights programs regionally and allow cross-jurisdictional trades to protect agricultural land from development.
- ▶ 06.02.04. Increase funding and capacity for agricultural easements to protect agricultural lands of all sizes.
- ▶ 06.02.05. Enhance tax benefits for lands in agricultural use, with priority given to areas with the potential for increased carbon sequestration, improved riparian habitat, increased water quality and quantity, and other ecosystem benefits.



MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION

SMART GROWTH

When farmland is converted to other uses, it impacts the Puget Sound ecosystem, local economies, and local food security. Established in 1977, the [Skagit Farmland Legacy Program](#) protects farmland in Skagit County by purchasing conservation easements that prevent the conversion of these lands to residential and commercial development. Between 2017 and 2022, Skagit County increased its total farmland acreage, even as farmland declined statewide. As of 2024, the program has protected over 15,000 acres of prime farmland from future development.

06.03. REDUCE REGULATORY AND ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO VIABLE AGRICULTURE IN PUGET SOUND.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 06.03.01. Quantify and minimize the immediate and long-term economic impacts of environmentally focused BMPs and critical area regulations on agricultural lands.
- ▶ 06.03.02. Update regulations, policies, and plans to allow uses that are secondary and incidental to primary agriculture (and do not result in additional negative ecological impacts), so that farmers can diversify their income streams and remain viable.
- ▶ 06.03.03. Update regulations, policies, and investments to support shared processing infrastructure and value-added farm products, so that agriculture is economically valuable.
- ▶ 06.03.04. Develop guidance and toolkits to assist local governments in approving land use planning and zoning and support innovative practices that protect agricultural land.
- ▶ 06.03.05. Strengthen policies and regulations that protect natural resource lands and minimize vulnerability to decreases in land use protection during comprehensive plan reviews.
- ▶ 06.03.06. Revise policies to allow habitat restoration on agricultural easements where agriculture is no longer viable due to sea level rise or other irreversible conditions.
- ▶ 06.03.07. Develop and support tools and programs that facilitate affordable access to agricultural land for farmers, such as the Farm to Farmer program by Washington Farmland Trust, particularly for those who are new to farming and farmers from low-income and under-represented communities.



A logging truck on the Olympic Peninsula. Credit: Halbergman

7. Working Forest Land Protection

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Reduce pressure for land-use conversion by supporting the long-term viability and sustainability of working forests through technical and financial assistance, improved incentives, increased acreage of forests, and improved market mechanisms.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 2. Protect agricultural lands and working forests from conversion
- 10. Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Outdoor Activity, Drinking Water	Economic Vitality	Birds	Forests and Wetlands	Freshwater

STRATEGIES

07.01. SUPPORT THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF WORKING FORESTS TO REDUCE PRESSURE FOR CONVERSION TO A MORE DEVELOPED USE.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 07.01.01. Increase funding for succession planning for private forestland owners to invest in the next generation of forestland owners and managers, particularly those from communities under-represented among current forestland owners.

- ▶ 07.01.02. Expand and improve technical, financial assistance, and incentive programs for forest landowners, including small forest landowners, to increase forest land resilience and ecological function.
- ▶ 07.01.03. Develop culturally relevant and effective engagement strategies for educating small forest landowners on best forest management practices.
- ▶ 07.01.04. Incorporate projected future conditions, human health and wellbeing data, and cultural resources into the design and implementation of forestland use protections, regulations, policies, and planning.
- ▶ 07.01.05. Build forest workforce capacity through training, financing, and small business management so that forest maintenance and ecological restoration are locally available and financially feasible.

07.02. INCREASE THE OVERALL ACREAGE AND RESILIENCY OF WORKING FORESTLAND IN THE PUGET SOUND BASIN TO RESPOND TO WARMER SUMMERS, WARMER WINTERS, WARMER STREAM TEMPERATURES, AND INCREASING DROUGHT.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 07.02.01. Improve forest landowners' acceptance and adoption of forestland best management practices that are based on predictive modeling of air temperatures, water availability, wildfire regimes, species migration, and other potential future conditions.
- ▶ 07.02.02. Simplify permitting processes for habitat restoration projects aimed at maximizing carbon sequestration and habitat connectivity. Monitor implementation of these projects for effectiveness, efficacy, and economic viability.
- ▶ 07.02.03. Apply the best available science and modeling data to inform forest management practices and reforestation approaches that improve resilience to potential future changes to conditions such as seed zones, moisture regimes, wildfire, air temperatures, and invasive species.
- ▶ 07.02.04. Increase assistance for land managers to support working forests becoming more resilient to warmer summers and increasing drought. This includes assistance for fire-adapted community strategies.
- ▶ 07.02.05. Increase sustainable working forestlands that steward natural processes and support critical water and habitat through changing conditions.
- ▶ 07.02.06. Support land acquisition projects for community forests to (1) protect and steward natural and cultural resources and (2) create economies of scale for forestry harvest and processing businesses.

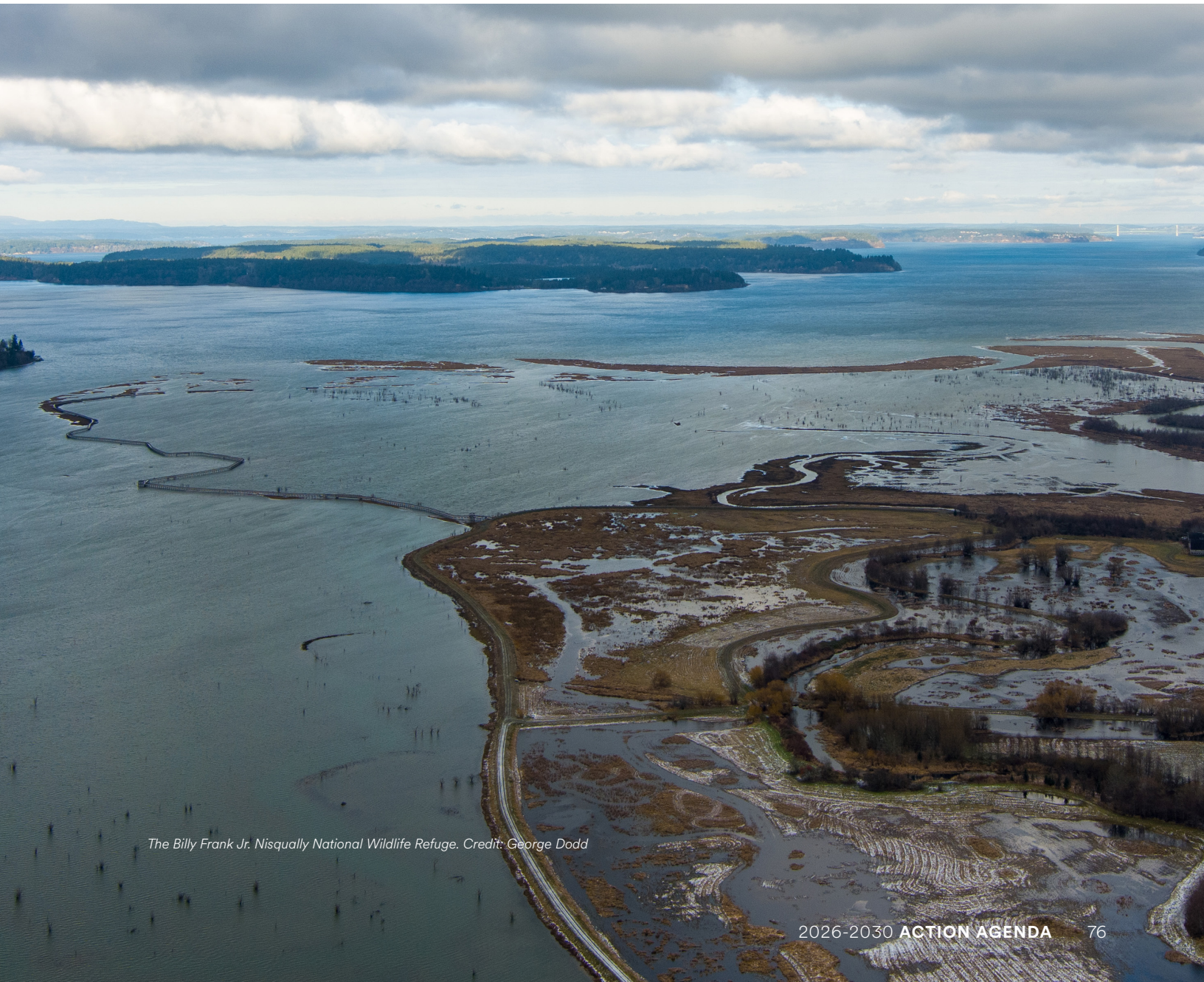
07.03. EXPAND MARKET MECHANISMS TO INCREASE LONG-TERM VIABILITY AND REDUCE CONVERSION PRESSURE FOR WORKING FORESTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 07.03.01. Assist forest landowners in accessing carbon markets and carbon payment programs.
- ▶ 07.03.02. Expand regional transfer of development rights programs and allow cross-jurisdictional trades to protect working forests from development.
- ▶ 07.03.03. Increase funding and capacity for forestland conservation easement programs.
- ▶ 07.03.04. Ensure that conservation and market programs are flexible, transparent, and supportive of long-term stewardship. Consider landowner concerns and cumulative pressures on the forestry industry when creating, implementing, and updating these programs.
- ▶ 07.03.05. Improve tax benefits for working forests, particularly for those areas that have the potential to increase carbon sequestration.
- ▶ 07.03.06. Research the interactions between forested ecosystems and the timber industry to quantify benefits and impacts on human health, quality of life, economic vitality, and ecological health.
- ▶ 07.03.07. Provide resources, such as training, grants, technical support, and incentive programs, on secondary forest and non-forest products for small forest landowners.
- ▶ 07.03.08. Support small scale milling/manufacturing infrastructure for local and regional processing of timber products.

RESILIENT HABITATS

The Puget Sound contains a wide variety of habitats, from kelp forests under the water to rocky shorelines, floodplains, and cascading rivers. Over time, human development has greatly altered, and in some cases destroyed, these habitats, threatening the survival of species and impacting the health of human communities. The Topics in this section focus on protecting, restoring, and managing these important habitats. Healthy habitats are essential because they help both nature and humans adapt to – or be resilient to – environmental changes. Implementing the Strategies and Actions in this section improves habitat quality throughout Puget Sound, helping to restore endangered species, protect human health, and improve quality of life. These seven Topics along with those focused on Sustainable Land Use compose the Habitat Protection and Restoration plan requirement of the CCMP.



The Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. Credit: George Dodd



Low tide at a beach in Edmonds. Credit: Mariloutrias

8. Marine Vegetation

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Protect and restore native marine vegetation by advancing priority research initiatives, expanding conservation areas, ensuring regulatory and program protection, piloting restoration projects, and supporting community connections.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

1. Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Local Foods, Outdoor Activity	Cultural Wellbeing, Sound Stewardship	Forage Fish, Salmon, Groundfish and Benthic Invertebrates, Birds	Beaches and Marine Vegetation	

STRATEGIES

08.01. IMPLEMENT TARGETED RESEARCH AND MONITORING INITIATIVES TO UNDERSTAND CHANGES IN MARINE VEGETATION, WITH CONSIDERATION OF ECOLOGICAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 08.01.01. Increase capacity and sustained funding to research partners for long-term distribution and trends monitoring.
- ▶ 08.01.02. Expand understory kelp research capacity and initiatives to improve management approaches.
- ▶ 08.01.03. Leverage historical data and ongoing distribution monitoring to understand short- and long-term changes in marine vegetation.
- ▶ 08.01.04. Expand kelp and eelgrass stressor research to understand contributing factors, across all life stages, for observed regional and site-specific losses and expansion.
- ▶ 08.01.05. Conduct research to better understand and quantify ecosystem services provided by marine vegetation such as habitat for juvenile salmonids as well as human health and quality of life consideration.
- ▶ 08.01.06. Ensure Tribal and community science marine vegetation programs are well supported and coordinated. Integrate data from these programs into broader regional efforts.
- ▶ 08.01.07. Leverage existing work groups, coalitions, and partnerships to increase outreach and effectively share research and monitoring information to improve coordination, identify research gaps, and inform marine vegetation management.



08.02. EVALUATE AND IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING SHORELINE, NEARSHORE, WATER QUALITY, AND LAND USE REGULATIONS, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES TO ENHANCE PROTECTIONS FOR MARINE VEGETATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 08.02.01. Cultivate support and capacity for regulatory staff to implement marine vegetation regulatory, programmatic, and policy planning efforts.
- ▶ 08.02.02. Review regulatory and aquatic land management protections for marine vegetation to identify implementation barriers (e.g., issues around mitigation), competing uses, and compliance issues.
- ▶ 08.02.03. Address barriers to implementing and enforcing protective measures for marine vegetation in existing regulations and aquatic land management programs (e.g., Shoreline Master Programs and mooring buoy regulations).
- ▶ 08.02.04. Develop targeted outreach and training initiatives to inform planners and coastal decision makers about marine vegetation and related regulations, programs, and policies.
- ▶ 08.02.05. Increase collaboration and information sharing between researchers, regulators, Tribes, and planners to improve protections for kelp and eelgrass, such as those that incorporate potential future changes to nearshore habitats.

08.03. PROTECT MARINE VEGETATION IN EXISTING AND NEW RESERVES, REFUGES, AND PROTECTED AREAS THAT RESPECT TRIBAL TREATY AND SOVEREIGN RIGHTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 08.03.01. Assess protective measures, historical distribution, stressors, and sites with ecological, social, economic, resilience, and cultural value to prioritize regions and sites for protection.
-  ▶ 08.03.02. Engage Tribes, community-based organizations, the public, and partners in the development and implementation of marine vegetation priority areas for conservation.
-  ▶ 08.03.03. Support place-based partnerships to develop and broaden outreach and behavior change strategies that improve the understanding of protected areas and stewardship of marine vegetation habitat.
- ▶ 08.03.04. Expand efforts to establish protected areas for marine vegetation at suitable sites, such as voluntary no-anchor zones, Aquatic Reserves, designated marine vegetation priority areas, and tideland easements and acquisitions.
- ▶ 08.03.05. Support long-term funding for the monitoring and adaptive management of protected areas to improve their effectiveness.

08.04. USE EFFECTIVE RESTORATION METHODS TO ACCELERATE RECOLONIZATION AND EXPANSION OF MARINE VEGETATION AT SITES SHOWN TO POSSESS SUITABLE ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONDITIONS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 08.04.01. Enhance understanding and evaluate site-based stressors, restoration suitability, and effective restoration methods to inform project planning, prioritization, and design.
- ▶ 08.04.02. Support and leverage existing work groups to increase sharing on restoration science and approaches to improve coordination, community engagement, and restoration success.
- ▶ 08.04.03. Expand restoration partners' capacity to advance approaches to marine vegetation restoration through continued pilots of restoration methods, sustaining effectiveness monitoring, and exploring public-private partnerships.
- ▶ 08.04.04. Improve awareness and coordination within the Puget Sound restoration community to better integrate marine vegetation restoration into holistic, ecosystem-based efforts that address large-scale issues of nearshore habitat connectivity and resilience.
- ▶ 08.04.05. Explore multi-beneficial projects and programs that advance recolonization and expansion of eelgrass and kelp while supporting a diverse array of ecosystem services, such as the removal of unauthorized, unnecessary, and/or derelict in- and over-water structures from marine vegetation habitat.

08.05. EXPAND AND PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP, LOCAL FOOD HARVEST, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS WITH MARINE VEGETATION AND SUPPORT HUMAN HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE WHILE UPHOLDING AND HONORING TRIBAL TREATY AND SOVEREIGN RIGHTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 08.05.01. Improve understanding of how Puget Sound residents connect with marine vegetation, as well as access barriers and benefits for known and potential communities.
- ▶ 08.05.02. Increase long-term funding and capacity support for Tribes to lead marine vegetation stewardship efforts in ways that uphold cultural values and support community health and quality of life.
- ▶ 08.05.03. Support communities in developing resources and programming, such as community science and place-based education efforts, to promote stewardship of marine vegetation across user groups and the Puget Sound region.
- ▶ 08.05.04. Identify and expand equitable opportunities to appropriately access marine vegetation habitats for sustainable, safe, and responsible harvest of local foods for personal use.
- ▶ 08.05.05. Promote sustainable access, quality of experience, and responsible practices for outdoor recreation in marine vegetation habitats.



Discovery Park in Seattle. Credit: RyanCSlimakPhoto

9. Healthy Shorelines

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Protect and restore marine shorelines by improving regulations, incentives, strategic planning, and restoration implementation rooted in an understanding of coastal processes.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

1. Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
3. Restore natural flows, fish passage, flooding, and tidal inundation to freshwater and marine systems by removing structural barriers or altering their management (including from major infrastructure)
4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities





VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS		Sound Stewardship	Forage Fish, Salmon	Beaches and Marine Vegetation, Estuaries	

STRATEGIES





09.01. INCREASE AND IMPROVE SHORELINE REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION, COMPLIANCE, ENFORCEMENT, AND COMMUNICATION TO PROTECT EXISTING INTACT NEARSHORE HABITAT AND REDUCE HARD ARMOR.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- 
 - ▶ 09.01.01. Conduct and update resilience analysis, including sea level rise vulnerability assessments, as required by GMA and SMA and share the assessments with decision-makers and landowners and incorporate the data into short- and long-term planning.
 - ▶ 09.01.02. Continue to evaluate and improve implementation of existing shoreline regulations and policies.
- 
 - ▶ 09.01.03. Implement new and enforce existing shoreline regulations. Continue to evaluate and adaptively manage opportunities to address future expected stressors to shorelines (including sea level rise and increased storminess), and provide the capacity and technical assistance to shoreline owners for implementation.
 - ▶ 09.01.04. Evaluate and improve oversight of the Shoreline Management Act through formation of a standing SMA Compliance Task Force charged with monitoring compliance with the SMA and identifying specific changes to improve the SMA, its implementing regulations, and budget priorities.
 - ▶ 09.01.05. Conduct and improve compliance monitoring and enforcement to support shoreline permitting decisions by state regulatory agencies and address unpermitted, non-compliant, and illegal armor.
 - ▶ 09.01.06. Sustain funding for state compliance monitoring and enforcement programs while developing requirements and funding mechanisms for programs in local jurisdictions.
 - ▶ 09.01.07. Support efforts to improve compliance with the SMA and local SMPs, including improved enforcement powers and new regulations requiring statements of exemption to be transmitted to Department of Ecology.
 - ▶ 09.01.08. Develop approaches to address political barriers to compliance and enforcement action.
 - ▶ 09.01.09. Provide funding and capacity for inter-local and local-state collaboration.
- 
 - ▶ 09.01.10. Increase communication about existing and new shoreline regulations to the public and across all sectors.
- 
 - ▶ 09.01.11. Provide technical assistance, guidance, and capacity for local jurisdictions to implement sea level rise vulnerability and other components of the SMA and GMA.
 - ▶ 09.01.12. Revise land use codes and practices for new and nonconforming developments to ensure adequate setback from marine shorelines to reduce risk to safety, property, and coastal processes.

09.02. EXPAND AND IMPROVE INCENTIVES AND EDUCATION FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY OWNERS TO MOTIVATE VOLUNTARY ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY SHORELINES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

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 - ▶ 09.02.01. Coordinate with the [Shore Friendly](#) program and local health jurisdictions to expand education programs and improve outreach materials about onsite-septic systems (OSS) for shoreline landowners.
- 
 - ▶ 09.02.02. Support and fully fund [Shore Friendly](#), which uses social marketing approaches to educate, communicate with, and assist (through financial support or technical expertise) shoreline property owners and the surrounding shoreline community on ways to best pursue voluntary ecologically friendly shoreline management alternatives to hard armor.
 - ▶ 09.02.03. Increase coordination and communication among regional and local partners to ensure that existing knowledge and resources are leveraged, and that related programs have adequate long-term funding.
 - ▶ 09.02.04. Develop strategies to address barriers of shoreline property owners and the shoreline community to use new and existing incentives.
- 
 - ▶ 09.02.05. Expand and improve conservation finance tools, incentives, and education programs for commercial and residential shoreline property owners to motivate voluntary actions for healthy, resilient shorelines.
- 
 - ▶ 09.02.06. Incorporate information about adaptations to pressures associated with increasing storminess, sea level rise, and coastal inundation into existing educational and incentive programs for shoreline residential property owners and communities.

- ▶ 09.02.07. Develop financial incentives at regional and local levels to support managed retreat (avoidance, abandonment, and relocation of infrastructure and residences) and restoration with community input, such as voluntary buyouts and easement programs.
- ▶ 09.02.08. Develop disclosure requirements and materials to advise owners of land use constraints and risks on shoreline properties. Increase landowner, buyer, realtor, and contractor education around shoreline development risks and constraints.

09.03. IMPROVE LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING TO REDUCE SHORELINE ARMORING, INCREASE COASTAL RESILIENCY, AND IMPROVE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC ACCESS TO RESTORED SHORELINES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 09.03.01. Expand access to and use of shoreline data, new information, criteria, and tools to inform long-term, regional, and local planning and management decision-making, particularly to address coastal squeeze and identify opportunities for habitat protection and restoration.
-  ▶ 09.03.02. Develop policies to ensure land use planning considers salmon recovery needs, habitat value, ecosystem services, risk of development, vulnerability to sea level rise, and the frequency and intensity of storms.
- ▶ 09.03.03. Recognize Tribal members' treaty-protected rights to access and harvest shellfish on all tidelands in Washington and incorporate Tribal access and harvest into shoreline management and restoration plans.
-  ▶ 09.03.04. Develop long-term planning pathways including technical and financial tools to facilitate managed retreat (avoidance, abandonment, and relocation of infrastructure and residences) where appropriate to promote healthy shorelines and protect infrastructure.
- ▶ 09.03.05. Continue to invest in infrastructure and community-based initiatives that improve safe, equitable public access to shoreline areas.
- ▶ 09.03.06. Fully fund local stewardship programs that empower residents to engage in restoration, monitoring, and maintenance efforts.
-  ▶ 09.03.07. Use available sea level rise tools like Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS) in long-term strategic planning and management decisions to address sea level rise vulnerability and coastal squeeze and identify opportunities for habitat protection and restoration.
- ▶ 09.03.08. Assess and manage for nearshore and offshore habitat use, value, and connectivity throughout major juvenile salmonoid and forage fish distribution and migration routes.
-  ▶ 09.03.09. Develop strategies to protect and restore aquatic habitats that provide refuge for sensitive species and food webs and provide resilience to pressures associated with warming water temperatures, sea level rise, changes to groundwater, and the encroachment of invasive species.
- ▶ 09.03.10. Identify nearshore restoration opportunities in industrial and municipal areas, such as water treatment plants, ports, railroads, highways, bridges, and other municipal and private development on shorelines.
- ▶ 09.03.11. Incorporate habitat and shoreline processes considerations into infrastructure planning and management processes.
-  ▶ 09.03.12. Improve coordination, collaboration, and capacity among local and state agencies to address existing failing onsite septic systems in shoreline habitat and those at risk of failure due to sea level rise and flooding.
- ▶ 09.03.13. Identify opportunities to coordinate salmon recovery information and planning with shoreline habitat protection and recovery planning.
-  ▶ 09.03.14. Ensure local jurisdictions have appropriate capacity, resources, and processes to promote habitat resilience and respond to sea level rise, shoreline erosion, coastal flooding, and increased severity and intensity of storms.

09.04. INCREASE AND IMPROVE COASTAL PROCESS-BASED DESIGN AND TECHNICAL TRAINING TO IMPROVE THE REGION'S CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT RESTORATION PROJECTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 09.04.01. Evaluate and update design guidelines with advancements in science and engineering practices to support habitat protection and restoration.

- ▶ 09.04.02. Ensure private-sector entities, landowners, engineers, and permitting agencies are educated and trained on ecologically supportive shoreline process-based design and emerging technologies to increase regional capacity.
- ▶ 09.04.03. Implement regional monitoring strategies on armor removal and soft shore projects. Analyze information to improve coastal process-based design.
- ▶ 09.04.04. Increase assessments and reports on ecological and economic benefits and tradeoffs of restoration to provide actionable information for program managers and project sponsors to increase multi-benefit solutions in shoreline protection and restoration projects.
- ▶ 09.04.05. Include restoration practitioners and planners in codeveloping and implementing best practices and requirements for nearshore restoration design to address current and predicted pressures to shorelines such as sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather, and heat stress.
- ▶ 09.04.06. Consistently monitor and adaptively manage new best management practices related to nearshore restoration design to build understanding of site-specific needs.
- ▶ 09.04.07. Develop and communicate findings from pilot projects for armor alternatives across a range of shoreline conditions, with a focus on nature-based solutions, and assess the impacts of design techniques.
- ▶ 09.04.08. Develop strategies and approaches for beneficial dredge material use in shoreline restoration projects in Puget Sound.
- ▶ 09.04.09. Identify and conduct priority research projects that address knowledge gaps related to shoreline restoration, and which directly inform future restoration projects.

09.05. IMPLEMENT RESTORATION AND PROTECTION TO IMPROVE BEACH PROCESSES, STRUCTURE, AND FUNCTION IDENTIFIED THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING AT MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHIC SCALES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 09.05.01. Encourage local governments to proactively undertake coordinated large-scale shoreline adaptation planning, through public and private partnerships wherever possible, to improve community resilience, restore ecological function, and reduce risks to upland property and structures.
- ▶ 09.05.02. Increase strategic funding, planning, and capacity for nearshore habitat restoration projects at parcel and larger geographic scales.
- ▶ 09.05.03. Support project administration efforts including increased and consistent funding, project development processes, and permitting reforms to facilitate restoration and protection.
- ▶ 09.05.04. Build upon existing efforts that foster education, coordination, and communication between agencies, partners, and community members to leverage beneficial projects for restoration and habitat improvement.
- ▶ 09.05.05. Advance shoreline protection, restoration, and management projects that address potential conflicts with Tribes' treaty-reserved rights, restoration, or public access for recreation and other uses. Develop guidance and best practices for balancing various needs in multi-use shoreline projects.
- ▶ 09.05.06. Develop guidance for managed retreat (avoidance, abandonment, and relocation of infrastructure and residences) due to sea level rise in order to support nearshore habitat protection and restoration.
- ▶ 09.05.07. Prevent conversion of nearshore habitats through voluntary acquisition, conservation easements, and other appropriate strategies that facilitate long-term protection and restoration of Puget Sound shorelines.
- ▶ 09.05.08. Leverage innovative funding mechanisms such as Nearshore Conservation Credits to expand the reach and impact of restoration projects.



CONNECTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

The following Actions from the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum were selected as a focus for the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) and relate to this Action Agenda Topic:

- ▶ Climate 3.3. Support local jurisdictions in the implementation of Shoreline Master Program regulations and guidance to prevent shoreline hardening and encourage nature-based solutions in shoreline protection practices.



The Nisqually Reach. Credit: George Dodd

10. Floodplains and Estuaries

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Protect and restore floodplains and estuaries by advancing integrated management approaches to reduce flood risk and improve ecological health.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

1. Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
3. Restore natural flows, fish passage, flooding, and tidal inundation to freshwater and marine systems by removing structural barriers or altering their management (including from major infrastructure)
4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS			Salmon, Birds, Groundfish and Benthic Invertebrates	Estuaries, Streams and Floodplains	Freshwater

STRATEGIES

10.01. INCREASE AND ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF HABITAT ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS AS PRIORITIZED IN WATERSHED SALMON RECOVERY PLANS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 10.01.01. Increase funding and flexibility of funding for acquisition, restoration, and management of floodplain (including upper watersheds and tributaries) and estuarine properties, as well as the necessary equipment to support restoration projects.
- ▶ 10.01.02. Increase the scale and pace of structural barrier removal to support habitat connectivity and function.
- ▶ 10.01.03. Explore strategies and funding sources that can rapidly support competitive acquisition opportunities as they arise.
- ▶ 10.01.04. Continue to improve Tribal notification and consultation when developing projects and setting priorities for acquisition, protection, and restoration.
- ▶ 10.01.05. Restore and acquire areas that provide flood conveyance, slow water, and deposit sediment during frequent, “ordinary” flood events by reconnecting floodplains and estuaries.
- ▶ 10.01.06. Restore and reconnect estuary and nearshore habitat for juvenile salmon and their key prey (e.g., Pacific herring, sand lance, surf smelt, larval crab) to provide habitat connectivity to increase rearing, refuge, and foraging habitat.
- ▶ 10.01.07. Increase understanding of watershed-specific salmon life history, habitat criteria, and use of estuaries and floodplains.

10.02. INCORPORATE THE ECONOMIC RISKS AND COSTS OF DEVELOPMENT INTO LAND USE PLANNING IN FLOODPLAIN AND ESTUARY HABITATS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:



- ▶ 10.02.01. Improve prioritization of land uses and emergency preparedness in flood-prone areas by developing and implementing outreach plans to developers, landowners, permitting staff, decision makers, and other key partners to communicate risks related to modeled future stream flow, extreme weather events, and sea level rise.
- ▶ 10.02.02. Expand the use of data and tools that integrate current and anticipated future ecological conditions with risk and cost models to improve planning and permitting decisions.
- ▶ 10.02.03. Provide guidance to local jurisdictions to incorporate risk and cost data into Comprehensive Plans and Shoreline Master Programs.
- ▶ 10.02.04. Strengthen flood risk disclosure requirements and improve buyer education to disincentivize development in floodplains.
- ▶ 10.02.05. Align hazard resilience planning with habitat recovery planning at watershed scales.
- ▶ 10.02.06. Identify policy and economic reforms necessary to incentivize development out of floodplains and sensitive shoreline habitats.
- ▶ 10.02.07. Support jurisdictions that share a floodplain to compare and coordinate development activities to ensure the combined impacts are not exceeding flood storage capacity or conveyance.
- ▶ 10.02.08. Develop and share success stories where floodplain restoration has reduced economic risks to developed areas.

10.03. SUPPORT A REGION-WIDE PLAN TO RESTORE PUGET SOUND BY BUILDING PUBLIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT, DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS, SECURING FUNDING, SIMPLIFYING PERMITS, AND MONITORING PROGRESS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR FISH POPULATIONS, REDUCE FLOODING, AND SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY (FARM, FISH, FLOOD).

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 10.03.01. Increase visibility of existing plans to improve collective awareness and leverage plans for implementation.
- ▶ 10.03.02. Communicate benefits of integrated management to build public support and political will.
- ▶ 10.03.03. Conduct monitoring and research to understand the role of estuaries for Chinook salmon rearing and survival across regions. Adapt regulatory, economic analysis, and restoration tools accordingly.
- ▶ 10.03.04. Sustain support and funding for Floodplains by Design to implement a Sound-wide integrated management framework.
- ▶ 10.03.05. Provide support for a network of regional and local practitioners to build opportunities for coordination, shared learning, and relationship building to support integrated management goals.
- ▶ 10.03.06. Develop Sound-wide goals and metrics to track and communicate progress across watersheds, including goals related to human wellbeing.
- ▶ 10.03.07. Advance current efforts to address barriers in the restoration permitting process and explore opportunities for additional permit streamlining processes.
- ▶ 10.03.08. Fund Ecology's efforts to build a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) review partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in order to improve restoration permitting processes and updates to flood maps.
- ▶ 10.03.09. Explore research opportunities to measure carbon fluxes in floodplains to develop a baseline for understanding the sequestration potential of restored floodplain ecosystems.

10.04. PRIORITIZE, DESIGN, AND IMPLEMENT REACH-SCALE RESTORATION AND PROTECTION PROJECTS WITHIN A RIVER BASIN, WATERSHED, AND/OR ESTUARY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 10.04.01. Increase understanding of floodplain and estuarine processes and restoration techniques to inform reach-scale project prioritization and design.
- ▶ 10.04.02. Conduct audience-specific outreach in local communities to highlight the locally relevant benefits and challenges of integrated floodplain and estuary management, tailored to community values, needs, and concerns. Engage impacted communities in integrated management forums.
- ▶ 10.04.03. Increase capacity and provide resources to Tribal co-managers and local communities, such as agricultural producers, to participate in integrated management forums.



CONNECTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

The following Actions from the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum were selected as a focus for the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) and relate to this Action Agenda Topic:

- ▶ Population Growth & Infrastructure 9.5. Pursue public/private partnerships to support acquisitions.
- ▶ Estuaries 1.3. Improve policy alignment and permitting for large capital restoration projects.
- ▶ Climate 1.1. Implement large-scale projects and programs that synergistically advance salmon recovery goals, reduce the magnitude of climate change (for example, increase carbon sequestration in Puget Sound ecosystems), and promote socio-ecological climate resilience.
- ▶ Climate 1.2. Restore and protect natural hydrologic processes to increase summer low flows and decrease winter peak flows (for example, remove or limit shoreline armoring, reconnect and restore floodplains, increase riparian habitat extent, set back levees, increase wetland areas).
- ▶ Climate 2.3. Prioritize key areas for conservation and increase the pace of broad-scale floodplain reconnection projects by acquiring conservation easements or fee simple title to property in the floodplain or otherwise working with existing landowners to increase stewardship of private lands. Leverage local recovery plans to prioritize key areas.

- ▶ 10.04.04. Support habitat restoration projects that responsibly move housing outside geographic areas at high risk of flooding or sea level rise in ways that protect families' economic wellbeing and communities' social cohesion.
- ▶ 10.04.05. Expand workforce development programs to increase capacity for project planning, design, and implementation.
- ▶ 10.04.06. Implement multi-benefit projects and programs that advance Puget Sound recovery goals and increase resilience to sea level rise, invasive species, extreme weather events, and ecosystem degradation.
- ▶ 10.04.07. Increase the number of protection and restoration projects that include multi-use elements for local communities to use and benefit from.
- ▶ 10.04.08. Increase and restore natural sediment transport and storage (including restoring natural channel features) through river and estuary restoration projects, managing land use practices in watersheds to reduce erosion, removing dams that impede sediment flow, and implementing sediment diversions to direct sediment to depleted areas.
- ▶ 10.04.09. Support funding and resources for data, mapping, and modeling needed for project designs, such as properly delineated channel migration zones and potential future flow regimes.

10.05. EXPAND FLOODPLAIN AND ESTUARY HABITAT PROTECTION THROUGH REGULATIONS AND INCENTIVES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 10.05.01. Continue funding for the Washington Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), which supports counties in protecting frequently flooded areas through voluntary best management practices as part of county-wide VSP work plans.
- ▶ 10.05.02. Fund state agencies to work with partners to develop guidance for local jurisdictions on designating and protecting frequently flooded areas through Critical Area Ordinances and to improve Shoreline Master Program integration.
- ▶ 10.05.03. Fund state agencies to work with partners to develop guidance for wetland protection under floodplain management.
- ▶ 10.05.04. Provide and sustain adequate funding for compliance monitoring and enforcement programs, as well as inter-local and local-state collaboration.
- ▶ 10.05.05. Address political barriers to compliance and enforcement action.
- ▶ 10.05.06. Develop and scale-up incentive programs that support carbon sequestration in floodplains and estuaries.
- ▶ 10.05.07. Require and fund updating FEMA floodplain maps, including projections of future flooding scenarios under shifting environmental conditions.
- ▶ 10.05.08. Fund the update of wetland maps and require data-sharing across jurisdictions. Leverage data generated by consultants during permit application processes by requiring geospatial data products to be vetted and included in local jurisdiction wetland inventory.
- ▶ 10.05.09. Explore new options such as Transfer of Development Rights to incentivize protection and restoration actions.



Wetlands and farmlands in the Skagit Valley. Credit: Stephen J Taylor

11. Riparian Areas

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Protect and restore riparian areas, especially by improving regulatory frameworks, building community support and stewardship mechanisms, and improving the system for delivering funding effectively to local implementing partners.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

1. Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS			Salmon	Streams and Floodplains, Forests and Wetlands, Beaches and Marine Vegetation	Freshwater

STRATEGIES

11.01. INCREASE COORDINATION AND CAPACITY TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTEGRATED RIPARIAN PROGRAMS ACROSS PUGET SOUND.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 11.01.01. Support the implementation of existing and future water cleanup plans, like TMDLs and similar plans, focused on addressing temperature-impaired waters.
- ▶ 11.01.02. Measure progress toward spatially explicit riparian targets, which include riparian area management, implementation, and permanent conservation.
- ▶ 11.01.03. Increase implementation efficiency by providing consistent, flexible, and streamlined funding that is integrated with watershed planning teams.
- ▶ 11.01.04. Increase capacity for on-the-ground restoration and professional development opportunities through workforce development and training programs.
- ▶ 11.01.05. Streamline riparian restoration permitting while ensuring that regulatory standards are met.
- ▶ 11.01.06. Hold annual Puget Sound riparian planning forums to assess progress and adaptively inform priorities and actions.
- ▶ 11.01.07. Support practitioner-led, centralized information sharing on innovative and basic field techniques for success.
- ▶ 11.01.08. Support producers of native plant materials with production and communication with implementors for riparian restoration.
- ▶ 11.01.09. Support efforts to restore beavers to the landscape where appropriate.

11.02. INCREASE LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH RIPARIAN RESTORATION THROUGH PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 11.02.01. Expand technical assistance, outreach, and educational opportunities to residents via conservation districts and other organizations to increase riparian restoration.
- ▶ 11.02.02. Evaluate the effectiveness of landowner incentive programs to inform adaptive management of these programs.
- ▶ 11.02.03. Provide robust funding for community-specific incentives, technical assistance, and ongoing maintenance needed for successful voluntary conservation.
- ▶ 11.02.04. Develop and support multi-benefit approaches that effectively restore riparian functions such as agroforestry, silvopasture, and Tribal regenerative gathering.
- ▶ 11.02.05. Increase community involvement with the value of riparian landscapes.



Reed canary grass being removed from Fishtrap Creek. Credit: Jefferson County Conservation District

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES



RIPARIAN AREAS

INVASIVE SPECIES

FLOODPLAINS AND ESTUARIES



ABUNDANT AND HARVESTABLE SALMON

The Jefferson County Conservation District (JCCD) is leading efforts to restore Chimacum Creek and its watershed, which has been heavily impacted by invasive weeds. Introduced throughout Western Washington as a forage crop in pastures, reed canary grass has escaped pastures and moved into wetlands and stream banks where it slows water flow, degrades salmon habitat, and contributes to flooding problems. In 2020, JCCD and local landowners removed reed canary grass from five miles of stream channel. These efforts benefit Puget Sound recovery by restoring salmon habitat, reducing flooding impacts, improving water quality, and enhancing the viability of local agricultural lands. Since 2023, JCCD and Washington State University Extension have been engaging with the community to provide information and receive input on current issues and potential solutions for the Chimacum Creek Management and Improvement Plan, which will guide ongoing efforts to address drainage issues.

-  ▶ 11.02.06. Increase resources for K-12 watershed-focused education and flexible funding for mobile, outdoor education programs.
-  ▶ 11.02.07. Increase the funding and equitable distribution of coordinated technical assistance and outreach programs to local landowners.
- ▶ 11.02.08. Work with Tribes to identify priorities for riparian habitat protection and restoration. Co-develop management and stewardship strategies between federal, Tribal, and state agencies, private landowners, and other interested partners.
- ▶ 11.02.09. Ensure landowners adjacent to temperature impaired salmon streams and tributaries are notified and presented with feasible options to restore riparian habitat and increase shade to help reach water temperature standards according to the best available science.


11.03. BUILD LONG-TERM COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP MECHANISMS, INCREASE RESILIENCY, AND IMPROVE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF RIPARIAN AREAS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 11.03.01. Fund actions that maintain sites, address noxious weeds, and reduce competition between invasive and native plants. Encourage restoration grant programs to require applicants to submit ongoing maintenance plans for the site.
-  ▶ 11.03.02. Advance research on (1) practices that may be resilient to potential future conditions and (2) integrated pest management (IPM) for noxious weeds.
-  ▶ 11.03.03. Develop collaborative riparian management strategies that account for projected ecological conditions and identify resources needed to achieve performance targets over time.
- ▶ 11.03.04. Establish watershed-scale identification teams made up of federal, Tribal, and state agencies, restoration practitioners, and landowners. These teams should collaboratively develop and approve site-specific plans through a scientifically repeatable process.

11.04. ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT SCIENCE-BASED REGULATORY PROGRAMS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 11.04.01. Support local jurisdictions in implementation and adaptive management of any riparian standard established through regulatory frameworks such as the GMA and SMA. Support the forest industry to implement protective measures (Forest Practice Act regulations) that meet statewide goals and objectives for ecological function protection.
- ▶ 11.04.02. Support state and local jurisdictions in developing effective regulatory and enforcement practices aligned with standards and best available science for riparian buffers.
- ▶ 11.04.03. Improve stream and riparian area mapping to evaluate and forecast authorized and unauthorized development scenarios in riparian areas. Assess scenarios that result in a cumulative loss of ecological function and analyze possible interventions.
-  ▶ 11.04.04. Coordinate local landowner outreach and communications. Align messaging with best available science and regulatory requirements.



CONNECTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

The following Actions from the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum were selected as a focus for the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) and relate to this Action Agenda Topic:

- ▶ Water Quality 5.2. Advocate for and support the outcomes of the State/Tribal Riparian Roundtable and working groups.



Spawning steelhead. Credit: John McMillan

12. Freshwater Availability

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Ensure freshwater is available for all by improving supply, reducing demand, and increasing resilience to impacts from extreme weather and shifting rain patterns.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

3. Restore natural flows, fish passage, flooding, and tidal inundation to freshwater and marine systems by removing structural barriers or altering their management (including from major infrastructure)
4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Drinking water		Salmon	Streams and Floodplains	Freshwater

STRATEGIES

12.01. DEVELOP AND EXPAND WATER EDUCATION AND VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION PROGRAMS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 12.01.01. Allocate sustained funding to implement projects that improve streamflow in key salmon migration and rearing corridors, consistent with salmon recovery plans.
- ▶ 12.01.02. Support work by watershed improvement districts, conservation districts, and other partners to implement irrigation efficiency programs.
- ▶ 12.01.03. Provide audience-specific public education on water conservation and best practices to water users.
- ▶ 12.01.04. Provide incentives to small and rural communities to expand small-scale water treatment and reuse programs.



12.02. INCREASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE TO ADDRESS WATER QUANTITY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:




- ▶ 12.02.01. Expand municipal government capacity (e.g., staffing, funding, technical expertise, toolkits) to educate, assist, and incentivize public and private water users to conserve water.
- ▶ 12.02.02. Implement local watershed plans that offset impacts from new domestic permit-exempt wells and achieve a net ecological benefit within the watershed.
- ▶ 12.02.03. Support watershed-scale stream temperature and flow monitoring and enforcement efforts in watersheds with vulnerable or ESA-listed fish species.
- ▶ 12.02.04. Increase enforcement and compliance efforts, such as increased staff capacity and tool development, for Ecology to track and eliminate illegal water use and withdrawals.
- ▶ 12.02.05. Pursue the full and partial acquisition of water rights and place those rights in trust for instream flow.
- ▶ 12.02.06. Integrate forestry management research and forestry management practices into management and protection plans of headwaters.
- ▶ 12.02.07. Implement multi-benefit projects that conserve freshwater while also accomplishing other objectives like fish passage barrier removal, habitat and biodiversity enhancement, clean air, or flood mitigation.

12.03. UNDERSTAND AND PLAN FOR ALL FUTURE WATER NEEDS IN THE CONTEXT OF POPULATION GROWTH AND POTENTIAL FUTURE ECOLOGICAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:


- ▶ 12.03.01. Identify and protect existing aquifers and geological formations that provide water storage.
- ▶ 12.03.02. Advance understanding of water supply changes due to increased droughts and floods.
- ▶ 12.03.03. Conduct studies and projects on how beaver relocation can address water quantity. Develop a comprehensive beaver strategy for Puget Sound.
- ▶ 12.03.04. Promote integrated watershed planning that connects growth management (e.g., Comprehensive Plans), ecological resilience, salmon recovery, and water supply.



- ▶  12.03.05. Develop tools that project watershed carrying capacity with population growth, commercial and industrial uses, and salmon needs to inform decision making and policy development.
- ▶  12.03.06. Define current streamflow baselines and support supply and demand forecasting in watersheds and municipalities.
- ▶ 12.03.07. Identify and support water conservation projects in areas that provide refuge for sensitive species and support resilience.
- ▶ 12.03.08. Understand water needs, use, quantity, and quality for Tribal treaty reserved resources throughout each watershed.
- ▶  12.03.09. Promote reforms to state water law to increase the resilience of our state's water resources to dwindling supplies.

12.04. ENSURE HUMAN COMMUNITIES HAVE ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT WATER RESOURCES, INCLUDING DRINKING WATER THAT MEETS REQUIRED STANDARDS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 12.04.01. Use modeling systems to establish a baseline understanding of drinking water quality across individual and small system wells.
- ▶  12.04.02. Engage communities in water resource conservation planning, design, and implementation, particularly those communities most impacted by inequitable water pricing or lack of access to water.
- ▶ 12.04.03. Promote water pricing and access that prioritizes basic human needs as a core first step in decision-making.



CONNECTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

The following Action from the 2024 Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum was selected as a focus for the [Puget Sound Implementation Plan](#) and relates to this Action Agenda Topic:

- ▶ Low Summer Flows 2.3. Advocate for staff capacity increases and tool development that allows the Department of Ecology to track and eliminate illegal water use and withdrawals.
- ▶ Low Summer Flows 4.6. Pursue the full and partial acquisition of water rights and place those rights in trust for instream flow.
- ▶ Low Summer Flows 5.3. Develop tools that project water carrying capacity with population growth and salmon needs to inform decision making and policy development.



This new bridge allows trout, salmon, and other fish upstream access. Credit: Washington State Department of Natural Resources

13. Fish Passage Barriers

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Remove and correct fish passage barriers to reconnect salmon habitat.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 3. Restore natural flows, fish passage, flooding, and tidal inundation to freshwater and marine systems by removing structural barriers or altering their management (including from major infrastructure)

- 9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS			Salmon	Streams and Floodplains, Estuaries, Beaches and Marine Vegetation	

STRATEGIES

13.01. INVENTORY, ASSESS, AND PRIORITIZE FISH PASSAGE BARRIERS (CULVERTS, DAMS, BRIDGES, CAUSEWAYS, ETC.) FOR REMOVAL AND MITIGATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 13.01.01. Advance legislation to establish required uniform monitoring methods to provide transparency and performance evaluations in support of adaptive management and salmon recovery.
- ▶ 13.01.02. Work with Tribal co-managers to identify priority barriers for removal based on their impact to treaty-protected or culturally significant salmon runs or areas.
- ▶ 13.01.03. Identify opportunities to remove outdated and unneeded infrastructure (such as small, privately-owned dams, undersized culverts, failing bridges, etc.) that restrict or limit fish passage.
- ▶ 13.01.04. Build on inventories, assessments, and prioritizations for barrier removal within each watershed based on potential benefits for salmon recovery and ecosystem processes. Factors to consider may include: ESA status, importance to Southern Resident orcas, projected future ecological conditions, cultural importance, importance to fisheries, project feasibility, landowner willingness, and potential risks (such as creating ecological traps).
- ▶ 13.01.05. Coordinate state, local, and private fish passage barrier removal efforts to reconnect blocked salmon habitat within priority subbasins. Also coordinate barrier removal efforts with other habitat restoration and protection efforts.
- ▶ 13.01.06. Identify opportunities for barrier correction projects to integrate green stormwater infrastructure to improve water quality and support salmon health.
- ▶ 13.01.07. Incorporate sea level rise and future flow potentials into culvert, bridge, and tidegate improvement planning, sequencing, and design, particularly for tidally influenced crossing structures, such as railroad crossings along Puget Sound's eastern shore.
- ▶ 13.01.08. Consider anticipated future ecological condition and water quality barriers when implementing strategies to increase cold-water refugia accessible to salmon. Support innovation and consider nature-based and engineered solutions.
- ▶ 13.01.09. Complete rulemaking for fish passage, fish screening, and adapting new road crossing structures to the anticipated future ecological conditions.
- ▶ 13.01.10. Measure responses to fish passage barrier removal and iterate existing guidelines, codes, and laws accordingly to support fish passage removal and flood safety optimization.



Crews work on a new fish passage structure at Twanoh Creek on SR 106. Credit: Washington State Department of Transportation

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

STORMWATER RUNOFF

ABUNDANT AND
HARVESTABLE SALMON

TOXIC CHEMICAL
PREVENTION

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) identified the State Route 106 crossing of Twanoh Creek as a barrier to salmon passage. As part of its standard process, WSDOT conducted a stormwater retrofit assessment (SRA) to identify opportunities to add storm water treatment aspects to the stream crossing. For Twanoh Creek, engineers added a compost-filled ditch that helps clean stormwater by filtering out pollutants, including heavy metals and 6PPD-q, a tire-wear chemical highly toxic to salmon. The new box culvert under State Route 106 at Twanoh Creek also creates a more natural creek environment that better supports spawning salmon. Conducting an SRA in the predesign phase allowed WSDOT to increase the project's ecological benefits by improving both fish passage and stormwater treatment.

13.02. FUND, IMPLEMENT, AND MONITOR FISH PASSAGE BARRIER CORRECTION OR REMOVAL IN WATERSHEDS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 13.02.01. Expand funding opportunities to remove privately-owned culverts, dams, and other barriers.
- ▶ 13.02.02. Remove the funding match requirements in state grants for private fish passage barrier removal projects for low-income populations.
- ▶ 13.02.03. Develop cooperative agreements between the state, Tribal co-managers, BNSF, and neighboring landowners to address railroad barriers, particularly those along Puget Sound's eastern shore.
- ▶ 13.02.04. Fully fund the removal of state culverts that violate treaty rights.
- ▶ 13.02.05. Fund the correction of culverts identified by WDFW's comprehensive statewide prioritization strategy to maximize salmon and orca recovery benefits from public investments.
- ▶ 13.02.06. Fund and implement fish passage actions to improve survival of salmon and steelhead at the Hood Canal Bridge. This includes research to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of these actions.
- ▶ 13.02.07. Fund and coordinate the removal of small, privately owned dams that are impassable to fish and are located within priority watersheds.
- ▶ 13.02.08. Support public/private partnerships to facilitate juvenile and adult salmon passage around dams that are not prioritized for removal.



New Zealand mudsnails were initially detected in 1987 in Idaho's Snake River and are now found throughout the Western U.S. Credit: WDFW

14. Invasive Species

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Prevent, monitor, manage, and reduce terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 4. Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities

- 9. Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to extreme weather events and changing ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Local Foods	Sound Stewardship, Economic Vitality	Groundfish and Benthic Invertebrates	Beaches and Marine Vegetation, Streams and Floodplains, Forests and Wetlands	

STRATEGIES

14.01. CONTINUE TO REFINE INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REMOVAL APPROACHES TO PREVENT, MANAGE, AND MITIGATE THE INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES, INCLUDING (BUT NOT LIMITED TO) EUROPEAN GREEN CRAB, INVASIVE FISH, AND INVASIVE PLANTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 14.01.01. Collaborate and coordinate monitoring and mitigation with federally recognized Tribes across state, federal, Canadian, and local agencies, academic institutions, and other partners.
- ▶ 14.01.02. Support the establishment and growth of community-led response networks and community science programs. These networks and programs will coordinate data collection and rapid response to effectively manage invasive species over time.
- ▶ 14.01.03. Train field staff from local jurisdictions in recognizing, predicting, reporting, and preventing invasive species.
- ▶ 14.01.04. Support short- and long-term studies for innovative invasive species removal strategies. Develop risk assessments that enable effective containment.
- ▶ 14.01.05. Address gaps to improve invasive species regulations and ballast water management.
- ▶ 14.01.06. Regularly assess the effectiveness of regional management strategies to help prevent local reproduction, reinfestation, and spread of priority aquatic invasive species, especially European green crabs and *Spartina* cordgrasses.



An invasive European Green Crab. Credit: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

STORMWATER RUNOFF

FLOODPLAINS AND ESTUARIES

MARINE VEGETATION

SHARED LANDSCAPES

Washington state's marine waters are at risk from European green crabs (EGC). This aggressive invasive species threatens estuary habitats, seagrass meadows, and the ecological foundations of Puget Sound. EGC also pose economic risks to Washington's shellfish industry, which contributes more than \$270 million annually to the state's economy through cultivated aquaculture and commercial crab fisheries. Native shellfish are also a substantial recreational resource for the public and hold deep cultural importance for Tribes. Containing the spread of EGC in Puget Sound will require expansion of ongoing trapping, collaboration, and investment. Results from coordinated efforts by the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Natural Resources (DNR), Tribes, shellfish growers, and partner organizations shows that early-detection monitoring and sustained trapping can slow the spread of EGC and prevent infestations from harming sensitive estuary habitats and local economies.







One example of this success is work by Northwest Straits Commission in coordination with WDFW and Washington Sea Grant. Working with Veterans Conservation Corps interns, Washington Conservation Corps crewmembers, and volunteers, these partners have led an aggressive and strategic control trapping program to remove EGC from hotspots in Drayton Harbor (since 2020) and Samish Bay (since 2022). While EGCs remain present in these North Puget Sound bays, trapping has kept their numbers in check. With recent evidence of southward spread of EGC to new areas and hotspots, it is essential to maintain robust and well-coordinated EGC trapping capacity. Continued investment from the state and federal government in early action and regional partnerships will help protect Puget Sound's ecosystems, safeguard Tribal and community resources, and preserve the economic backbone of Washington's shellfish and Dungeness crab industries.



- ▶ 14.01.07. Expand research efforts to understand, predict, and plan for increased air and water temperatures, sea level rise, and extreme weather events impacts to invasive species. These efforts should aim to mitigate the spread of invasive species and strengthen ecological resilience.

14.02. DEVELOP, SUSTAIN, AND FUND COORDINATED OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT RAISE AWARENESS, ENCOURAGE BEHAVIOR CHANGE, AND MOTIVATE ACTION FOR PUGET SOUND RESIDENTS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 14.02.01. Develop, fund, and assess projects and programs that support community stewardship behaviors for invasive species prevention, management, and mitigation, particularly for culturally relevant efforts.
-  ▶ 14.02.02. Improve access to existing formal and informal education about invasive species awareness, identification, reporting, and prevention.
-  ▶ 14.02.03. Continue to improve and deploy culturally relevant education and signage at water access sites (such as public boat launches for both marine and freshwater bodies) about invasive species prevention.
-  ▶ 14.02.04. Continue to improve and provide culturally relevant educational flyers about invasive species prevention when registering watercrafts or purchasing fish and shellfish harvest licensing, both in-state and out-of-state.
-  ▶ 14.02.05. Increase public awareness and access to state and local mandatory watercraft inspection stations to inspect and prevent invasive species (such as invasive freshwater mussels, or aquatic noxious weeds) along roadways and ports of entry.
- ▶ 14.02.06. Continue to support studies and reports documenting connections between invasive species and their impacts on the Puget Sound ecosystem, treaty-protected resources, human health and wellbeing, and economic and community resiliency.
-  ▶ 14.02.07. Maintain and strengthen collaborations with pet retailers, horticultural nurseries, native plant and gardening groups, conservation districts, and schools to improve education on native plant benefits, non-native plants, or impacts of releasing unwanted animals into the wild.
-  ▶ 14.02.08. Continue to develop and share information on ecological conditions that can contribute to the spread and impact of invasive species.

CLEAN WATER & HARVESTABLE SHELLFISH

Puget Sound is known for its high-quality clams, mussels, and oysters, and the shellfish industry is a major part of the state's economy. Shellfish are also a treaty-protected resource, and Tribal members have the right to access and harvest shellfish on both public and private tidelands. Healthy, and harvestable shellfish beds rely on clean water, free of pollution and bacteria. Unfortunately, human activity has polluted the waters of Puget Sound, leading to shellfish bed closures when shellfish became either unsafe to eat or their populations declined. While the State has made significant progress in reducing water pollution and reopening shellfish beds to harvest, threats to the waters of Puget Sound remain, and addressing them is a high priority. Water quality is one of five key priorities identified in [gw̓ɔdzadad](#) ("[Teaching of Our Ancestors](#)" in Lushootseed), the Tribal Habitat Strategy produced by the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and its member Tribes. The Topics in this section focus on reducing water pollution that impacts shellfish beds. This pollution comes from runoff, sewage treatment, and vessels. Implementing the Strategies and Actions in this section protects Puget Sound's water quality, which all life in the region relies on.



A Swinomish Tribe clam bake. Credit: Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission



The Aurora Bridge bioswale captures and treats over 2 million gallons of stormwater annually. Credit: Jon Bridgman

15. Stormwater Runoff

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Improve management of stormwater runoff by implementing retrofits, regulatory frameworks, and incentives, using a comprehensive approach that reflects community priorities at the site and landscape scales.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- 6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator


VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Drinking water, Outdoor Activity		Salmon		Freshwater, Marine Water, Toxics in Aquatic Life

STRATEGIES


15.01. ENCOURAGE STORMWATER RETROFITS AND RESTORATION.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

-  ▶ 15.01.01. Develop requirements and guidance for local prioritization efforts to mitigate stormwater runoff. Guidance should include integration with Stormwater Management Action Plans (supporting enhancement or implementation of permit-required planning); opportunities to accelerate green stormwater infrastructure; likely prioritization factors; and best practices for engaging local partners, including new audiences and communities impacted by excessive stormwater runoff.
- ▶ 15.01.02. Fully fund state and local stormwater retrofit programs including long-term maintenance and monitoring needs.
- ▶ 15.01.03. Implement and maintain key stormwater retrofits with local governments and other partners, including Stormwater Management for Existing Development (SMED) projects, long-term maintenance and effectiveness monitoring, and accountability to community priorities.


15.02. INCREASE LOCAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT CAPACITY (INCLUDING FUNDING, STAFFING RESOURCES, AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND INFORMATION).

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 15.02.01. Engage local decision makers (program managers as well as elected officials) to increase support for stormwater management resources and funding for local priorities, cross-jurisdictional collaboration, and long-term maintenance needs.
- ▶ 15.02.02. Engage local leaders and decision makers for watershed-scale integrated planning to solve stormwater management challenges with multiple community benefits.
-  ▶ 15.02.03. Ensure that stormwater planning, design, assistance, and incentive programs are informed by science-based predictive models of future environmental conditions.
- ▶ 15.02.04. Expand opportunities to bring training, workforce development, jobs, and economic benefits to communities and small local businesses through stormwater management and green infrastructure work where stormwater initiatives take place.

15.03. INCENTIVIZE REDEVELOPMENT IN RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE AREAS LACKING EFFECTIVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 15.03.01. Identify priority locations for stormwater retrofit pilot projects based on high toxic chemical loading in surface water runoff, environmental health disparities, age of the facilities, community-led planning and prioritization criteria, and regional growth strategies.
- ▶ 15.03.02. Conduct community-led planning and implementation of stormwater retrofits when redeveloping neighborhoods to address toxic runoff, anticipated future conditions, and displacement pressure in areas without effective modern stormwater management.
- ▶ 15.03.03. Design effective retrofit implementation programs in priority areas for redevelopment or increased density and fund pilot efforts.
- ▶ 15.03.04. Incentivize redevelopment of existing paved areas by funding the design and implementation of regional facilities to serve more than one parcel at a time.
- ▶ 15.03.05. Identify and support implementation of financial incentives, including tax credits, abatements, grants, and subsidies for communities and/or developers.
- ▶ 15.03.06. Use mitigation banking or swaps as one option to improve conditions through redevelopment in highly impacted areas, while funding protection or restoration in critical habitat areas.
- ▶ 15.03.07. Leverage flood recovery opportunities to plan and implement resilient stormwater management.
-  ▶ 15.03.08. Mitigate extreme rain events by identifying areas suitable for green infrastructure and recharge zones to conserve and enhance infiltration and other natural processes.

15.04. REDUCE NUTRIENT IMPACTS FROM RESIDENTIAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT STORMWATER.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 15.04.01. Incorporate nutrient reduction requirements into stormwater programs, stormwater management manuals, and plans in collaboration with regular permit and manual reissuance efforts.
- ▶ 15.04.02. Develop requirements and guidance for local nutrient reduction prioritization efforts. Guidance should include prioritization factors and best practices for engaging local partners, including new audiences and communities impacted by excessive stormwater runoff.
- ▶ 15.04.03. Identify successful outreach messages and campaigns for addressing nutrient load reduction. Work with community partners to implement programs with successful models.
- ▶ 15.04.04. Implement effectiveness research and deployment of stormwater treatment actions and BMPs in priority areas to reduce or eliminate toxic loads to fresh and marine waters.

15.05. ADJUST STORMWATER PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS OR OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 15.05.01. Identify where compliance with quantitative water quality standards could be prioritized instead of qualitative and flexible practice-based standards (such as AKART).



Yauger Park in Olympia captures stormwater runoff. Credit: Doug Kennedy

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

STORMWATER RUNOFF

SMART GROWTH

Many of Puget Sound's neighborhoods were built before modern regulations that protect water quality. As our communities grow, redevelopment creates opportunities for innovative stormwater solutions that provide clean water and other community benefits. Regional stormwater facilities such as stormwater parks treat runoff from hundreds of developed acres. These solutions protect water quality while also providing other benefits such as green space, new housing, recreation, and reduced flooding. With support from the Stormwater SIL, the Puget Sound Regional Council published [Planning Stormwater Parks](#) in 2022. This guide helps local jurisdictions to design and install stormwater parks that deliver these multiple benefits to their communities. Supporting stormwater parks and similar infrastructure helps local governments support growth while achieving clean water and livable communities.



Farmland and estuary in the Puget Sound. Credit: Brandon Sawaya

16. Agricultural Lands Runoff

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Reduce and prevent non-point source pollutants from agricultural lands by expanding and improving incentive programs and supporting compliance with policies.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- 6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Shellfish Beds, Drinking water				Freshwater, Marine Water, Toxics in Aquatic Life

STRATEGIES

16.01. INCREASE VOLUNTARY BMP IMPLEMENTATION AMONG AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS AND LANDOWNERS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 16.01.01. Ensure voluntary and incentive-based programs have adequate funding and capacity to develop relationships with landowners and support BMP implementation. Continue to fund strategic outreach and engagement approaches that are culturally relevant and encourage landowners to implement BMPs.
- ▶ 16.01.02. Fund grant programs for landowners to implement and maintain BMPs.
- ▶ 16.01.03. Address permitting and process challenges that limit landowners' ability to install new BMP infrastructure.
- ▶ 16.01.04. Incorporate predictive modeling and monitoring tools into education and technical assistance programs to increase the resiliency of BMPs, ensuring they account for how changes in precipitation, extreme weather, drainage, and temperature affect runoff issues.
- ▶ 16.01.05. Identify opportunities for technical assistance and BMP implementation, particularly in geographies with existing environmental human health risks, increased likelihood of environmental degradation, and greater economic or cultural dependency on aquaculture and local food harvesting.

16.02. SUPPORT PATHWAYS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS AND LANDOWNERS TO ACHIEVE REGULATORY COMPLIANCE.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 16.02.01. Use regulatory programs with incentives for BMP implementation to encourage compliance.
- ▶ 16.02.02. Support technical assistance and grant programs targeting regulatory compliance.
- ▶ 16.02.03. Support regulatory programs that, when needed, provide enforcement backstops for noncompliance in a timely manner to stop pollution sources.

16.03. INCREASE MONITORING AND EVALUATION EFFORTS TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS AND BMPS AT PROVIDING AFFORDABLE AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 16.03.01. Integrate mapping and data sharing to improve tracking of BMP implementation and transparency in decision making about water pollution activities across watersheds.
- ▶ 16.03.02. Convene local and regional discussions about short- and long-term costs and benefits of BMP implementation.
- ▶ 16.03.03. In areas with limited monitoring data, advocate for funding to improve local and regional monitoring programs.
- ▶ 16.03.04. Continue to monitor BMP effectiveness in reducing fecal, nutrient, and toxic pollution from agricultural runoff.
- ▶ 16.03.05. Continue to research and share information on the best agricultural BMPs and most successful programs that benefit the ecosystem and support agricultural viability.



Farmland near an estuary on Puget Sound
Credit: Marlin Greene/One Earth Images.

MULTI-BENEFIT SUCCESS STORIES

AGRICULTURAL LAND RUNOFF

RIPARIAN AREAS

The State Conservation Commission's Riparian Grant Program supports private landowners to restore and protect priority riparian areas. The owners of Zylstra Farm partnered with the Whatcom Conservation District and the North Lynden Watershed Improvement District to plant native trees and shrubs along a half-mile stretch of Fishtrap Creek, a Nooksack River tributary. The riparian buffer was the last unplanted stream reach between the City of Lynden and the Canadian border. As it grows, the buffer will provide shade and wood to the stream and help buffer Fishtrap Creek from agricultural runoff.



A newly constructed forest road, built as part of the Soderman Slope Timber Sale in eastern King County. Credit: Washington State Department of Natural Resources

17. Forest Roads Runoff

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Reduce and prevent non-point source pollutants from forest lands by better understanding the landscape of forestry in Washington so that incentive programs and BMPs can be improved upon.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- 6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Drinking water			Forests and Wetlands	Freshwater

STRATEGIES

17.01. DEVELOP A PUGET SOUND FOREST RUNOFF STRATEGY.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 17.01.01. Conduct a situational analysis, including a base program analysis and state of knowledge report, to inform the development of a Puget Sound forest runoff strategy.
- ▶ 17.01.02. Identify priority intervention points through collaborative and equitable methods with local Tribes, communities, and organizations.
- ▶ 17.01.03. Create strategies to address priority intervention points.

17.02. ADDRESS RUNOFF FROM FOREST ROADS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 17.02.01. Identify any barriers to fully implementing forest road management and decommissioning programs on federal lands through the Northwest Forest Plan.
- ▶ 17.02.02. Secure ongoing funding for forest road maintenance on Federal Forest Lands.
- ▶ 17.02.03. Support strategic, audience-specific outreach and engagement methods that follow best practices known to increase positive stewardship behavior.
- ▶ 17.02.04. Support effectiveness monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy towards meeting water quality, cultural, recreational, and ecosystem function standards.



17.03. INCREASE RESEARCH ON FOREST RUNOFF.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 17.03.01. Secure ongoing and adequate funding for the Forest Practices Adaptive Management Program.
- ▶ 17.03.02. Fund research needs identified in the Puget Sound Forest Runoff Strategy.
- ▶ 17.03.03. Fund ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts.

17.04. SUPPORT CURRENT AND DEVELOP NEW PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE VOLUNTARY INCENTIVES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 17.04.01. Explore new voluntary incentives for conservation easements that could incentivize landowners to apply water quality protections that go above and beyond legal requirements.
- ▶ 17.04.02. Ensure adequate funding to assist non-industrial private landowners and small forest landowners in developing and implementing management plans.
- ▶ 17.04.03. Develop voluntary incentives identified in the Puget Sound Forest Runoff Strategy.



Repairing an onsite septic system. Credit: Lauripatterson

18. Fecal Pollution

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Address fecal pollution that impacts Puget Sound water quality, including shellfish bed harvesting.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator
- 8. Ensure sustainable harvest of native wild fish and shellfish populations and support treaty-reserved fishing rights
- 11. Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and that populations and communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Shellfish Beds, Outdoor Activity, Drinking Water, Local Foods				Freshwater, Marine Water, Toxics in Aquatic Life

STRATEGIES

18.01. FUND, DEVELOP, AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE LOCAL AND TRIBAL NATIONS PIC PROGRAMS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 18.01.01. Secure long-term funding for PIC programs by supporting pathways that achieve stable local funding and provide flexible funding to support work that may not be covered by program budgets.
- ▶ 18.01.02. Support effective and adaptable sampling and monitoring programs.
- ▶ 18.01.03. Support strategic, audience-specific outreach methods that follow best practices known to increase positive stewardship behavior. Provide incentives for achieving voluntary compliance that reduces fecal runoff.
- ▶ 18.01.04. Enforce regulations if voluntary compliance is not achievable.
- ▶ 18.01.05. Enable PIC programs and local governments to address emerging fecal pollution sources, such as waste management solutions for people experiencing homelessness or places with inadequate access to sanitary services impacting water quality.
- ▶ 18.01.06. Provide reliable and tailored regional support to PIC programs to improve effectiveness by enabling cross-program collaboration and providing guidance documents, minimum standards, and program resources that are clear and inclusive.
- ▶ 18.01.07. Reduce the administrative burden for programs relying on grant funds.
- ▶ 18.01.08. Prioritize work within shellfish growing areas in locations with greater environmental human health risks and/or for communities more economically or culturally bound to local food harvest or outdoor recreation.

18.02. SUPPORT WATERSHED CLEANUP PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT TO LIMIT FECAL POLLUTION, SUCH AS TMDLS AND OTHER STRATEGIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 18.02.01. Ensure cleanup plans identify pollution sources and outline strategies to attain water quality standards.
- ▶ 18.02.02. Fund the implementation of cleanup plans, including TMDLs, developed to accelerate the restoration of waterbodies from cumulative impacts of point and nonpoint source pollution.
- ▶ 18.02.03. Support effectiveness monitoring, including the Department of Ecology's effectiveness monitoring program, to evaluate progress toward meeting water quality standards.

18.03. EFFECTIVELY MANAGE OSS AND LOSS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 18.03.01. Secure long-term stable funding for OSS management programs by supporting pathways that achieve stable local funding and continuing to fund regional programs that contribute to OSS management, including the Craft3 Clean Water Loan program.
- ▶ 18.03.02. Ensure OSS management programs have funding and staffing to implement ongoing program activities, including inventorying existing and new OSS; inspecting OSS; and supporting OSS owners to repair, replace, and maintain OSS.
- ▶ 18.03.03. Enforce OSS regulations when voluntary compliance is not achieved.
- ▶ 18.03.04. Support funding and monitoring to understand and address how groundwater table changes, frequent flood events, sea level rise, extreme heat, and fire events impact the design, permitting, and maintenance of low-lying and shoreline OSS. The results of such work should specify the location, age, and type of OSS to identify maintenance-related best practices for OSS owners. Mitigation approaches will differ for existing versus new systems based on policy and infrastructure contexts.
- ▶ 18.03.05. Support strategic, audience-specific education to increase positive stewardship behaviors, including improving OSS owners' understanding of maintenance best practices and increasing OSS resilience to sea level rise, more frequent flooding, changes to the groundwater table, extreme heat, and other potential future ecological conditions.
- ▶ 18.03.06. Support programs' access to assessment tools and regulatory authority to prevent new OSS in areas not suitable due to inadequate soil capacity and/or where sea level rise or flooding will impact.
- ▶ 18.03.07. Assess barriers to OSS operation and maintenance for homeowners, particularly low-income individuals, people with disabilities, non-English speakers, and other communities that may have challenges maintaining OSS.
- ▶ 18.03.08. Improve access to and eligibility for incentives, loans, and other funding sources for OSS operation and maintenance, repairs, and upgrades, particularly for low-income households.
- ▶ 18.03.09. Improve regulations around educating homebuyers about the presence of OSS, condition of OSS systems, and the responsibilities and expectations of an OSS owner.
- ▶ 18.03.10. Prioritize geographies or project sites that have increased environmental human health risks, increased likelihood of environmental degradation, economic or cultural ties to local food harvest, and/or economic or cultural ties to outdoor recreation.
- ▶ 18.03.11. Convert to LOSS, other septic solutions, or connect to sewer when appropriate, consistent with the GMA.
- ▶ 18.03.12. Support LOSS management, maintenance, and upgrades.



West Point Treatment Plant. Credit: Carterdayne

19. Wastewater Treatment Plants

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Reduce and prevent pollution from wastewater systems by improving regulations, offering better incentives, and investing in new technologies.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator
- 8. Ensure sustainable harvest of native wild fish and shellfish populations and support treaty-reserved fishing rights
- 11. Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and that populations and communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Shellfish Beds, Local Foods, Outdoor Activity				Marine Water, Toxics in Aquatic Life

STRATEGIES



19.01. REDUCE NUTRIENT DISCHARGE AND OTHER POLLUTANTS FROM WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 19.01.01. Continue to implement nutrient reduction requirements for wastewater treatment facilities.
- ▶ 19.01.02. Provide technical assistance and funding to support upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities.
- ▶ 19.01.03. Prioritize key locations to implement enhanced wastewater treatment, particularly infrastructure for impacted communities and/or in close proximity to salmon-bearing waterways, shellfish beds, or other food sources.
- ▶ 19.01.04. Explore opportunities for water quality trading programs that do not worsen water quality in any location.
- ▶ 19.01.05. Develop a comprehensive overview of WWTP staffing needs and workforce development across Puget Sound.


19.02. PREVENT AND REDUCE IMPACTS FROM COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSO).

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 19.02.01. Implement the CSO Consent Decrees.
- ▶ 19.02.02. Develop and deploy programs that encourage green stormwater and other private system upgrades in areas with CSOs. Explore barriers to innovation and use of distributed approaches to reducing CSO events.
-  ▶ 19.02.03. Increase modelling capacity for future ecological conditions and stormwater in Puget Sound to better predict whether a CSO will be uncontrolled in the future.
- ▶ 19.02.04. Increase funding for monitoring the function of current stormwater infrastructure and related models and model calibration.
- ▶ 19.02.05. Identify funding strategies to equitably distribute the financial burden of upgrades.
-  ▶ 19.02.06. Increase funding and capacity for risk planning via local and inclusive community engagement, particularly with low-income and impacted communities, to identify key infrastructural needs and concerns. Community members should be compensated for their engagement.

19.03. INTEGRATE WASTEWATER AND LAND USE PLANNING.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 19.03.01. Integrate shellfish growing area classification priorities and the Department of Health's Wastewater Treatment Plant Outfall Strategy in WWTP and outfall operation, planning, and/or upgrades.
- ▶ 19.03.02. Identify onsite sewage system (OSS) alternatives in areas where conditions are unsuitable for OSS.
- ▶ 19.03.03. Identify areas where large onsite sewage systems (LOSS) and other small-scale centralized treatment strategies should be incentivized or required.
- ▶ 19.03.04. Where accessible and appropriate, remove barriers for property owners to connect to centralized sewer systems.
-  ▶ 19.03.05. To ensure long-term resilience and reliability, address risks to existing and new infrastructure from sea level rise, floods, and extreme weather events.
- ▶ 19.03.06. Strengthen connections between sewer availability and density through utilities and capital facilities that are planning to concentrate development in UGAs.
- ▶ 19.03.07. Research, monitor, and evaluate the impacts of wastewater treatments plants on Tribes and local communities, particularly those that are already impacted.

19.04. IMPROVE END-PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 19.04.01. Adopt recommendations in the [Septage Legislative Report](#).
- ▶ 19.04.02. Support and incentivize efforts to recycle, reuse, or reclaim water (including tertiary treatments) that meet quality performance standards through engineered treatment or natural infiltration. Efforts should result in wetland enhancement, groundwater recharge, or increased flows in rivers and streams.
- ▶ 19.04.03. Sustain investment in research and monitoring of water reuse projects.
- ▶ 19.04.04. Promote beneficial reuse of reclaimed water.
- ▶ 19.04.05. Through local and tailored communications, increase public acceptance of reclaimed water to address future water needs.

**19.05. ADDRESS CONTAMINANTS OF EMERGING CONCERN/TOXICS AND MICROPLASTICS IN WASTEWATER.**

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 19.05.01. Develop a “Toxics/CECs in Wastewater” strategy.
- ▶ 19.05.02. Advance research to develop water quality standards (numeric or narrative) for toxic pollutants in fresh and marine waters. Develop NPDES effluent limits to meet standards.
- ▶ 19.05.03. Expand monitoring efforts to characterize the presence of toxic chemicals, CECs, and microplastics throughout the wastewater treatment train (influent, effluent, solids).
- ▶ 19.05.04. Research WWTP pollution impacts on local aquatic and terrestrial harvestable food items.
- ▶ 19.05.05. Investigate potential CEC, heavy metal, microplastic, and other pollutant concerns and regulations related to land application of biosolids.
- ▶ 19.05.06. Understand the potential co-benefits of wastewater treatment approaches to remove toxic contaminants, including pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and other CECs.
- ▶ 19.05.07. Reduce toxics in wastewater influent by removing them through industrial or other pretreatment options.



Ships on Elliot Bay. Credit: BSPollard

20. Vessel Impacts

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Implement targeted and adaptive maritime oil spill prevention and safety measures and improve spill response readiness and capacity. Reduce the underwater noise and physical disturbance impacts of ships and boats on Southern Resident orcas. Reduce pollution from vessels, including derelict fishing gear, sewage, and abandoned vessels.

DESIRED OUTCOMES BENEFITED:

- 5. Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- 6. Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator
- 7. Prevent spills of oil and hazardous substances

VITAL SIGNS AND STATUTORY GOALS BENEFITED:

STATUTORY GOALS	HEALTHY HUMAN POPULATION	VIBRANT HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE	THRIVING SPECIES & FOOD WEB	FUNCTIONING HABITAT	HEALTHY WATER QUALITY
VITAL SIGNS	Shellfish Beds	Sound Stewardship	Orcas, Birds, Forage Fish, Salmon	Beaches and Marine Vegetation	Marine Water

STRATEGIES

20.01. REDUCE THE ABANDONMENT OF VESSELS AND EXPAND AND ACCELERATE DERELICT VESSEL REMOVAL PROGRAMS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 20.01.01. Support proposed federal policies and seek funding for derelict vessel reporting, tracking, and removal programs through new and existing mechanisms.
- ▶ 20.01.02. Allocate additional funding to the Derelict Vessel Removal Account to expand the Washington Vessel Turn-In Program by increasing the program's staffing capacity and salvage efforts.
- ▶ 20.01.03. Increase targeted financial assistance for routine boat maintenance in Tribal and low-income fishing communities.
- ▶ 20.01.04. Promote education and outreach on proper boat maintenance and liability considerations if a boat becomes derelict or sinks.
- ▶ 20.01.05. Develop abandoned and derelict vessel prevention plans for implementation at the municipal, Tribal, port, or marina level.



20.02. IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF RISK AND CONSEQUENCES OF OIL SPILLS AND TOXIC POLLUTION DISCHARGE, ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS AND FEASIBILITY OF MITIGATION MEASURES, AND SUPPORT ADDITIONAL PREVENTION EFFORTS.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 20.02.01. Ensure current and future oil spill risk assessments are informed by regional risk modeling efforts and vetted guidance. Incorporate risk from emerging fuels, changing vessel traffic, and other factors into new oil spill risk assessments.
- ▶ 20.02.02. Monitor emerging issues with maritime shipping in Washington and British Columbia and encourage discussions in transboundary marine safety forums about potential policy solutions.
- ▶ 20.02.03. In alignment with other regional regulations and policies (such as California and Canada), encourage low-sulfur fuels for commercial vessels in Puget Sound to decrease sulfur oxides, heavy metals, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from scrubber wastewater.
- ▶ 20.02.04. Study the impacts of changing ocean conditions on oil spill risk analyses, spill prevention measures, and response capabilities.
- ▶ 20.02.05. Research culturally significant marine food sources that are impacted by oil spills. Develop strategies to expand oil-spill response efforts to protect these resources.



As part of the derelict vessel removal project, a crane aboard a barge removes a derelict vessel from Neah Bay. Credit: Tiffany Royal, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS

In 2024, the Port of Neah Bay worked with federal, Tribal, state, and nonprofit partners to remove 8 sunken boats, 12 other derelict vessels, a derelict pier consisting of more than 700 creosote pilings, and a 220-foot-long bridge pontoon that had been resting on the bottom of the bay for decades. The Makah Tribe's Office of Marine Affairs is also in the process of developing an Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Prevention Plan to manage at-risk vessels before they become bigger problems.

20.03. STRENGTHEN THE NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND SPILL PREPAREDNESS OF ALL PARTNERS, INCLUDING FEDERAL, TRIBAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, OIL SPILL RESPONSE ORGANIZATIONS, AND TRANSBOUNDARY PARTNERS.


Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 20.03.01. Establish a stable funding source for Puget Sound Corps to continue ephemeral sediment sampling within the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) managed Aquatic Reserves and strategic Puget Sound locations. Use sampling to establish baseline sediment conditions that can inform Natural Resource Damage Assessments (NRDA) in the event of an oil spill.
- ▶ 20.03.02. Develop protocols for assessing damage from oil spills to kelp forests, eelgrass meadows, and other important marine habitats.
- ▶ 20.03.03. Ensure alignment with regional policies and area planning to drive coordinated responses with federal (both U.S. and Canadian), Tribal, state, local, and other spill response partners.
- ▶ 20.03.04. Ensure that Washington's spill response requirements and Tribes' interests are incorporated into the Sector Puget Sound Area Contingency Plan, the Northwest Inland Area Contingency Plan, and the Regional Contingency Plan policies that pertain to the Puget Sound Watershed.
- ▶ 20.03.05. Continue cross-border collaborations and spill response exercises pursuant to the CANUS WEST South Annex (under the Inland Plan, with ECCO and EPA leads) and CANUSPAC (Canadian Coast Guard and US Coast Guard leads), with partners including Indigenous nations, Tribal nations, and the Province of British Columbia.
- ▶ 20.03.06. Seek coordination, engagement, and partnership with federal, Tribal, state, local, community, and industry partners to support effective oil spill contingency planning.
- ▶ 20.03.07. Continue to partner with Canada to explore effective spill prevention and preparedness measures across our shared border in the Salish Sea.
- ▶ 20.03.08. Ensure sufficient and appropriate oil spill prevention and response assets are stationed in accordance with the oil spill risk landscape, in particular remote areas near dense vessel traffic or high oil spill risk.
- ▶ 20.03.09. Expand the ways that performance is evaluated for preparedness and response capabilities (for example, no-notice drills) and publicly share performance results.
- ▶ 20.03.10. Ensure that Geographic Response Plans (GRPs) are grounded in up-to-date habitat assessments so that newly restored areas can be incorporated into response plans.
- ▶ 20.03.11. Add capacity, strategies, and tools to deter marine mammals, including sensitive Southern Resident orcas, that improve our likelihood of steering them away from oil spills.
- ▶ 20.03.12. Develop and conduct drills and exercises to test and train for non-floating oil and emerging fuels spill response.

20.04. IMPROVE EARLY LOCAL RESPONSE TO SPILLS BY INCREASING CAPACITY FOR LOCAL ENGAGEMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS.








Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 20.04.01. Advocate for oil spill contingency plan holders to drill NRDA during spill drills, so that it becomes routine for response teams to effectively incorporate NRDA at the time of a spill.
- ▶ 20.04.02. Ensure response agencies have appropriate capacity and access to resources to effectively respond to and assess the damage from marine oil spills.
- ▶ 20.04.03. Improve long-term funding for—and integration of—local response entities and Tribes to participate in training, drills, planning, and volunteer development and deployment. Where appropriate, encourage respective transboundary authorities and First Nations to similarly support the capacity of their local response entities.

-  ▶ 20.04.04. Expand trainings (such as community-based Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response, Tribal engagement training, etc.) and voluntary vessel turn-in programs to more widely engage communities (e.g., Tribes, anglers, local governments, local responders, etc.) in marine oil spill responses, NRDA, prevention efforts, and clean-up (for example, oilspills101.wa.gov).
- ▶ 20.04.05. Through Vessels of Opportunity, provide training programs and informational resources for commercial and recreational boaters to participate in oil spill preparedness, planning, and response.


20.05. EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE RISKS AND IMPACTS OF MARINE OIL SPILLS IN PUGET SOUND AND ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN FORUMS THAT INFLUENCE POLICY AND DECISION MAKING FOR REGIONAL OIL SPILL PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

-  ▶ 20.05.01. Use audience-specific messaging to communicate the impacts of marine oil spills (of all scales) on the Puget Sound ecosystem, human health, and communities.
-  ▶ 20.05.02. Distribute relevant preparedness, planning, and response information and BMPs on marine oil spills (of all scales) to Puget Sound residents.
-  ▶ 20.05.03. Translate information about marine oil spills into locally relevant languages and use various forms of media (e.g., video, social media campaigns, and phone) to effectively reach communities.
-  ▶ 20.05.04. Partner with community-based organizations on outreach and engagement efforts to better reach communities, especially those most likely to be impacted by current or future marine oil spills. Determine preferred/optimal pathways for residents to engage in local and regional spill preparedness, planning, response, and decision making.
-  ▶ 20.05.05. Use local communication tools and resources to improve outreach to at-risk and impacted communities during marine oil spill responses.
-  ▶ 20.05.06. Coordinate between local emergency response agencies and public health officials during marine oil spill responses to communicate health risks to impacted communities.
- ▶ 20.05.07. Identify communities that are at higher risk of experiencing or being impacted by marine oil spills (of all scales) across Puget Sound. Include these communities in planning and decision-making efforts to improve response readiness, mitigate health and exposure risk, build trust.
-  ▶ 20.05.08. Create an inclusive coordinating body or hub to provide tailored education, training, communication, and technical support to local populations around marine oil spills and boater best practices.

20.06. PROMOTE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND GUIDELINES FOR BOATERS, SHIP OPERATORS, PORTS, AND OTHERS TO PROTECT SOUTHERN RESIDENT ORCAS FROM UNDERWATER NOISE AND VESSEL DISTURBANCE.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 20.06.01. Sustain and expand the pool of observers and technologies that provide around-the-clock, real-time orca sightings to key partners and the Whale Report Alert System through Quiet Sound.
- ▶ 20.06.02. Sustain seasonal shipping slowdowns and implement similar measures and best practices for other maritime sectors, like tugs and passenger-only ferries, to reduce underwater noise and ship-strike risks in key foraging areas for Southern Resident orcas.
-  ▶ 20.06.03. Develop, enhance, and support innovative tools and social marketing campaigns (e.g., Be Whale Wise) to complement current outreach efforts that promote boaters' compliance with laws restricting their proximity to orcas.

- ▶ 20.06.04. Expand mixed media and signage to highlight opportunities to view orcas from land.
- ▶ 20.06.05. Enforce and adaptively manage rules and guidelines for vessels around orcas using the best available science and results of marine spatial planning efforts.
- ▶ 20.06.06. Strengthen alignment of monitoring and enhance collaborative efforts to support law enforcement in central Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, offshore waters, and Canadian waters.
- ▶ 20.06.07. Promote the supplemental State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) orca checklist for shoreline and aquatic projects that may impact Southern Resident orcas.
- ▶ 20.06.08. Co-develop and distribute multilingual, culturally relevant educational materials for the recreational boating community about orca-safe boating practices (e.g., safe distances, noise reduction, speed zones, etc.).
- ▶ 20.06.09. Continue to actively coordinate with Canada, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the United States Coast Guard, and other key partners to implement standards that promote aligned and effective vessel mitigation measures across our transboundary waters.

20.07. PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE BOATING BY INCREASING ENFORCEMENT AND EDUCATING BOATERS ABOUT REGULATIONS, PROGRAMS, AND RESOURCES TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF RECREATIONAL BOATING ON WATER QUALITY, MARINE DEBRIS, AND SENSITIVE WILDLIFE.

Actions for 2026-2030 include:

- ▶ 20.07.01. Ensure that Puget Sound ports and marinas support the No Discharge Zone in their environmental plans by providing appropriately scaled pump out resources, checking holding tank capacity for vessels using port facilities, and supporting mobile pump out programs.
- ▶ 20.07.02. Install permanent pump out stations at popular recreational boating sites.
- ▶ 20.07.03. Develop and distribute (at pump out stations, fueling bibs, marinas) educational materials to boaters about the effects of dumping sewage and the No Discharge Zone regulations. Include information on pump out stations in navigational maps. Ensure resources are available in relevant languages to reach various boating communities in Puget Sound.
- ▶ 20.07.04. Expand enforcement authority to relevant federal, Tribal, and state agencies to inspect and respond to illegal discharges. Work with marinas to ensure slip owners are properly pumping out their sewage tanks.
- ▶ 20.07.05. Consider new funding mechanisms to support No Discharge Zone education and compliance, such as fees for vessel registration or commercial vessels visiting port facilities.
- ▶ 20.07.06. Assess factors contributing to lost equipment by tracking hotspots for derelict fishing gear and equipment. Provide more targeted enforcement, outreach, and clean-up.
- ▶ 20.07.07. Consider financial incentives, such as deposits on fishing and crabbing equipment, to promote responsible behavior and fund clean-up efforts.
- ▶ 20.07.08. Increase monitoring, enforcement, and removal of illegal and/or degrading buoys, moorings, docks, and other overwater structures to protect marine ecosystems.
- ▶ 20.07.09. Promote inclusive outreach campaigns to raise awareness of the cultural and ecological importance of marine vegetation, like bull kelp, and educate boaters on how to identify and avoid damaging these habitats. Efforts should reflect Indigenous stewardship practices and be tailored to diverse boating communities.

GLOSSARY

Acronyms

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act	FTA – Federal Transit Administration
AKART – All Known, Available, and Reasonable methods of prevention, control, and Treatment	FY – Fiscal Year
BEACH Program– Beach Environmental Assessment, Communication, and Health Program	GIS – Geographic Information System
BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs	GHG – Greenhouse Gas
BMP – Best Management Practice	GMA – Growth Management Act
BNSF – Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad	GRPs – Geographic Response Plans
CCA – Climate Commitment Act	HEAL Act – Healthy Environment for All Act (Senate Bill 5141)
CANUSPAC Annex – Canada-United States Joint Marine Pollution Contingency Plan, Pacific Annex	HGMPs – Hatchery Genetic Management Plans
CCMP – Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan	HIS – Health Information System
CEC – Chemicals of Emerging Concern	IPM – Integrated Pest Management
CERCLA – Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act	LCLIP – Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program
CIG – Climate Impacts Group	LE – Lead Entities
CoSMoS – Coastal Storm Modeling System	LIO – Local Integrating Organization
CSO – Combined Sewer Overflow	LOSS – Large Onsite Sewage Systems
CWA – Clean Water Act	MTCA – Model Toxics Control Act
DNR – Department of Natural Resources	NEP – National Estuary Program
DOH – Department of Health	NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
ECB – Ecosystem Coordination Board	NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
ECHO – Quiet Sound and Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation	NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service
ECY – Department of Ecology	NRDA – Natural Resource Damage Assessment
EEEC – Earth, Energy, & Environment Center	OSG Program– Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grants Program
EJA – Environmental Justice Assessment	OSS – Onsite Sewage System
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency	PAHs – Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons
ESA – Endangered Species Act	PAI – Farm Protection and Affordability Investment
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency	PBDEs – Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers
FHA – Federal Housing Administration	PCBs – Polychlorinated Biphenyls
	PFAS – Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances
	PFOA – Perfluorooctanoic Acid

PIC program – Pollution Identification and Correction program

PS – Puget Sound

PS RAFT – Puget Sound Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool

PSAR – Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Program

PSI – Puget Sound Institute

PSP – Puget Sound Partnership

PSEMP – Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program

PSNERP – Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project

PSFLTF – Puget Sound Federal Leadership Task Force

PSSRC – Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council

RCO – Recreation Conservation Office

RCW – Revised Code of Washington

REPI – Readiness Environmental Protection Integration

SAM – Stormwater Action Monitoring

SEPA – State Environmental Protection Act

SIL – Puget Sound Strategic Implementation Lead

SMA – Shoreline Management Act

SMED – Stormwater Management for Existing Development

SMP – Shoreline Master Program

SOC – Salish Sea Statement of Cooperation

SSAC – Social Sciences Advisory Committee

SSAG – Salmon Science Advisory Group

STF – Strategic Funding Team

TIFIA – Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program

TMC – Tribal Management Conference

TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load

UGA – Urban Growth Area

USACE – United States Army Corps of Engineers

USDOT – United States Department of Transportation

USFS – United States Forest Service

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

USGS – United States Geological Survey

UW – University of Washington

WDFW – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

WSCC – Washington State Conservation Commission

WSDA – Washington State Department of Agriculture

WSHFC – Washington State Housing Finance Commission

WSU – Washington State University

WWTP – Wastewater Treatment Plants

TERMS

ABUNDANT AND HARVESTABLE SALMON

Thriving salmon are essential to Puget Sound residents' sense of place and cultural wellbeing, and require improved monitoring, information sharing, and effective management to maintain population levels amidst growing challenges. For more information, see page 52.

ACTION AGENDA

The Action Agenda for Puget Sound charts the course to recovery of our nation's largest estuary by volume. It complements and incorporates the work of many partners to describe strategies and actions needed to recover a healthy and resilient Puget Sound. These strategies provide opportunities for federal, Tribal, state, local, and private entities to better invest resources and coordinate action.

ACTION

Actions describe the activities that need to be implemented to advance the Strategy. Actions guide partner implementation and innovation. They inform the focus of public and private funding and implementation support by the boards and regional partners. Actions include restoration and acquisition of habitat, program development and improvement, education, outreach, research, policy improvements, and other activities.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Adaptive Management Framework describes the Partnership's approach to results-based management. The Framework is applied by the Partnership and by partners who implement the Action Agenda with the goal of improving the practice of science-based recovery of the Puget Sound ecosystem. This approach helps to ensure that decisions about ecosystem recovery priorities are based on the best available information about the effectiveness of management investments.

AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION

Keeping agricultural lands in production helps minimize the risk of being converted into developments, provides habitat that supports animals, and contributes to the region's economy, local foods, community identity, and sense of place. See page 71 for more details.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS RUNOFF

Rainwater can run off onto agricultural lands, carrying pollutants, such as excess nutrients and fecal pollution into the groundwater, surface water, and Puget Sound, which can negatively impact human health. For more information, see page 104.

AGROFORESTRY

A land management approach that integrates trees and shrubs with crops and/or livestock on the same unit of land.

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

The backbone organization mobilizes, coordinates and facilitates the process of collective impact. Key functions include guiding vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement systems, building public will, and mobilizing funding to support the initiative. The Partnership defines itself as a backbone organization for guiding collective impact in recovering Puget Sound.

BIOLOGICAL PATHOGENS

Infectious microorganisms such as bacteria, algae, viruses, and parasites that can cause illness hospitalizations, death, and disabilities.

BIOSOLIDS

Solid organic matter and nutrients left over from the sewage treatment process that can be used as fertilizer.

BIOGEOGRAPHIC

The geographical distribution of a species through time.

BULKHEAD

A wall-like structure often used to reinforce shorelines to prevent erosion.

CARBON PAYMENT PROGRAM

Programs that offer financial incentives for reducing greenhouse gases (for example, reforestation).

CARBON SEQUESTRATION

The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT

A voluntary, legal agreement that restricts certain uses and activities to protect a property's natural resources and wildlife habitat.

CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCES

A local government regulation required by Washington State's Growth Management Act that requires cities and counties to adopt regulations that protect critical areas to preserve the natural environment and reduce exposure to risks.

CULVERT

A structure, often a short pipe, that channels water past an obstacle to a subterranean waterway.

CO-MANAGEMENT

Co-management is the shared responsibility of management between two or more entities. As sovereign nations, federally recognized Tribes co-manage the natural resources they share with other residents of Washington state as agreed under treaties negotiated with the Federal Government in 1854 and 1855. Treaties are the “Supreme Law of the Land” under the U.S. Constitution. When Tribes ceded their land under the treaties, they reserved their right to fish, hunt, and gather at all usual and accustomed grounds and stations. U.S. v. Washington (Boldt decision) and related cases affirmed the Tribes’ role as co-managers of treaty-protected resources and their right to half of the sustainably harvestable salmon and shellfish. As affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, implicit in this treaty right is the responsibility of the State to protect and restore salmon and the habitats that they need to thrive.

COMMITMENTS

Activities that partners and the Partnership pledge to try to achieve to advance the Action Agenda and related recovery plans. They are measurable, ambitious (yet realistic), and time-bound within a four-year period. Commitments allow partners to show leadership and actively highlight their efforts to implement the Action Agenda. The Partnership articulates, tracks and reports on Commitments in a joint Puget Sound Implementation Plan with the Salmon Recovery Plan.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO)

CBOs are organizations that represent or serve a particular community. People in communities around Puget Sound have formed organizations to address Endangered Species Act listings of Chinook salmon and other salmonids in Washington state, and decide which projects matter most. CBOs include Lead Entities and Local Integrating Organizations.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The term used to describe the interconnected network of systems that directly impact human society at a grassroots community level, including the socioeconomic, ecological, and built environments.

CULTURAL WELLBEING

The extent to which people feel able to maintain their cultural traditions and measured by the level of satisfaction with participation in cultural practices, including spiritual or religious practices related to the environment, native practices, and environmentally related social activities (as defined by the Cultural Wellbeing Vital Sign).

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS

In the context of environmental justice, this refers to when one group or population bears an environmental or health impact that is substantially higher than the average distribution. This impact is usually compounded by existing inequities due to historic discrimination against certain groups.

ECOSYSTEM

A geographic area in which plants, animals, and other organisms each have their own role while they interact with each other and non-living environments (water, sun, soil, weather).

ECOSYSTEM COORDINATION BOARD

The purpose of the Ecosystem Coordination Board is to advise and assist the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council in carrying out its responsibilities in implementing chapter 90.71 RCW including development and implementation of the Action Agenda.

ECOSYSTEM PRESSURE

Demands of a growing population with rapidly changing consumption patterns for food, mobility, and energy, in combination with climate change, are exerting increasing pressures on ecosystems and their life-supporting services.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

This act establishes protections for fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered and provides the ability to add or remove species from that list, implement recovery plans, and encourages interagency and state cooperation.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. This includes using an intersectional lens to address disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted populations, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.

EROSION

The breakdown, transport, redistribution, or detachment of soil by wind, water, or gravity.

FECAL POLLUTION

Failed onsite sewage systems (OSS), livestock manure, and pet waste carries harmful bacteria, viruses, and other contaminants into marine waters, making seafood unsafe to eat, increasing the risk of illness from contact with polluted water and creating a need for effective fecal pollution management. For more information, see page 108.

FISH PASSAGE BARRIERS

Roads, culverts, dams, tide gates, bridges, and other human infrastructure cut off rivers and streams, blocking salmon from reaching spawning grounds and swimming to sea, creating temperature barriers, reducing river nutrients, disrupting natural flows, and violating Tribal treaties. For more information, see page 94.

FLOODPLAINS AND ESTUARIES

Floodplains and estuaries connect freshwater, marine, and terrestrial ecosystems, creating a diverse landscape as well as providing a range of environmental, cultural, and social benefits. For more information, see page 84.

FOREST ROADS RUNOFF

Poorly managed forest lands can carry pollutants from forest roads into groundwater and surface waters, negatively impacting the health of both aquatic ecosystems and human communities. For more information, see page 106.

FOUNDATIONS OF PUGET SOUND RECOVERY

Partners rely on a strong, shared foundation to support Puget Sound recovery efforts. Six Topics make up the Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery include: funding, research and monitoring, good governance, strategic leadership and collaboration, workforce development, and outreach and behavior change. These Topics define Strategies and Actions that are applicable to all facets of Puget Sound recovery. For more information, see page 28.

FRESHWATER AVAILABILITY

Freshwater is essential to people and wildlife in Puget Sound, and it is important to use long-term management and protection strategies to ensure freshwater is available for all by improving supply, reducing demand, and increasing resilience to impacts from extreme weather and shifting rain patterns. For more information, see page 91.

FUNDING

Diverse funding sources for large capital projects, ongoing programs, and essential activities such as research, monitoring, hiring staff, outreach, and communications are needed to achieve Puget Sound recovery goals, along with improved use of existing funding and clear funding expectations. For more information, see page 29.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance uses tools, resources, and training to help people understand how decisions are made, provide community members with opportunities to participate in shaping decisions, and ensure government agencies are effectively working together, including respectfully consulting with Tribes. For more information, see page 37.

GREEN ECONOMY

An economy that develops and uses products or services that promote environmental protection and/or energy security.

GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Nature-based infrastructure such as rain gardens is an approach to manage stormwater, including by slowing and collecting rainwater, reducing flooding and sewer overflows, and limiting pollution entering waterways.

GROUND-LEVEL OZONE

A harmful air pollutant that can trigger a variety of health and environmental problems.

GROUNDWATER TABLE

The area under the soil surface where water has infiltrated and saturates, filling spaces between sediments and rock.

HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

The ability for animals to move across the landscape within their natural habitats.

HEALTHY SHORELINES

Puget Sound shorelines provide important habitat, protect against storms and sea-level rise, and support cultural, recreational, and economic activities. Shoreline health is important to protect through armor removal and habitat enhancement efforts that work with landowners, uphold Tribal treaty rights, and consider impacts to local communities. For more information, see page 80.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL (HEAL) ACT

The Healthy Environment for All Act (also known as the HEAL Act) was passed by the legislature in 2021. The HEAL Act is the first statewide law to create a coordinated and collaborative approach to environmental justice, making it a priority and part of the mission of key state agencies. The law requires Ecology and the state departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Health, Natural Resources, Transportation, and the Puget Sound Partnership to identify and address environmental health disparities in overburdened communities and for vulnerable populations.¹

HEALTH DISPARITIES

The higher burden of illness, injury, disability, or death experienced by one group or population relative to another.

HUMAN WELLBEING

Everything that allows humans to thrive. It includes familiar topics such as physical and psychological health, as well as governance, social, cultural, and economic wellbeing. For the purposes of Puget Sound recovery, the focus is on human wellbeing as it relates to human engagement with the natural environment of Puget Sound.

HUMAN HEALTH

People physically, emotionally, and mentally benefit from opportunities to spend time in nature but disproportionately face negative short-and-long-term health and quality of life impacts from pollution, toxic contamination of water, air, and shellfish resources, and increasing environmental changes. For more information, see page 55.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The recovery plans for achieving specific ecosystem targets for the Puget Sound Vital Sign indicators. They describe the sequence of steps, activities, and results needed to move closer to a recovery goal.

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

The Partnership's Science Work Plan for 2020-2024 introduces the concept of an inclusive knowledge network (IKN) that will link various forms of knowledge (for example, Indigenous, local, and scientific) and the people and organizations who develop, hold, and share knowledge and understandings. This concept will focus on collaborations among Tribal nations, others who work and know the land, managers, and scientists to develop linkages to put knowledge to use in service of Tribal nations, vulnerable populations and underserved communities overburdened with environmental impacts, and all people who are connected to the future of Salish Sea ecosystems.

INDICATOR

One or more metrics that are tracked consistently over time with repeatable methods. Puget Sound Partnership monitors two types of indicators, Vital Sign Indicators and Progress Indicators. Our system of indicators helps us communicate recovery progress, ecosystem conditions, and inspire focused action.

INTEGRATED RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

The integrated floodplain management is an emerging form of planning, action, and management where partners from a wide variety of sectors, including local jurisdictions, conservation districts, and representatives from agricultural industry, agree on a set of shared visions, strategies, and actions to improve floodplain health.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Species that are intentionally or unintentionally introduced to an area can harm native wildlife and habitats, food webs, and ecosystems that support local culture, traditions, economies, and recreation. Efforts must be made to prevent non-native species introduction and spread. For more information, see page 97.

LAND USE

The term used to describe the human use of land. It represents the economic and cultural activities (for example, agricultural, residential, industrial, mining, and recreational uses) that are practiced at a given place.

LEAD ENTITY

The watershed-based organization that oversees implementation of watershed chapters of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Leadership Council is the governing body of the Puget Sound Partnership. Its seven members are leading community members chosen from around the Sound. Members are appointed by the governor to serve four-year terms but may continue to serve until being officially reappointed or replaced by a new member.

LOCAL INTEGRATING ORGANIZATION

The consortium of local and Tribal organizations that guides the planning and implementation of actions at the ecosystem scale and prioritizes local actions for investment in one of 10 geographical areas around Puget Sound.

MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

The Puget Sound Management Conference includes: the statutorily-described Partnership including the Puget Sound Partnership state agency, Leadership Council, Ecosystem Coordination Board, and Science Panel; and the broader partnership coalition that includes Tribal governments, the Puget Sound caucuses affiliated with the Ecosystem Coordination Board, the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council, Northwest Straits Commission, implementing networks, formal and informal interest groups, watershed groups, individual local governments, and representatives from Canadian agencies.

MARINE VEGETATION

Native marine vegetation such as kelp forests and seagrass meadows provides species habitat, coastal protection, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, and food for communities. Marine vegetation is vital to the health of the Puget Sound and the Salish Sea, requiring coordinated management and research for restoration and protection. For more information, see page 77.

MICROPLASTICS

Plastic fragments under 5-millimeters.

MOISTURE REGIME

A soil classification based on the water table level and the presence or absence of available water given the amount of time soil is unsaturated.

MULTI-BENEFICIAL

The Partnership and the Puget Sound recovery community at large have limited resources to address numerous very challenging and complex problems, including climate change. Therefore, as the Partnership works to address climate change more thoroughly within the context of Puget Sound recovery, the Partnership seeks to advance high-leverage, multi-benefit, and systems-based solutions which provide a multiplicity of benefits (directly to Puget Sound ecosystems and species, as well as indirectly to Puget Sound residents), address pervasive issues, utilize an understanding of the larger context, and leverage available resources efficiently and effectively. Doing so will optimize resources, funding, and capacity to effectively and efficiently decrease the vulnerability of Puget Sound to climate stressors and simultaneously advance Puget Sound recovery.

NO NET LOSS

Over time the existing condition of ecological functions should remain the same. This applies to shorelines as the Shoreline Management Act is implemented in Washington seeks to reduce impacts of development on shorelines through protection and restoration (Department of Ecology).

NUTRIENT LOADS

The input of nutrients (mainly nitrogen and phosphorous) into the environment.

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

Excess carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, released by burning coal, oil, and gas, dissolves in the ocean, creating acidic conditions that are expected to have significant and negative ocean impacts.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

The continuing efforts—regulatory, oversight, technical support, guidance—that provide the foundation for Puget Sound ecosystem protection and recovery and align with the Action Agenda's strategies and actions.

OPEN STANDARDS (OR CONSERVATION STANDARDS)

The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation link science, policy, and performance management, and are the foundation of the adaptive management framework for the recovery efforts coordinated by the Puget Sound Partnership.

OUTREACH AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Engaging with individuals and communities through social connections helps to adapt environmentally friendly behaviors to support health and quality of life. For more information, see page 44.

PARTNERSHIP/TRIBAL CO-MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

A forum for early and frequent engagement with Tribal nations in Puget Sound Partnership activities.

PINNIPED

Marine mammals that have front and rear flippers, including seals, sea lions, and walrus.

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS (PCBS)

PCBs are a group of 209 human-made compounds that generally occur as complex mixtures. PCBs are very persistent, lasting for decades in the environment. PCBs move easily between air, water, and land. They are persistent, toxic chemicals that are found throughout Washington. PCBs are also bioaccumulative, meaning they build up overtime in people and animals, becoming more concentrated in organisms at the top of the food chain, like orcas.²

POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)

Nonstick and water-repellant chemicals used in the manufacturing of cookware, clothing, carpeting, food wrappings, fire-fighting foams, and many other products. After consumption or use of these products, residual chemicals and byproducts are excreted or disposed of, and released to the air, water, or land without regulation or monitoring. Many of these chemicals are known to have harmful impacts to ecological and human health, are considered contaminants of emerging concern. PFAS contaminants are eventually washed into the Sound's ecosystem, accumulating over time in water, sediment, and animals.³

PRESSURES

The human activities that stress the ecosystem but may benefit humans. As reported in the Puget Sound Pressures Assessment, there are 41 critical ecosystem pressures (species and habitats).

PUGET SOUND

The Puget Sound is a large inland estuary in northwestern Washington state that forms the southern portion of the Salish Sea and flows out to the Pacific Ocean.

PUGET SOUND ECOSYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAM

The collaborative network of subject matter experts from many monitoring organizations and different parts of the region. Together, they generate, organize, synthesize, and communicate scientific information, across political and organizational boundaries, to track ecosystem conditions that directly address management and science questions critical to Puget Sound recovery.

PUGET SOUND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Puget Sound Implementation Plan contains partners' Commitments that describes the work they will pursue over the next four years to implement Actions in both the Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan.

PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP (PSP/ PARTNERSHIP)

The Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) is the state agency, overseen by an executive director and boards, leading the region's collective effort to restore and protect Puget Sound. The Puget Sound Partnership brings together hundreds of partners to mobilize partner action around a common agenda, advance Sound investments, and advance priority actions by supporting partners.

PUGET SOUND PRESSURES ASSESSMENT

Summarizes pressures on specific endpoints in Puget Sound ecosystems and identifies ecosystem vulnerabilities.

PUGET SOUND RECOVERY ATLAS

The Puget Sound Recovery Atlas provides online updates on project implementation and ongoing programs.

PUGET SOUND SALMON RECOVERY COUNCIL

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council advises the Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council on decisions relating to salmon recovery and the implementation of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan. The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council's recommendations inform priorities for recovery work and funding.

PUGET SOUND SALMON RECOVERY PLAN

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan was developed in 2005 by regional experts and adopted by NOAA Fisheries in 2007 to meet obligations under the Endangered Species Act. Subsequently, local experts in each watershed worked together to craft 16 individual chapters of the Recovery Plan to specify local recovery goals, priority recovery actions, and monitoring needs.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

Progress Indicators measure human activities that positively or negatively influence ecosystem health. Progress Indicators relate to activities necessary to advance Puget Sound recovery and can help us understand whether we are implementing Strategies and Actions within a Topic.

REACH-SCALE PLANNING

The reaches are sections of rivers and estuaries defined for planning purposes, based on natural characteristics and existing land uses. See examples from Snohomish County Sustainable Lands Strategy.

RECHARGE

The process in which groundwater aquifers are replenished by surface water.

RECOVERY

The protection and restoration of essential resources and functions. The Partnership builds a shared vision for recovery through the Action Agenda, which identifies the top priority actions or programs to stay on course to recovery.

RECOVERY COMMUNITY

The individuals, groups, organizations, and agencies who identify or are identified as helping the effort to protect and restore the Puget Sound ecosystem or have taken part in planning and action that supports this effort.

RECOVERY GOALS

The Washington State statute that created the Puget Sound Partnership defines the following recovery goals: healthy human population, vibrant quality of life, thriving species and food web, functioning habitat, and healthy water quality. The Partnership is the state agency leading the region's collective effort to restore and protect Puget Sound in order to meet these goals.

RECOVERY TARGETS

The policy statements that express desired future conditions for human health and quality of life, species and food webs, habitats, water quantity, and water quality.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Focused, relevant research and systematic, ongoing monitoring are important foundations for Puget Sound recovery and can help better understand impacts and relationships of Puget Sound ecosystem elements, including changes over time. For more information, see page 32.

RIPARIAN AREAS

These areas of vegetation along streams and rivers, also known as riparian corridors, are critical for keeping water clean and cool, controlling erosion, preventing flooding, offering wildlife habitats, and supporting community and cultural values. Land development and tree clearing have created needs for riparian area restoration, protection, and comprehensive management. For more information, see page 88.

SALISH SEA

The bioregion encompassing the inland marine waterways of British Columbia and Washington and their watersheds.

SALISH SEA ECOSYSTEM CONFERENCE

The Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference convenes every two years and the Salish Sea recovery community—including scientists, First Nations and Tribal government representatives, resource managers, community and business leaders, policymakers, educators, and students—gets together to present and share the latest research on the state of the ecosystem, and to guide future actions for protecting and restoring the Salish Sea ecosystem. The Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference provides a forum for sharing ecosystem information and fosters collaboration between the Puget Sound and Canadian recovery community.

SEED ZONE

An area where plant materials can be transferred with low risk of poorly adapting to a new location.

SCIENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

The structured approach to deciding on actions and strategies for Puget Sound recovery that are informed by scientific information.

SCIENCE PANEL

The Science Panel's expertise and advice are critical to the Puget Sound Partnership's efforts to develop a comprehensive, science-based plan to restore Puget Sound. The members, appointed by the Leadership Council, are chosen from the top scientists in Washington State.

SCIENCE WORK PLAN

The Science Panel developed a Science Work Plan for 2020-2024, which describes strategies to improve our collective understanding of Puget Sound. Implementing this Science Work Plan will generate information that the Puget Sound recovery community uses to improve decision-making and accelerate recovery across Puget Sound for the benefit of the people and communities in the region and the ecosystems on which they depend.

SENSE OF PLACE OR PLACE ATTACHMENT

The term place attachment refers to a bond or connection between people and place, including the natural environment. Place attachment is considered a dimension of sense of place. The term sense of place is defined as the extent to which people identify with and feel positively attached to a specific place.

SHARED LANDSCAPES

Spending time outdoors for recreational and cultural purposes benefits people by building deeper attachments and care for nature, inspiring resource management involvement, and providing social, cultural, and health benefits. Shared landscapes require balancing increasing access to the outdoors while preserving sensitive, culturally important, and treaty-protected resources and sites. For more information, see page 62.

SHELLFISH BED

Areas that are home to oysters, clams, mussels, and other shellfish that provide opportunities for recreational and commercial shellfish harvest.

SHORELINE ARMORING

Using physical structures to protect shorelines from coastal erosion.

SILVOPASTURE

A specific type of agroforestry that integrates trees and grazing animals to create a managed woodland pasture.

SMART GROWTH

Smart Growth strategies help address development pressures from population growth by directing populations to urban growth areas and balancing affordable development and infrastructure improvements with the protection of working lands, natural areas, and culturally valued lands. For more information, see page 67.

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM

The concept emphasizes that humans as an integrated part of nature, and stresses that the delineation between social systems and ecological systems is artificial and arbitrary.

SPAWNING

Producing eggs or young (salmon spawn).

STATE OF THE SOUND

The summary of recovery progress, challenges, and investment in Puget Sound ecosystem protection and recovery every two years.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION LEAD

The Puget Sound Strategic Implementation Leads (SILs) invest EPA Puget Sound Geographic Program funds under the authority of the National Estuary Program in transformative actions for lands, waters, fish, and communities. The Habitat, Shellfish, and Stormwater SILs, are programs funded by EPA and charged with strategic planning and investments in Puget Sound recovery. The SILs are a “roots up” approach to ecosystem recovery: working on the ground to grow and fund strong, collaborative networks to implement priority needs and actions in the Action Agenda.

First established in 2016, the current SIL programs are led collaboratively by Washington state agencies. From 2016 through 2025, the SILs worked with advisory teams to direct EPA funding to impactful projects in the Puget Sound Action Agenda and provide state funding match for federal dollars. These investments created enabling conditions for success, fostering relationships, institutional capacity, and scientific basis needed to overcome recovery barriers. SILs also invested in public education, technical assistance, and stewardship activities. SIL investments build capacity and programs locally and regionally to protect shellfish beds, healthy habitats, and clean water. Strategic SIL-funded projects and programs have restored shorelines, installed stormwater treatment, contributed critical salmon research, and expanded harvestable shellfish acreage in communities around Puget Sound. SIL staff capacity is also invested in convening partners to address barriers, develop guidance and resources, and exchange knowledge. These investments set the stage for future restoration activities to flourish to advance work for a healthy Puget Sound.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY TEAM

The committee of technical experts who advise the Strategic Implementation Lead in identifying priority approaches to recover Puget Sound and selecting projects to receive funding.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Recovering and protecting Puget Sound is a complex, long-term effort that depends on strong leadership, clear strategy, and effective coordination across many different people, places, and organizations. For more information, see page 40.

STRATEGIC SCIENCE PLAN

The framework for coordinating the science required for Puget Sound ecosystem recovery as outlined in the Action Agenda.

STRATEGY

The Implementation Plan strategies describe the strategic approaches needed to make progress toward recovery. Each Strategy either addresses underlying stressors on the ecosystem or improve our ability to address a stressor. Strategies include 4-10 Actions that work together to advance the Strategy.

STORMWATER RUNOFF

As stormwater flows over roads, rooftops, and other hard surfaces, it carries harmful pollutants into nearby waterways, creating a need for management to reduce risks of pollution harming species, marine sediment, and habitat, and creating health risks that cause social challenges for communities. For more information, see page 101.

STRESSOR

The human-caused or biophysical factor that forces destructive change on the Puget Sound ecosystem. A total of 48 stressors identify the change to the ecosystem contributed by one or more sources. Examples of stressors include habitat conversion, pollution from legacy toxics, and shoreline hardening. Stressors generally are distinct from sources (also known as pressures) which are the human actions or natural processes that contribute to stressors. Generally, a single source of pressure will contribute to multiple stressors. The Strategies address stressors.

SUBBASIN

A smaller geologic basin formed as a part of a larger basin.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

The key agencies, organizations, and advisory bodies that support the work of the Puget Sound Partnership.

TARGETS

Targets define specific short or long-term benchmarks of success in quantitative (numeric) terms for a specific indicator or state ongoing program.

TOPICS

Priority focus areas within Puget Sound recovery that have broad and established communities of practice working to advance recovery goals. This Action Agenda has 6 Topics that make up the Foundations of Puget Sound Recovery and 20 Topics within the Recovery Plan that focus on Healthy Communities, Sustainable Land Use, Resilient Habitats, and Clean Water. Each Topic has between three and seven Strategies that complement each other to reduce pressures on the ecosystem and advance one or more of the statutory recovery goals.

TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD (TMDL)

The calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that is allowed to enter a waterbody while still meeting water quality standards for that pollutant.

TOXIC CHEMICAL PREVENTION

Toxic chemicals come from a wide range of past and present human activities, are in a range of everyday products, and pose serious public health concerns as they make their way into the Puget Sound. It is important to prevent toxic chemical build up in ecosystem stormwater, soil, sediment, and water, as well as clean-up toxic areas to improve ecosystem health and human wellbeing. For more information, see page 58.

UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

The U.S. EPA defines this term as populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

URBAN HEAT ISLANDS

Developed areas that experience higher temperatures than nearby rural areas.

VESSEL IMPACTS

Vessel traffic fuels the Puget Sound economy but creates underwater noise and disturbance impacts on Southern Resident orcas, creates sewage and material waste pollution, increases risks of major oil spills, which can create severe cultural and economic resource impacts. For more information, see page 114.

VITAL SIGNS AND VITAL SIGN INDICATORS

Each of the Puget Sound recovery goals is expressed with Vital Signs that represent important components of a healthy Puget Sound (for example, marine water, local foods). Vital Sign indicators track the status and trends of parts of the ecosystem and help assess progress towards the Partnership's statutory recovery goals. For more information, see page 20.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The HEAL Act defines vulnerable populations as population groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to: (i) Adverse socioeconomic factors, such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate healthcare, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms; and (ii) sensitivity factors, such as low birthweight and higher rates of hospitalization.

WASTEWATER INFLUENT

Untreated sewage and wastewater that enters a wastewater treatment plant.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS

Wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) process water from homes and businesses and can release excess nutrients and contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) into waterways, negatively impacting aquatic life and communities.

Improving regulations, offering incentives, and investing in new technologies can help reduce and prevent pollution from wastewater systems. For more information, see page 111.

WATER CARRYING CAPACITY

The maximum social, economic, and environmental development that a region's water resources can support.

WATERSHED

An area of land that directs snowmelt and rainfall to creeks, streams, rivers, and eventually out to outflow points such as reservoirs or the ocean.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development includes strong partnerships between schools, agencies, and the natural resource industry that are essential for building a skilled Puget Sound recovery workforce, providing training opportunities, reducing program participation barriers, implementing the Action Agenda, and supporting individuals, communities, and economies. For more information, see page 42.

WORKING FOREST LAND PROTECTION

Preserving and supporting working forests through management strategies provides a range of benefits including protecting quality of habitats and downstream conditions for many species, benefiting the economy, providing carbon storage, creating recreation opportunities, and contributing to community identity. For more information, see page 74.



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