

The Impact of the Strategic Stormwater Interventions and Planning for Puget Sound Recovery and Resilience - Dustin Bilhimer

The National Estuary Program's Stormwater Strategic Initiative (Stormwater SI) has played a crucial role advancing science and innovative solutions to address urban stormwater impacts on Puget Sound. Through multiple levels of public engagement, financing catalytic work, and strategic collaborations, the team is using local knowledge and lived experiences of regional stakeholders to guide our work.

This presentation will highlight our role in funding research, pilots, and other strategic interventions. We will present examples of projects that advanced scientific knowledge, informed policy decisions, and catalyzed implementation. This includes discovery of the tire-derived chemicals in stormwater runoff that cause acute Coho mortality syndrome, and projects that accelerate community-led adoption of green stormwater infrastructure. We will reflect on lessons learned that have informed our approaches for cross-discipline integration, holistic strategic planning, prioritizing, and implementing projects.

We use EPA Geographic Funds for priority actions across Puget Sound, leading to significant environmental benefits and policies to improve water quality. From 2016-2022, the Stormwater SI invested \$22.65 million in a broad portfolio of effective actions. Since 2022, we continue to build on our successes with a greater emphasis on projects that integrate climate resiliency, tribal treaty rights, and environmental and social justice issues.

Our team is co-led by the Washington State Departments of Ecology and Commerce, and the Washington Stormwater Center, but we are also guided by multiple workgroups consisting of scientists, tribal representatives, regional experts, and environmental advocates. This mutually self-reinforcing set of collaborations helps to bridge policy with solutions embedded in local processes.

Catalyzing habitat recovery in Puget Sound under the National Estuary Program - Jennifer Griffiths

The National Estuary Program's Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead accelerates solutions for habitat protection and restoration in Puget Sound through strategic capacity to connect and support partners coupled with a unique funding stream to enhance collaborative and novel approaches. Puget Sound, Washington State has 2500 miles of shoreline and is the largest estuary, by volume, in the contiguous United States. It has a diversity of terrestrial, aquatic, and marine habitats that sustain culturally important species and traditions, outdoor recreation, industries, and a connection to nature for a rapidly growing human population. Habitat recovery across this landscape requires integrated management solutions across sectors, policy frameworks that reinforce recovery goals, and incentives that align individual behaviors and property decisions with restoration outcomes. The Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead, led by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources, invests EPA Puget Sound Geographic Program funding in innovative programs development for regulatory compliance, financial and technical incentives, and restoration effectiveness evaluation.

Funding also supports policy evaluations, capacity for integrated management, scientific research to inform management decisions, and the early planning and coordination that is critical for project implementation funding. The lessons learned from this program go beyond regional strategic planning and local funding and are a model for similar efforts across the nation. Specifically, this program demonstrates the added value that in-house strategic planning capacity can bring to leverage grant program investments, the challenges of transitioning successful pilot programs to permanent funding, and the opportunities that come from investing in partner coalitions.

Reducing pollution in Puget Sound to improve water quality for shellfish harvest - Clara Hard

Since 2011, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has received three cooperative agreements with the Environmental Protection Agency's Puget Sound Geographic Funds. As the Shellfish Strategic Initiative, we have funded water quality improvement projects around Puget Sound to reduce pollution from preventable sources of bacteria and to increase the acres of approved harvestable shellfish growing areas. Shellfish in Puget Sound are not only a multimillion-dollar industry that harvests oysters, mussels, clams and geoducks from our waters, but a crucial resource for many tribes as a traditional and ceremonial food source.

We've captured both success stories and lessons learned through the years. Addressing issues around onsite sewage systems, livestock manure management, boating and nonpoint sources identified through pollution identification and correction (PIC) programs, we've helped our subrecipients navigate the challenges of finding and correcting fecal pollution sources.

Moving forward we are incorporating "cross-cutting" priorities to address climate resiliency and disproportionately affected communities. Our applicants now describe how they will incorporate environmental justice, climate change and tribal treaty rights considerations from the proposal stage through deliverables and final reporting while we encourage and support these priorities. This presentation will discuss how we are expanding the accessibility of our funds and ensuring that those who rely on access to safe shellfish to eat from our waters can benefit equitably from where we focus our program's resources, along with highlighting some success stories and lessons learned from the synthesis of our past projects and how we will strategically fund projects into the future.

Developing an Equity-Centered Framework for Coastal Resilience on Washington State Coastlines - Olivia Zimmerman

The Washington State Department of Ecology houses the state's Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program, which takes a comprehensive approach to coastal resource management that prioritizes protecting and restoring coastal wetlands, preventing or reducing threats from climate and coastal hazards, enhancing community resilience to coastal climate impacts, managing responsible coastal development, and increasing opportunities for public access. Recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding enabled our CZM Program to grow capacity to support coastal resiliency efforts, which has resulted in the development of our team's new

Coastal Resilience Program. The Program's resilience vision is driven regionally by local partners to effectively respond to unique needs across Washington's complex coastal geographies. The top priority for this program is to develop and implement a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to support resilient and equitable Washington coastlines in collaboration with a wide network of partners and sovereigns. This new resilience-centered program builds on over 20 years of efforts to convene multi-jurisdictional and community-based partnerships in a strategic and comprehensive approach to nature-based coastal and climate adaptation. This presentation will describe the ongoing development of our emerging equity-focused coastal resilience efforts including: (1) the Washington State Coastal Climate Resilience Partnership composed of state agencies, Tribes, community-led organizations, local governments, and NGOs; (2) our NOAA-funded project entitled 'Advancing an Equitable Framework for Coastal Resilience in Washington State' which creates an actionable strategy to center equity, climate, and Tribal justice in the CZM Program's resilience efforts; (3) development of a Tribal Engagement Framework to ensure our work upholds Tribal sovereignty and self-determination at every stage; and (4) our new multi-agency partnership Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT) that will collaborate with diverse communities to co-create projects to address coastal hazards. We will also share key takeaways from interviews with local governments conducting sea level rise vulnerability assessments with Ecology-provided funding and developing a coastwide regional resiliency vision with 30+ partners.

Using indicators and targets to assess regional progress in Puget Sound, WA - Kirsten Feifel
The Puget Sound Partnership is the Washington State agency tasked to lead the region's collective effort to restore and protect Puget Sound, a large and complex estuary in Washington State. The Puget Sound Partnership brings together hundreds of partners to mobilize partner action around a common recovery agenda - the "Action Agenda". The "Puget Sound Indicators" have been developed to help assess progress in implementing the Action Agenda and achieving our desired goals at short, medium, and long timescales. This presentation will showcase work to develop relevant and usable Puget Sound Indicators and affiliated targets suitable to help us assess regional progress on achieving our recovery goals. It will also highlight how we are using indicators and targets to hold ourselves and partners accountable to accelerating efforts to protect and recover Puget Sound.