



## 2022-2026 ACTION AGENDA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Puget Sound is a special place that nourishes our health, economy, environment, and quality of life. It encompasses the southern half of the Salish Sea which spans across international borders. Tribal nations have stewarded these lands and waters, and fished, hunted, cultivated, and gathered throughout the region since time immemorial. Its snowcapped mountains and sparkling waters continue to attract people and businesses from around the world. Though it may appear pristine from a distance, Puget Sound is in serious trouble. Yet, Puget Sound can be a resilient ecosystem that supports healthy and diverse human communities, and the habitats and species that we care about and rely upon. To achieve thriving natural systems and communities, we must plan for the range of potential impacts of an uncertain future. Our decisions and policies concerning population growth, changing climate and ocean conditions, governance, public perceptions, economic factors, environmental justice, and other forces will drive how the region changes and, ultimately, the wellbeing of the people who are inextricably connected to the health of Puget Sound.



Figure 1. Puget Sound National Estuary Program area and Salish Sea bioregion.

The 2022-2026 Action Agenda charts the course for Puget Sound recovery. It presents the most effective and beneficial outcomes, strategies, and actions for Puget Sound recovery and resilience, supported by science and robust partner engagement. The Action Agenda addresses the magnitude of the challenges present in Puget Sound from the pressures of human activities including climate change and population growth. It calls for bold leadership to direct and support recovery by maximizing expertise, experience, and networks. It begins to incorporate human wellbeing, tribal nations' treaty and sovereign rights, and environmental justice. It provides clear guidance for funding and policy proposals to protect Puget Sound. Finally, it fulfills the Puget Sound Partnership's (Partnership) statutory mandate and purpose of the Clean Water Act's [National Estuary Program \(NEP\)](#).

In 2018, the Partnership's Leadership Council adopted the following vision for 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."*

Hundreds of partners have committed to making this vision a reality and the 2022-2026 Action Agenda provides the roadmap for the next four years.

Three components illustrate the longer-term vision for Puget Sound recovery for 2022-2026: Vital Signs, desired outcomes, and targets and commitments for implementing the Action Agenda.



## Puget Sound Vital Signs Articulate Our Goals for Puget Sound Recovery

The Puget Sound Vital Signs and their indicators are measures of ecosystem health. Vital Signs also articulate the statutory goals for Puget Sound recovery and describe how we will know whether statutory goals are achieved. The 2022-2026 Action Agenda sets targets for six Vital Sign Indicators. These targets are ambitious and bold, represent iconic and valued components of the Puget Sound ecosystem, and are strongly linked to the work proposed in this Action Agenda.

- ▶ [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.

### EXAMPLE OF VITAL SIGNS STRUCTURE



Figure 2: Example of the structure of the Vital Signs.

## The Action Agenda Sets Us on the Pathway to Achieve Our Vision

To achieve the Vital Sign goals and Puget Sound recovery, the Action Agenda identified desired outcomes as well as the strategies and action we must take to achieve them in the near term. The Action Agenda also emphasizes a multi-benefit approach – to meet the urgency and magnitude of the challenge we face – that will help the recovery community effectively make progress towards multiple goals.

**Desired outcomes describe the reductions in adverse effects on the ecosystem (for example, reducing toxic pollution in stormwater runoff) and the changes in human activities that create them (for example, reducing impervious surfaces from development) and are necessary to make progress toward the Vital Signs and statutory goals.**

The Partnership analyzed the strength of the relationship between the full list of desired outcomes and Vital Sign Indicators. Eleven of 23 desired outcomes appear to generate substantial multi-benefit results. Progress toward any one of these eleven multi-benefit desired outcomes could result in improvements to 25 percent or more of the Vital Sign Indicators. As the recovery community implements this Action Agenda, we should consider how to incorporate multi-benefit approaches into recovery actions. These outcomes are:

- ▶ Protect habitat and habitat-forming processes from conversion and fragmentation
- ▶ Protect agricultural lands and working forests from conversion
- ▶ 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)
- ▶ Restore habitat and habitat-forming processes to support biological communities
- ▶ Reduce toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound and connected waters, including from roads, contaminated sediments, and industrial lands
- ▶ Reduce nutrients entering Puget Sound and connected waters to improve the dissolved oxygen marine water quality indicator
- ▶ Prevent spills of oil and hazardous substances
- ▶ Ensure sustainable harvest of native wild fish and shellfish populations and support treaty-reserved fishing rights.
- ▶ Increase the resilience of the Puget Sound ecosystem (including habitats, water resources, species, and humans) and recovery efforts by adapting to changing climate and ocean conditions when conducting protection and restoration activities
- ▶ Increase engagement in and trust of Puget Sound environmental and natural resource governance
- ▶ Ensure that the health of the human population of Puget Sound is improved by changes in ecosystem conditions and vulnerable populations and underserved communities do not experience inequitable health outcomes



## Recovery Partners are Setting Targets and Commitments for Implementing the Action Agenda

We achieve these targets and desired outcomes by implementing the strategies. We will be leading an ongoing process of setting targets for Puget Sound recovery-related programs and Action Agenda Progress Indicators to assess the success of implementing the Action Agenda.

Eight of the strategies are affiliated with one or more [program targets](#). Program targets are commitments for results that a Puget Sound recovery-related program will aim to achieve in the next four years. They are measurable, bold, yet achievable program accomplishments. The targets are a definition of success for accelerating progress toward one or more of the desired outcomes 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.

Implementation is guided by:

- **31 collaboratively developed, science-informed strategies**
- **137 actions with key opportunities that advance each strategy**
- **11 program targets that define how to accelerate progress toward one or more desired outcomes**

## Program Targets for 2022-2026 include:

STRATEGY	PROGRAM NAME	TARGET
<b>Strategy 2 – Working Lands</b>	Ecology Floodplains by Design	4,140 acres of working lands protected or improved
<b>Strategy 3 – Healthy Shorelines</b>	Puget Sound Partnership Nearshore Credits	930 tons of creosote removed
	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Shore Friendly	Conduct 914 technical site visits with interested shoreline landowners and follow up with over 330 technical site visits with site-specific recommendations
<b>Strategy 4 – Riparian Areas</b>	Washington State Conservation Commission Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	675 acres of riparian buffer installed in Puget Sound agricultural areas
<b>Strategy 5 – Floodplains and Estuaries</b>	Puget Sound Partnership Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Program	Fund 6,000 acres of salmon habitat protection or restoration projects
	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project	Secure funds to start the process-based restoration of 2,414 acres of Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Program identified nearshore habitat projects
	Ecology Floodplains by Design	Fund 4,554 acres of floodplain or estuary habitat restoration or reconnection
<b>Strategy 8 – Toxic Chemical Pollution</b>	Ecology Toxics Reduction Program	Reduce the amount of toxic chemicals used or generated hazardous waste an additional 8,000 pounds above their existing goal of 160,000 pounds and realize an additional cost savings for participating businesses of \$20,000 above their existing cost-savings goal of \$400,000
<b>Strategy 12 – Working Lands Runoff</b>	Washington State Conservation Commission Shellfish Program	Fund the installation of best management practices in agricultural areas in Puget Sound with a cumulative effectiveness index of over 680 acres, 99,512 linear feet, and 2,748 units
<b>Strategy 17 – Responsible Boating</b>	Department of Natural Resources Derelict Vessel Removal Program	Remove or prevent 180 or more derelict vessels from entering Washington’s waterways
<b>Strategy 20 – Climate Adaptation and Resilience</b>	Ecology Floodplains by Design	Support 1,340 homes or structures with reduced flood or climate risk

The 2022-2026 Action Agenda is our plan to achieve the vision for Puget Sound recovery, including all the Vital Signs, their indicators, and the desired outcomes. The Action Agenda is comprised of two sections: the Comprehensive Plan and the Implementation Plan. The Comprehensive Plan charts the longer-term vision for recovery and explains the recovery framework. The Implementation Plan provides the shared focus and implementation guidance for recovery over the next four years.

Recovery partners, including state agencies, federal agencies, tribal nations, local jurisdictions, Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs), Lead Entities and other salmon recovery group, nongovernmental organizations, and the business community, worked with the Partnership to develop the Action Agenda. These partners are committed to implementing the specific projects, programs, and actions that will advance recovery progress. This is our roadmap of progress toward a thriving, resilient Puget Sound for the next four years.