



The Coastal Program In Puget Sound

Caring for Our Coastal Habitats

Overview

The Coastal Program in Puget Sound is one of 22 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Programs established to conserve coastal habitat to support fish, wildlife and plants. We serve 12 counties in Puget Sound with a population of approximately 3.8M people. Additionally, we serve 5 counties along the Washington Coast with 157 miles of shoreline.

The health of Puget Sound is vital to the region's economy, tourism, quality of life and recreational, commercial and subsistence fisheries. Puget Sound is home to many Native American tribes who are dependent upon fisheries and other natural resources. Washington State leads the nation in the production of farmed bivalve shellfish, with approximately \$77M in sales per year. Community members place high cultural values on the area's natural resources.

Unique Habitats

Puget Sound is designated an Estuary of National Significance, and is the second largest estuary in the United States. The Sound includes:

- 2,500 miles of shoreline,
- 2,800 square miles of inland marine waters, and
- 10 major watersheds that provide freshwater flow input.

Puget Sound is the southern part of a large inland sea, which we share with Canada. We actively participate in

Coastal Program Accomplishments

FROM 2000-2006

Restored

- 8,545 acres of coastal wetlands
- 273 acres of coastal uplands
- 115 miles of coastal streamside habitat

Protected

- 10,377 acres of coastal habitat

IN FY 2007

- 19 Partnership agreements

Restored

- 8,244 acres of coastal wetlands
- 45 acres of coastal uplands
- 22 miles of streamside habitat
- 4 fish barriers removed

Protected

- 8,502 acres of coastal habitat

the Puget Sound-Georgia Basin Task Force, and promote cross-border coordination, research and information sharing.



Skagit River Delta USFWS Photo

Puget Sound habitats include productive nearshore areas of beaches, mudflats, bluffs, kelp and eelgrass beds, salt marshes, large and small river deltas, estuaries, and deepwater habitat. The geology, climate and nutrient-rich waters of Puget Sound provide habitat for 200+ species of fish, 26 marine mammals, 100 species of seabirds, and thousands of marine invertebrates and plants.

Threats

Population Growth and Urbanization
The human population of the basin is expected to increase by 1.4M people by 2020. Impacts of increasing growth and urbanization have resulted in:

- the loss of approximately 90% of coastal estuarine wetlands in the greater Puget Sound Basin;
- marine bird populations declines of 57-96% in the last 20 years; and
- bull trout, salmon and orca populations declines and listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Non-Native Invasive Species

Fish, wildlife and plants are threatened by non-native plants and animals. In 1998, the Washington Department of Natural Resources identified 52 non-native saltwater and estuarine species present in Puget Sound. *Spartina*, a non-native salt marsh cordgrass, poses a major threat to nearshore habitats and the shellfish

industry in Puget Sound, Willapa Bay and Gray's Harbor.

Environmental Contaminants

Puget Sound has a legacy of pollution that continues to affect its health today. As cities grow and prosper, human activities discharge toxic compounds to the water. These contaminants become bound to sediments in Puget Sound and are spread to other areas and contaminate the food web.

These threats have contributed to the loss and degradation of habitat and declines in fish, wildlife and plants.

Focus Areas in Washington



Priorities

In Washington, we collaborated with Federal, State, tribal, and local partners to identify current program focus areas including watersheds and nearshore habitats in:

- North Puget Sound and the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca,
- South Puget Sound and Hood Canal, and
- Willapa Bay.

In these focus areas, we and our partners: 1) develop and implement restoration and protection projects; 2) understand and address the threats to fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats; and, 3) support education to

improve stewardship of coastal resources.

Partnerships

Several Coastal Program partnership successes are highlighted below.

Derelict Fishing Gear Removal

Puget Sound supports strong commercial and recreational fisheries. Due to mechanical failure, bad weather or human error, derelict fishing gear has been accumulating. Abandoned or lost nets, fishing lines and crab or shrimp pots can wound or kill numerous marine fish, shellfish, birds and mammals. Through the Coastal America Program, with the Northwest Straits Foundation and others, we have removed derelict fishing gear from deepwater habitats in northern Puget Sound. The partnership supports ongoing surveys and removal, and has trained US Navy divers in appropriate removal techniques, a skill that is now being used in other areas of the United States.

Western Snowy Plover Recovery

We identify and implement projects that benefit species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Partnering with Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, 80 acres of coastal dune habitat for western snowy plover has been restored. This effort has led to interest from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and State Parks, and initiation of restoration actions on State managed lands.



Western snowy plover USFWS Photo

Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership

The Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership is led by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the USFWS Coastal Program. A feasibility study to identify significant ecosystem problems in the Puget Sound basin is ongoing, with the goal of preserving and restoring the health of the Sound's nearshore habitats. The project is one of the largest habitat conservation and restoration efforts undertaken in the United States, and is a cooperative effort among government, tribes, industries, and environmental organizations.

Puget Sound Partnership

In 2005, Governor Christine Gregoire initiated the Puget Sound Partnership. The partnership was tasked with achieving the recovery of Puget Sound by 2020. The Governor asked the team of business, tribal, environmental and government leaders to:

- develop recommendations for preserving the health and ecosystem of Puget Sound
- help educate the public and enlist them to help achieve the recovery of Puget Sound by 2020.

A comprehensive ecosystem recovery strategy has been developed and a new state agency has recently been formed. The goal is to develop an action plan that will integrate ongoing salmon recovery and watershed planning efforts leading to clean up of Puget Sound by 2020. The Coastal Program actively participates in the development and implementation of the action plan.

For More Information

For more information about the Coastal Program in Puget Sound, contact the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration, Program Manager, Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office at (360) 753-9440 or visit us on the internet at <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/>