

CONTINUITY OF TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC HABITAT NETWORKS

Outcome: Protect the Diversity of Plants and Wildlife

Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

"Adjacent jurisdictions shall identify and protect habitat networks that are aligned at jurisdictional boundaries. Networks shall link large protected or significant blocks of habitat within and between jurisdictions to achieve a continuous Countywide network. These networks shall be mapped and displayed in comprehensive plans." (CA-7) "All jurisdictions shall identify critical fish and wildlife habitats and species and develop regulations that a) promote their protection and proper management; and b) integrate native plant communities and wildlife with other land uses where possible." (CA-8) "Natural drainage systems including associated riparian and shoreline habitat shall be maintained and enhanced to protect water quality, reduce public costs, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and prevent environmental degradation." (CA-9)

About this Indicator:

In addition to designating and protecting critical areas, the Growth Management Act also requires local governments to identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas that are useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas. These open space corridors maintain wildlife connectivity, providing access to larger habitats. When ecosystems become fragmented and lack connectivity, fish and wildlife are prevented from meeting their need for food, water, cover and reproduction. This indicator focuses on land conservation priorities highlighted by the King County Greenprint Program. These priorities provide stakeholders with guidance regarding strategic land acquisition and conservation goals.

The Greenprint analysis has identified six regionally significant acquisition and conservation priorities in King County. The highest value lands are found throughout the forests of the Cascade foothills and along major riparian corridors. Other priority areas include farmland, the Puget Sound shoreline, regional trails connections and the protection of open space to maintain the Urban Growth Boundary.

Figure 17.1

Federal, State, County and City Owned Lands within King County (2005)		
	acres of protected land	percent of countywide acreage
federal public lands	354,200	26%
city public lands	142,900	10%
state public lands	97,500	7%
King County public lands	31,800	2%
total	626,400	46%
total county acreage	1,363,776	

As shown in figure 17.1, almost one-half of King County's 1.4 million acres is permanently protected by local, state and federal land management agencies. King County and local jurisdictions together own and manage almost 175,000 acres of parks, open space and resource lands. An additional 105,000 acres of privately held, working resource lands are under development rights of King County. These lands comprise a variety of natural systems across the county and contribute to the protection of significant ecosystem features, such as water quality and quantity and wildlife habitat.

What is Greenprint? The *Greenprint for King County Report* describes a regional conservation strategy that King County plans to apply to protect open space resources for such purposes as salmon recovery, farm and forest preservation, flood hazard reduction, parks and regional trails. The Greenprint strategy is informed by Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, which is used to evaluate the King County landscape to identify land conservation options that provide the greatest public benefits. The *Greenprint for King County Report* also reflects completion of a King County Conservation Finance Study and extensive public outreach. The Greenprint strategy and GIS model were conceived by the Trust for Public Land project team and King County staff. For more information about the Greenprint project, please see <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/greenprint/>.