



NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT

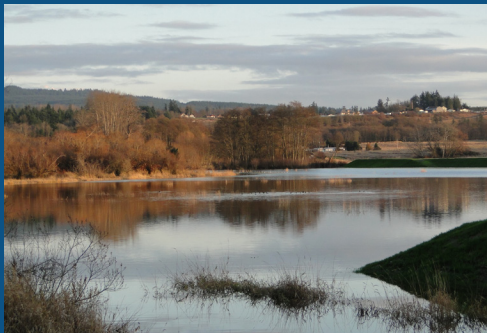
A regional initiative to restore Puget Sound habitat

In 1999, NOAA Fisheries listed Puget Sound Chinook salmon as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Working with Federal, state, tribal, and local partners, along with various industries, we developed a long-term plan for salmon recovery in Puget Sound. This Federal recovery plan was adopted in 2007, but despite strong efforts to protect Chinook habitat, it continues to decline. Outpaced by development, Washington State has lost over 70 percent of its estuarine wetlands and 50 percent of its riparian habitat, with losses continuing to mount. These losses not only pose threats to Chinook salmon, but also the integrity of the entire ecosystem. Reductions in salmon also impact the trust resources of Western Washington's Treaty Tribes and the recreational and commercial fishing opportunities benefiting coastal communities.

Prioritizing Habitat Attributes & Actions for Salmon and Shellfish

Our priorities for Puget Sound target regulatory and non-regulatory improvements to address three habitat factors limiting Chinook salmon survival: shoreline and nearshore habitats, floodplains, and water quality. These three priorities form the foundation for salmon and shellfish habitat recovery in Puget Sound and the Washington Coast. NOAA's Northwest agencies are working with partners to:

- Reduce habitat impacts from bank armoring, piers, ramps, and floats in marine waters;
- Implement the new salmon-related floodplain habitat requirements of FEMA's National Floodplain Insurance Program;
- Develop new regional guidance for utilizing conservation banks to promote larger scale and more effective mitigation and restoration efforts; and
- Coordinate Federal funding mechanisms to the greatest extent possible to ensure the right actions are happening in the right places as quickly as possible.



Leveraging Partnerships

NOAA Fisheries Northwest Regional Office, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Restoration Center, Office of Law Enforcement, and National Ocean Service are collaborating on an enhanced approach to implement the Puget Sound Chinook Recovery Plan to protect and restore salmon habitat throughout Puget Sound. We are leveraging our partnerships with other Federal agencies through the Puget Sound Federal Caucus; with Western Washington Treaty Tribes through a new Tribal Forum; and with state agencies through the Puget Sound Partnership. We share a common goal to recover our fish and restore Puget Sound by improving habitat conditions.

Compliance and Enforcement

NOAA and other Federal agencies are coordinating and increasing their efforts to improve compliance with existing programs to protect salmon habitat. They are doing so in close partnership with their state enforcement partners. NOAA Fisheries' Office of Law Enforcement, the U.S. Coast Guard, and other Federal agencies have joined with their state counterparts to form a subgroup of the Northwest Environmental Crimes Working Group. Enforcement strategies include internal training, outreach, directed enforcement, and community collaboration and education targeted toward priority habitat types. The federal and state agencies involved have pledged both short- and long-term commitments to this effort.

Strengthening the Scientific Foundation for Action

NOAA is developing monitoring, research and modeling approaches to support the principles of the Habitat Blueprint. The Northwest Fisheries Science Center, in collaboration with state agencies and NGOs, is refining research and monitoring designs to help managers target protection, restoration and acquisition investments toward the most strategic recovery actions in Puget Sound.



Developing a Framework for Future Action

NOAA's Northwest agencies have developed a framework for restoring Puget Sound and the habitat on which Chinook salmon and marine species depend. Through coordinated efforts with our Federal, state, tribal, local and NGO partners, we are using our collective regulatory and non-regulatory efforts to restore shoreline and nearshore habitats, floodplains, and enhance water quality for the entire Puget Sound community. Restoring the Sound's ecosystem is vital to its long-term ecological and economic viability.