

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

VITAL SIGN ECONOMIC VITALITY

Natural resource-based industries have a long-standing history in the region and their existence is important to residents of the area as they provide jobs, income, a sense of identity, and cultural heritage. The Economic Vitality Vital Sign tells us how well natural resource industries (aquaculture, agriculture, fishing, forestry, and recreation and tourism) are doing economically over time, as well as compared to non-natural resource industries. Many communities in Puget Sound depend on healthy, sustainable, natural resource-based industries for job stability and satisfaction, and connection to nature and place.



Fishing is an important natural resource industry in Puget Sound.

Related Strategies

- Awareness of Effects of Climate Change
- Climate Adaptation & Resilience
- Economic Benefits
- Education Partnerships
- Funding
- Invasive Species
- Research & Monitoring
- Responsible Boating
- Salmon Recovery
- Stewardship & Motivating Action
- Stormwater Runoff & Legacy Contamination
- Strategic Leadership & Collaboration
- Wastewater Systems
- Water Pollution Source Identification & Correction
- Working Lands

VITAL SIGN > INDICATOR	PROGRESS	STATUS
Economic Vitality		
Employment in natural resource industries	MIXED RESULTS	NO TARGET
Natural resource industry output	MIXED RESULTS	NO TARGET
Percent of employment in natural resource industries	NO TREND	NO TARGET

Vital Sign Reporter

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Key Vital Sign Messages

Based on data through 2019 for indicators of natural resource industry employment, percent employment, and output (2019 is the latest year of availability of some critical data needed to update these indicators):

- The region is making progress with overall growth in natural resource industries. This is largely driven by growth in the recreation and tourism sector which represents almost 78 percent of natural resource employment and about 82 percent of natural resource wages.
- Employment in natural resource industries increased by more than 35 percent from an estimated 75,596 jobs in 2005 to 102,371 jobs in 2019. At the same time, wages improved from approximately \$1.7 billion in 2005 to over \$2.7 billion in 2019 (\$2019) – an increase of nearly 61 percent.
- Wages in fishing and timber have declined in real terms, while aquaculture, agriculture, and recreation each have increased by approximately 4 to 5 percent per year since 2005.
- Roughly 3 percent of Puget Sound jobs are in natural resource industries. However, people working in these jobs receive just 1.4 percent of total wages in Puget Sound. This implies that natural resource industry jobs are lower paying relative to other sectors.
- The percentage of natural resource industry employment and wages compared to all employment and wages varies across counties from approximately 1 to 14 percent. Natural resource industries tend to account for a higher percentage of wage and employment in rural counties with more recreational opportunities, such as San Juan, Clallam, Jefferson, and Whatcom Counties.

- Combined product value, or prices paid to producers for unprocessed timber, fish, shellfish, crops, and livestock from 2005 through 2019 averaged about \$1.7 billion (\$2019) annually. Since 2005, the combined value of natural resource industry products has increased and decreased over the years.
- Commercial fishing value (finfish and shellfish) declined significantly from \$114 million in 2017 to about \$69 million in 2019 (\$2019). This was driven by a decrease in finfish numbers resulting in part from low coho returns and resulting fishery closures.

While economics is a component of all the Vital Signs to varying degrees (through funding, costs, benefits, and incentives), the indicators for the Economic Vitality Vital Sign are linked to other Vital Signs in more specific ways. For example,

- Employment in resource-based industries contributes to a [Sense of Place](#) where residents' strong connections to nature partly stem from cultural and outdoor activities, including fishing, shellfish gathering, and boating.
- Sustainable natural resource industries can contribute to, and also depend on, the health of [Thriving Species and Food Webs](#), or alternately, can have a negative impact related to over-harvesting or poor practices.
- Poor conditions related to [Toxics in Aquatic Life and Water Quality](#) can negatively impact fishing and aquaculture resources, and forestry harvesting practices can impact water quality.
- [Land development pressures](#) can impact the forestry, fishing, shellfish, and agricultural industries.

Background Documents

- [Leadership Council Resolution 2015-02, Human Health and Quality of Life Vital Signs and Indicators](#)
- [Human Wellbeing Vital Signs and Indicators for Puget Sound Recovery \(2015\)](#), technical report describing the recommended portfolio of Puget Sound Human Health and Quality of Life Vital Signs and indicators

Other Resources

- Articles related to [ecosystem services](#) and [quality of life](#) in the [Encyclopedia of Puget Sound](#)
- [Economic Impact of Killer Whales in the Salish Sea](#), by Earth Economics, supported by the Seadoc Society

Contributing Partners

