

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

VITAL SIGN FORESTS AND WETLANDS

During the past 150 years, Puget Sound lost at least two-thirds of its remaining old growth forest, more than 90% of its native prairies, and 80% of its marshes. With an estimated 1.5 million additional residents expected in the Puget Sound area by 2050, the need for housing and commercial development and the network of infrastructure (roads and utilities) to serve such development must be balanced with protection of the important functions provided by forested and riparian areas as well as agricultural lands.

This Vital Sign tells us about the extent and condition of terrestrial habitats important to freshwater quality and the overall health of Puget Sound.

VITAL SIGN > INDICATOR	PROGRESS	STATUS
Forests and Wetlands		
Extent of forest cover in the upper, middle, and lower areas of watersheds	INSUFFICIENT OR NO DATA	NO TARGET
Forest condition	INSUFFICIENT OR NO DATA	NO TARGET
Wetlands extent and condition	INSUFFICIENT OR NO DATA	NO TARGET

Related Strategies

- Awareness of Effects of Climate Change
- Climate Adaptation & Resilience
- Education Partnerships
- Floodplains & Estuaries
- Freshwater Availability
- Funding
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Carbon Sequestration
- Research & Monitoring
- Riparian Areas
- Smart Growth
- Stewardship & Motivating Action
- Stormwater Runoff & Legacy Contamination
- Strategic Leadership & Collaboration
- Working Lands
- Working Lands Runoff

Vital Sign Reporter

Mary Ramirez and Nathalie Hamel, Vital Signs Reporting Team
mary.ramirez@psp.wa.gov

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Key Vital Sign Messages

- A collaboration of federal, state, and local governments, tribes, local recovery groups, nonprofits, and the private sector worked together to develop an [Implementation Strategy](#) of the best approaches to achieve recovery targets for Puget Sound land development and cover.
- In Puget Sound, forest cover is declining, but the rate of that loss has slowed. Over the 2011-2016 time period, the rate of forest cover loss to development decreased below the 2020 recovery target to not exceed 1,000 acres per year.
- Central urban centers such as Seattle, Bellevue and Tacoma are experiencing rapid growth. According to the Department of Commerce, as of 2017, less than 10% of growth in the Puget Sound region occurred in rural areas over the past few years. However, as growth continues to increase, there are indications of growing development pressure in rural areas close to urban growth boundaries.

Background Documents

Implementation Strategy

The Partnership and its affiliated network of researchers works with the three Strategic Initiative Lead Teams on Implementation Strategy development and operationalization. Please read more about these teams and our shared work at <https://pugetsoundestuary.wa.gov/recovering-puget-sound/>

- [Habitat Strategic Initiative](#)
 - [Land Development and Cover Implementation Strategy](#)

Indicator Targets

- 2020 Ecosystem Recovery Targets
 - [Leadership Council Resolution 2011-21, Adopting a 2020 ecosystem recovery target for land cover](#)
 - [Leadership Council Resolution 2011-22, Adopting a 2020 ecosystem recovery target for land development: avoiding development of ecologically important areas](#)
 - [Leadership Council Resolution 2011-23, Adopting a 2020 ecosystem recovery target for land development: directing growth to urban growth areas](#)
 - [Leadership Council Resolution 2011-24, Adopting a 2020 ecosystem recovery target for land development encouraging compact growth patterns](#)
 - [Setting Targets for Ecosystem Condition and Pressure Reductions \(Sep 2011 revised version\) Technical Memorandum](#)

Other Resources

- [High Resolution Change Detection](#), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- [State of our Watersheds](#) report by the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
- [Puget Sound Mapping Project](#), Washington Department of Commerce

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