

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

VITAL Sign LOCAL FOODS

The Puget Sound region provides an abundance of locally harvestable foods, including finfish and shellfish, other animals and birds, and plant-based greens, roots, nuts, and fruits. The Local Foods Vital Sign tells us about people’s access to Puget Sound food resources for traditional, subsistence, and recreational uses. Harvesting high-quality wild foods provides an opportunity for people to make meaningful connections with the region’s natural resources. The act of collecting, preparing, and sharing such foods maintains cultural knowledge and practices and often builds social relationships.



Digging for shellfish in Puget Sound.

Related Strategies

- Awareness of Effects of Climate Change
- Climate Adaptation & Resilience
- Cultural Practices & Local Foods
- Education Partnerships
- Funding
- Human Health
- 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 Runoff

VITAL SIGN > INDICATOR	PROGRESS	STATUS
Local Foods		
Locally harvestable foods	NO TREND	NO TARGET
Bivalve harvest for personal use	NO TREND	NO TARGET
Dungeness crab catch for personal use	GETTING WORSE	NO TARGET

Vital Sign Reporter

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KEY VITAL SIGN MESSAGES

- Puget Sound wild foods and local farms provide high quality food as well as an opportunity for people to make meaningful connections with the region’s natural resources. Harvesting activities help form and strengthen residents’ *sense of place and stewardship of the environment*.
- A survey of Puget Sound residents tells us that over half of the population does *harvest local foods* at least once per season. Plants, berries and mushrooms are more likely to be harvested than fish, shellfish or game species.
- Each year, over 200,000 people demonstrate their interest in *recreational crabbing* by purchasing a Puget Sound Dungeness crab fish license. Unfortunately, recent years have seen an increasing number of harvest closures in South and Central Puget Sound in response to declining Dungeness crab populations.
- There is a long-standing tradition of harvesting clams and oysters along the beaches of Puget Sound. Most people harvest shellfish at beaches in the Hood Canal or North Sound regions. Pollution limits people’s access to shellfish harvest at many beaches in Central and South Sound.
- DOH recently announced that certain shellfish beaches near *Hoodsport* in southern Hood Canal and along *Vashon-Maury Island* are now safe for harvest. This good news reflects successful efforts to improve water quality.

- **Salmon** are an important cultural and economic resource for tribes and are highly prized by anglers and commercial fishermen. Regional and local partners are committed to restoring salmon habitat and **recovering salmon populations** in Puget Sound. Healthy salmon runs mean more salmon for harvest.
- **Toxics in fish** limit the amount of seafood we can safely eat and raise concerns regarding inequitable health impacts on communities who rely on local Puget Sound seafood.
- **Implementation Strategies** are plans for achieving specific Vital Sign indicator recovery targets. All of the plans strive for healthy ecosystem conditions essential for species and food webs as well as human health and quality of life, including the ability to access and harvest local food resources.

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

- [Connection, collection, culture, and cuisine: Understanding bivalve harvest in Washington - Making Waves](#)
- Articles related to a [healthy human population](#) in the [Encyclopedia of Puget Sound](#)
- [Enhancing the Human Wellbeing Vital Signs through Inclusive Engagement Report](#), Trimbach et al. 2023.

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VITAL SIGNS VISIT: vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov OR CONTACT: vitalsigns@psp.wa.gov