

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

VITAL Sign OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

The Puget Sound region is highly valued for its nature-based outdoor opportunities. The Outdoor Activity Vital Sign tells us about people’s access to and participation in nature-based recreation and work. Whether for recreational or occupational purposes, participation in nature-based outdoor activities is beneficial in multiple ways. Physical movement, breathing fresher air, absorbing vitamin D, and clearing one’s thoughts all contribute to improved human wellbeing. Nature-based outdoor activities often include spending time with others as well and research has shown that positive social interactions are one of the greatest contributors to human wellbeing.



Photo credit: Ingrid Taylor.

Related Strategies

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

VITAL SIGN > INDICATOR	PROGRESS	STATUS
Outdoor Activity		
Nature-based recreation	NO TREND	NO TARGET
Nature-based work	NO TREND	NO TARGET
Condition of swimming beaches	NO TREND	BELOW TARGET

Vital Sign Reporter

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KEY VITAL SIGN MESSAGES

- Outdoor activities have mental and physical health benefits for people, often with minimal requirements for special equipment and skills. Outdoor activities also have several [economic benefits](#).
- COVID-19 and its impacts have made residents’ connections to Puget Sound even clearer. Residents’ use and reliance on Puget Sound’s parks and green spaces as safe places for recreation and relaxation during COVID-19 highlights now more than ever the value of this place among residents.
- Not all communities have equal [access](#) to quality parks and trails. Furthermore, a history of discriminatory and largely anti-Black practices excluded people of color from the benefits of public spaces and some continue to feel [unsafe and unwelcome in the outdoors](#).
- King County and other regional leaders [mapped](#) disparities in access to open space and developed a [framework](#) for creating a more equitable distribution of open space throughout King County.
- A survey of Puget Sound residents suggests wildlife viewing/birding, gardening, and walking or hiking on paved or unpaved trails are the [most frequently practiced outdoor activities](#). The same survey show resident’s strong [sense of place and psychological wellbeing](#) derived from the outdoors.

- Residents also enjoy the many marine beaches around Puget Sound, which generally have good [water quality conditions](#). This is due in part to work the [BEACH program](#) has done to identify and correct many local bacteria problems that would otherwise result in beach closures.
- Though only a small fraction of Puget Sound residents answered that their work involves spending time outdoors, [nature-based work](#) is more important in some places, such as San Juan County.
- Climate change will not only impact the region's plants and animals, but also the ability to enjoy seasonal outdoor activities like [skiing](#), [fishing](#), and [spending time outside during the wildfire season](#).

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 indicator

Indicator Targets

- [Condition of Swimming Beaches Recovery Target Fact Sheet](#)
- [Leadership Council Resolution 2011-06: Adopting a 2020 ecosystem recovery target for swimming beaches](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

- 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