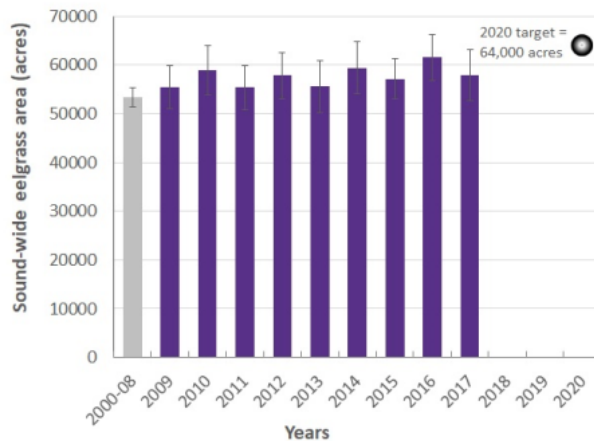


PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

INDICATOR SOUND-WIDE EELGRASS AREA

Soundwide eelgrass area is a metric for the overall health of native seagrass beds in greater Puget Sound. Seagrass is an important component of nearshore habitats, and is sensitive to human disturbance. Seagrass responds to changes in water quality, and can be used as indicator of eutrophication.



Long-term trend in soundwide seagrass area in greater Puget Sound.

Key Indicator Results

- Soundwide eelgrass area was relatively stable between 2000 and 2017. The relative stability is reassuring and sets Puget Sound apart from many other developed areas, where substantial system-wide declines are ongoing.
- While the majority of sites appear stable or increasing, the spatial pattern in site level trends suggests that eelgrass is more susceptible to declines in certain areas of greater Puget Sound. Declines are mostly centered in south Central Puget Sound and near the San Juan Islands. Eelgrass seems particularly vulnerable at the end of inlets or in protected embayments.
- Likely drivers for local declines include water quality impairments, eelgrass wasting disease, high abundance of green macro-algae, and changes in river flow patterns across deltaic flats.
- At this point in time, it seems unlikely that the indicator target of 20 percent increase in eelgrass area by 2020 will be met. Stressors that affect eelgrass in Puget Sound will likely need to be reduced to see significant soundwide gains in eelgrass area, depth distribution and overall health.

Contributing Partners



Progress



Status



Recovery Target

20 percent increase in the area of native seagrasses (eelgrass and surfgrass) in greater Puget Sound relative to the 2000-2008 baseline by the year 2020.

Data Source

Washington State Department of Natural Resources [Submerged Vegetation Monitoring Program](#), [Eelgrass GIS data](#)

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