

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

INDICATOR MARINE BENTHIC INDEX

Scientists are developing a new Marine Benthic Index to better assess and communicate status and trends of benthic invertebrate community health. While this work is being conducted and evaluated, Ecology will continue to report on the Sediment Benthic Index (SBI) to track changes in the benthos. The SBI tells us whether marine areas are either *adversely affected* or *unaffected* by natural or human stressors based on the composition of the benthic community.

Indicator
Progress

Target
Status



Target

No targets are currently set for this indicator.

Data Source

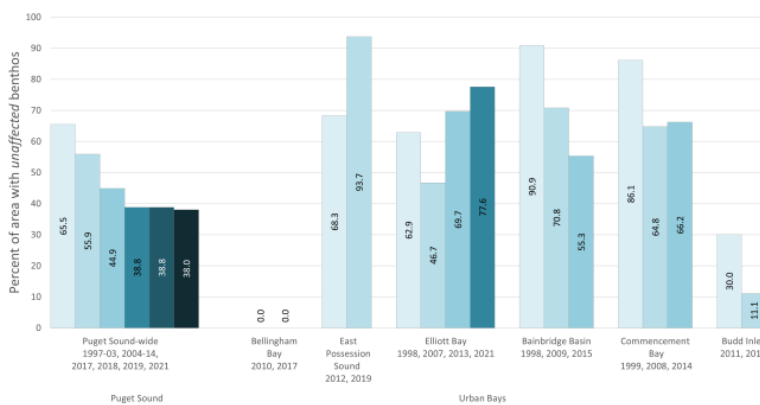
Department of Ecology's
Environmental Information
Management (EIM) System:
Marine Sediments

Indicator Lead

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<p>Percent of study area with unaffected benthic invertebrate communities, as determined by our Sediment Benthic Index for each sampling event including Puget Sound-wide and urban bays monitoring.</p>

Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- The Sediment Benthic Index (SBI) indicates that the area of Puget Sound with *unaffected* benthic communities is gradually declining over the nearly three decades sampled.
- The SBI indicates that benthic condition is improving in the East Possession Sound and Elliott Bay study areas, and declining or holding steady in Bainbridge Basin, Commencement Bay, and Budd Inlet.
- The entire Bellingham Bay study area was categorized as having adversely affected benthic communities.

Contributing Partners

