



Local Habitat Assessment

The Local Habitat Assessment is a methodology to map current habitat condition at a countywide and watershed scale. Using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) platform, the Assessment combines regional biodiversity priorities with local indicators of habitat condition, such as land conversion, road density, and fish and wildlife priority areas. The Assessment is a broad-brush approach intended to inform county land use planning. It may help with: identifying urban growth boundaries, informing incentive programs, establishing green space networks, guiding acquisition or easement programs, and identifying opportunities for habitat connectivity.

Why is WDFW conducting this Assessment?

WDFW wants to improve technical assistance to local governments. Through interviews and surveys to local governments, citizens, and land use planners, WDFW determined that a more integrated technical assistance approach was needed, especially in the areas of broad scale and proactive land use planning.

What data are used?

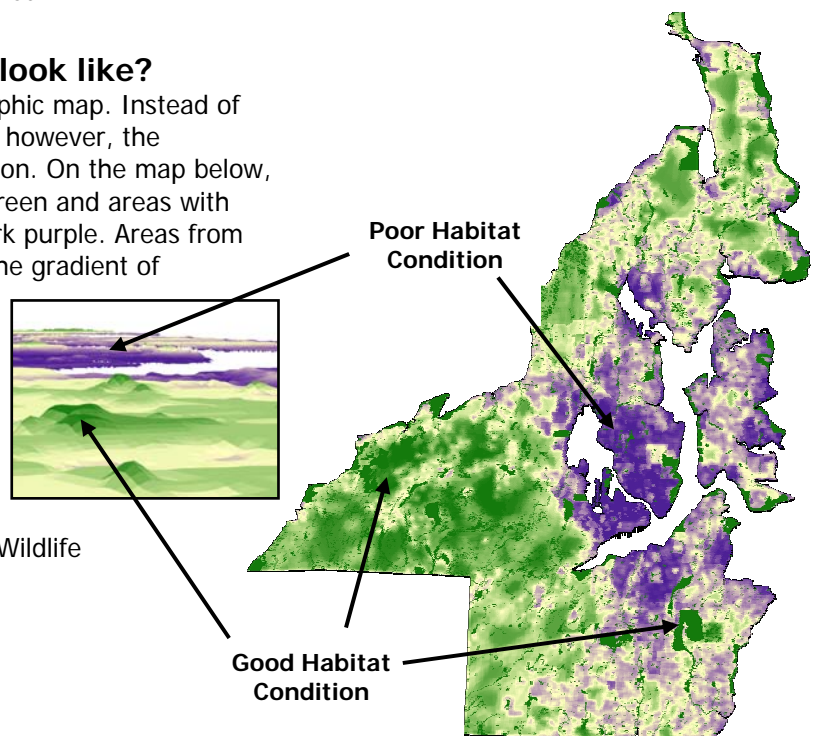
The Assessment uses pre-existing information and data from a variety of sources including: Ecoregional Assessments, WDFW Priority Habitats and Species Program, WADNR Natural Heritage Program, statewide stream layers, land cover, state and county road layers, and local expert knowledge.

What are the methods?

The Assessment is a GIS-based procedure that combines existing data and information into 4 general maps that represent: (1) regional biodiversity priorities, (2) local priority habitat areas, (3) land conversion, and (4) road density. Areas (i.e., pixels) within each of the 4 maps are weighted from 0 to 10 depending on their relative habitat condition or contribution to biodiversity, where 10 represents the best habitat condition or highest contribution. The 4 maps are then stacked in a GIS platform and added together. Areas that are weighted most heavily for all layers represent the best habitat condition within the county or watershed.

What does the Assessment look like?

The Assessment resembles a topographic map. Instead of elevation and physiographic features, however, the assessment represents habitat condition. On the map below, areas in good condition are colored green and areas with poor habitat condition are colored dark purple. Areas from light green to light purple represent the gradient of habitat condition in between.



Contacts

Erik Neatherlin
Project Manager
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501-1091
360/902-2559
360/902-2946 Fax
neathean@dfw.wa.gov