

Frequently Asked Questions

E. Kitsap Nearshore

Salmon Habitat Assessment

Q1: Why is Kitsap County conducting this Nearshore Assessment?

We are doing this Assessment so we can make wiser choices about where and how to invest public restoration funds. We are intent upon providing effective and efficient County services that produce significant positive results and lasting benefits for our citizens and our environment.

Q2: What is this Nearshore Assessment?

The Nearshore Assessment is a scientific assessment of current conditions and the health of our shorelines. The Assessment supplements existing data with data gathered through walking the shoreline. The final result will be a measure of the ecological health of each stretch of shoreline. The score will be based upon the most important biological factors (plants and animals) and physical characteristics that contribute to shoreline health.

The Assessment is specifically designed to be compatible with larger Puget Sound-wide efforts to identify and prioritize shoreline conservation and restoration opportunities.

Q3: What problem does this Assessment solve? Why do we need the data?

We are committed to improving the health of Puget Sound, but we currently lack the knowledge to prioritize among potential shoreline protection and restoration projects. We are also committed to providing effective and efficient government services, but we don't know which restoration projects will give us the biggest environmental "bang" for the taxpayers' "buck." This Assessment will help fill those gaps.

The results of this Assessment will assist in demonstrating to state and federal funding programs the relative priority of proposed projects to restore and sustain Kitsap County's marine shorelines.

Q4: Who is funding the Assessment and why? What partners are involved?

The Assessment is funded directly through a grant from Washington State's Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Grant funding supports involvement of scientists from the Battelle Marine Laboratory - Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Kitsap County, the Suquamish Tribe, and the Washington Sea Grant Program at the University of Washington are providing staff and equipment support for the project.

Q5: Why is this Assessment being undertaken now?

During the past decade results of scientific studies identify the importance of the shoreline for Puget Sound and salmon. During this time several counties completed similar assessments. Because Kitsap County has waited until now, we have been able to build upon their work and apply their “lessons learned.”

Q6: What's the Assessment's scientific basis? What scientists are involved?

In keeping with best available science, the Assessment is being conducted with scientists at the Battelle Marine Laboratory - Pacific Northwest National Laboratory that developed the methods and analysis protocols. The Assessment is built upon the idea that by quantifying key shoreline characteristics we can identify places to protect and/or restore which will result in significant habitat improvements for Puget Sound plants and animals.

In addition to scientists from Battelle Marine Laboratory, habitat biologists from Kitsap County, the Suquamish Tribe and the Washington Sea Grant Program are participating in data collection, analysis and public outreach.

Q7: What are the key factors that influence the health of the shoreline?

Local shorelines are among the most ecologically diverse and abundant habitats in the world. The health of each shoreline reach is largely determined by a combination of physical, biological, and chemical factors. Key physical characteristics include such things as type of landform (low bank, high bank, no bank, etc.), sediment source/amount/ size (sand, gravel, boulders), and presence of things like bulkheads, riprap or docks. Key biological characteristics include things such as presence of eelgrass, overhanging vegetation, invasive species, etc. Common key chemical factors include presence of outfalls or other pollutants.

Q8: What data will you gather?

Much of the data used in this Assessment has already been gathered by state agencies. During our walks along the shoreline we will gather additional data about the location and type of armoring (bulkheads, riprap), overhanging structures (decks, homes), pilings, piers/docks, boat launches, outfalls, shoreline bank type, substrate composition, vegetation type/amount, shoreline use, and land slides. Reference photos are taken at the midpoint of each reach of shoreline.

Q9: Who will gather the data and how will they do it?

The data is gathered by teams of researchers consisting of staff from Kitsap County Department of Community Development the Suquamish Tribe Fisheries Department and citizen volunteer.

To gather the data, teams walk along a stretch of shoreline with a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, digital camera and notebook. As they walk they record the beginning and ending points of various features (bulkheads, bluffs, outfalls, etc.) with the GPS unit. They take pictures of the reach and of noteworthy items (slides, big pieces of debris, etc.). To see the complete list of items we gather, see the “data dictionary” on our website.

Q10: What do you do with the data and photos?

After a day of walking the shoreline we download the data from the GPS unit and photographs from the camera. This data is digitally recorded in the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) for analysis and mapping.

Q11: When will the data be gathered?

The field work for the Nearshore Assessment starts in May in South Kitsap and proceeds northward to Foulweather Bluff through September 2007. Generally, the field work occurs within three hours of low tide, between the hours of 8am to 7 pm, Monday through Friday, with possible weekend work depending on how quickly we make progress.

Q12: When will the project's final results be available?

Once the entire shoreline of East Kitsap has been walked, the data will be provided to scientists at the Battelle Marine Science Laboratory who will analyze and assign a "health" score each stretch of shoreline (reach). This is expected to be accomplished in the Fall of 2007. Results will be posted to the Nearshore Assessment's webpage. The project is scheduled to conclude by September 2008.

Q13: How will the County use the Assessment to improve the health of shorelines?

The County will use the data and results of this Assessment primarily to identify high priority, cost-effective restoration and preservation efforts. Results of the assessment also provide a baseline to measure changes to local shoreline conditions in the future. In addition, information gained from the assessment assists in developing policies and management practices that support a healthy shoreline environment.

Q14: What shorelines are being assessed? Are the Cities' shorelines included?

This Nearshore Assessment includes the 155 miles of shorelines along the eastern part of Kitsap County from the Kitsap/Pierce County line to Foulweather Bluff. It includes the cities—except Bainbridge Island, which completed its own Nearshore Assessment last year.

Q15: How are you notifying shoreline owners that you are doing this?

We send a letter and brochure to each shoreline property owner a few weeks in advance of walking the shoreline in their neighborhood. We include basic information about the Assessment including its webpage and provide contact information.

Additionally, local newspapers and television stations have run stories on the effort.

Q16: What if I don't want research teams accessing my privately owned tidelands?

Kitsap County is committed to enhancing public trust; we respect our citizens' property rights. The Assessment has taken several steps to avoid or minimize our entry onto private property. First, we conduct the field work at low tide so that we can remain entirely or mostly on public tidelands. Second, we notify property owners that we will be coming by; if they request we not enter their private land, we, of course, respect that wish (to date, 1 in 600 property owners have made such a request).

If a property owner requests we not physically cross their tidelands we conduct the survey by boat at high tide.

Q17: Will you report buildings or bulkheads that haven't been permitted, or areas cleared within the shoreline buffer?

No. This is a scientific undertaking, not a code enforcement inspection.

Our researchers are walking around to document what's out there. They are not there to identify and/or report un-permitted bulkheads, buildings, or cleared areas. They have no regulatory authority, nor are they trained for Kitsap County Code enforcement.

Note: Research teams will contact authorities under the following circumstances:

1. Under State and Federal laws, the observation of oil or hazardous material spills/discharges must be reported to authorities.
2. If on-going egregious damage to the shoreline is occurring (like a bulldozer actively working in the intertidal area) we will notify the proper authorities.

Q18: Will the researchers be taking pictures of my home and bulkhead?

The researchers will take four pictures at the mid-point in each shoreline stretch: left, right, frontward and backward. The purpose of these photos is to create a photo reference of what the reach of shoreline looked like on the day it was assessed. The closer your home or bulkhead is to the center of the reach, the closer up your home/bulkhead will appear in the photos.

Additional photos are taken of special features, such as slides, but these photos typically will not include homes and bulkheads.

Q19: Will the Assessment be updated?

The methods of collecting data and the analysis of that data are designed specifically to be reproducible in the future. However, there are no immediate plans or schedule for updates.

Q20: How much does this Assessment cost? How is the money being spent?

The total cost of the Assessment is \$276,050; \$181,050 of this comes from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (State General Fund), the remaining \$95,000 comes from Kitsap County, the Suquamish Tribe, and the Washington Sea Grant Program primarily through the use of existing staff and equipment.

Q21: How important is the shoreline to Puget Sound and its inhabitants such as salmon and orca?

Extremely important.

Almost all recreationally and commercially important species of fish and shellfish in Puget Sound depend on the nearshore environment for various stages of their life cycle. For example, all salmon species, particularly Chinook and chum, spend months as juveniles feeding in the highly productive nearshore waters in preparation for their summer migration. In fact, young salmon from throughout the Sound end up in Kitsap's

nearshore area. In addition to salmon, these areas are used by fish, such as herring and smelt, which are a key food source of bigger fish. Kitsap's marine shoreline plays a crucial role in the recovery of listed Chinook salmon, steelhead, and orcas.

Q22: What can shoreline property owners do to improve the health of the shoreline?

Fortunately, the majority of shoreline owners are very concerned about sustaining the health of Puget Sound and the shoreline. Hope for a better future motivates many to seek ways to improve their portion of the shoreline. Here are a few tips:

- Plant trees. Especially conifers close to the shoreline.
- Don't use fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.
- Clean up pet waste and properly maintain your septic system.

Q23: What is a drift cell? What is a reach?

A drift cell is a portion of a shoreline which moves sediment (such as sand) from one place (such as a feeder bluff) to another (such as a bay).

A reach is a subsection of a drift cell which has similar features (such as a low bank).

Q24: How do I get more information about the Nearshore Assessment?

Go to our website:

www.kitsapgov.com/dcd/nr/nearshore/default.htm or contact:

Val Koehler

Stream Team/ Public Education and
Outreach Coordinator
DCD, Kitsap County
(360) 337-4601
vkoebler@co.kitsap.wa.us

Jeff Adams

Marine Water Quality Specialist
Washington Sea Grant - Kitsap
(360) 337-4619
jaws@u.washington.edu
www.wsg.washington.edu

Paul Dorn

Salmon Recovery
Coordinator
Suquamish Tribe
(360) 394-8441
pdorn@suquamish.nsn.us

Q25: How can I share my support for or concerns about this Assessment?

Call the manager of the Natural Resources Division, Patty Charnas at (360) 337-4558; Department of Community Development (DCD) Assistant Director Jim Bolger at 337-7165, DCD Director Larry Keeton at 337-7181 and/or the Board of Commissioners at 337-7146. Letters can be sent to those people at 614 Division Street, MS-36 (DCD) or MS-4 (Commissioners), Port Orchard, WA 98366.

Q26: What other efforts are underway to improve the health of Puget Sound and local shorelines?

Reflecting the public's desire to sustain and restore Puget Sound, the Legislature created the Puget Sound Partnership; this new agency is holding public discussions entitled *State of the Sound*.

Local governments are becoming more efficient, effective and coordinated by creating the West Sound Watersheds Council to coordinate salmon recovery, nearshore, and water issues.