



VISION 2050 PLANNING RESOURCES

Conservation Toolkit

Protecting Farms, Forests,
Open Space, and Rural Lands



JUNE 2022



Puget Sound Regional Council



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Puget Sound Regional Council, Information Center

1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500

Seattle, Washington 98104-1035

206.464.7532 | info@psrc.org | www.psrc.org



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Introduction

A healthy natural environment is the foundation for the region's high quality of life and thriving economy. Conservation of natural resource lands, rural lands, and open space is key to protecting and improving the health of the natural environment, maintaining healthy farms, increasing resilience to climate impacts, and protecting what so many love about the Northwest. An important conservation strategy is VISION 2050's Regional Growth Strategy which calls for the vast majority of growth to be directed into urban areas. VISION 2050 emphasizes the importance of directing growth away from rural and resource lands. In addition to allocating a low level of future population growth (2% regionwide) to rural areas, VISION 2050 includes RGS-Action-4 to support this goal. The action calls for exploring conservation programs to reduce development pressure in rural and resource areas through establishing a regional structure for transfer and purchase of development rights, developing a toolkit of open space conservation strategies, and facilitating city and urban development.

This toolkit provides a description of open space, rural, and resource land conservation tools to support local jurisdictions and their partners. Many of the tools, particularly the planning, policy, and regulatory tools, will be helpful during comprehensive plan updates.

Use of conservation tools will vary by local circumstances, and all parts of the region have a role to play in appropriately directing growth. Cities have an important role in accommodating new growth and taking development pressure off rural and resource areas. Resources to support urban development, including accommodating growth targets, supporting growth near transit and in centers, and support for housing and economic development, are available on PSRC's [VISION 2050 webpage](#). This toolkit will outline additional tools and strategies cities can use.

Some resources in this toolkit may be more appropriate for designated rural areas rather than natural resource lands. Natural resource lands should provide long-term preservation to support resource industries, open space, and ecological functions. Rural areas are expected to retain important cultural, economic, and rural lifestyle opportunities in the region over the long term and are not intended to be served with urban services or accommodate a significant amount of residential or employment growth. VISION 2050 supports limiting and reducing rural growth over time, but also recognizes that there is existing development capacity in the rural area and thousands of residents and jobs already call rural areas home.

Some promising tools in this toolkit include:

- Watershed planning
- Future land use designations
- Rural development codes
- Conservation futures programs
- Park levies
- Ecosystem service markets
- Urban forestry programs
- Shore Friendly programs
- Open Space Assessment Tool
- Transfer of Development Rights

Reducing growth rates on rural lands and keeping working lands working is challenging. However, the tools in this toolkit have been used to accomplish these goals by jurisdictions in the region. Many of the tools could be enhanced and used more widely. Combining multiple strategies and tools can help to expand opportunities for conservation and protection and overcome project barriers. This approach can help when the funding from an individual tool is not sufficient and when multiple agencies and departments are interested in the protection of an area to achieve multiple benefits.

Another challenge that organizations and people across the region are grappling with is the need to address racial inequity. Communities underserved by parks, tree cover, trails, social services, and other natural, built, and social infrastructure exist across the region. Some of the tools in this toolkit can be used to address equity when the community is fully engaged in the process. However, community capacity building is needed to be able to authentically engage communities that have been historically underserved. Tools and funding programs will need to evolve to effectively advance racial equity and make it an integral part of conservation work.

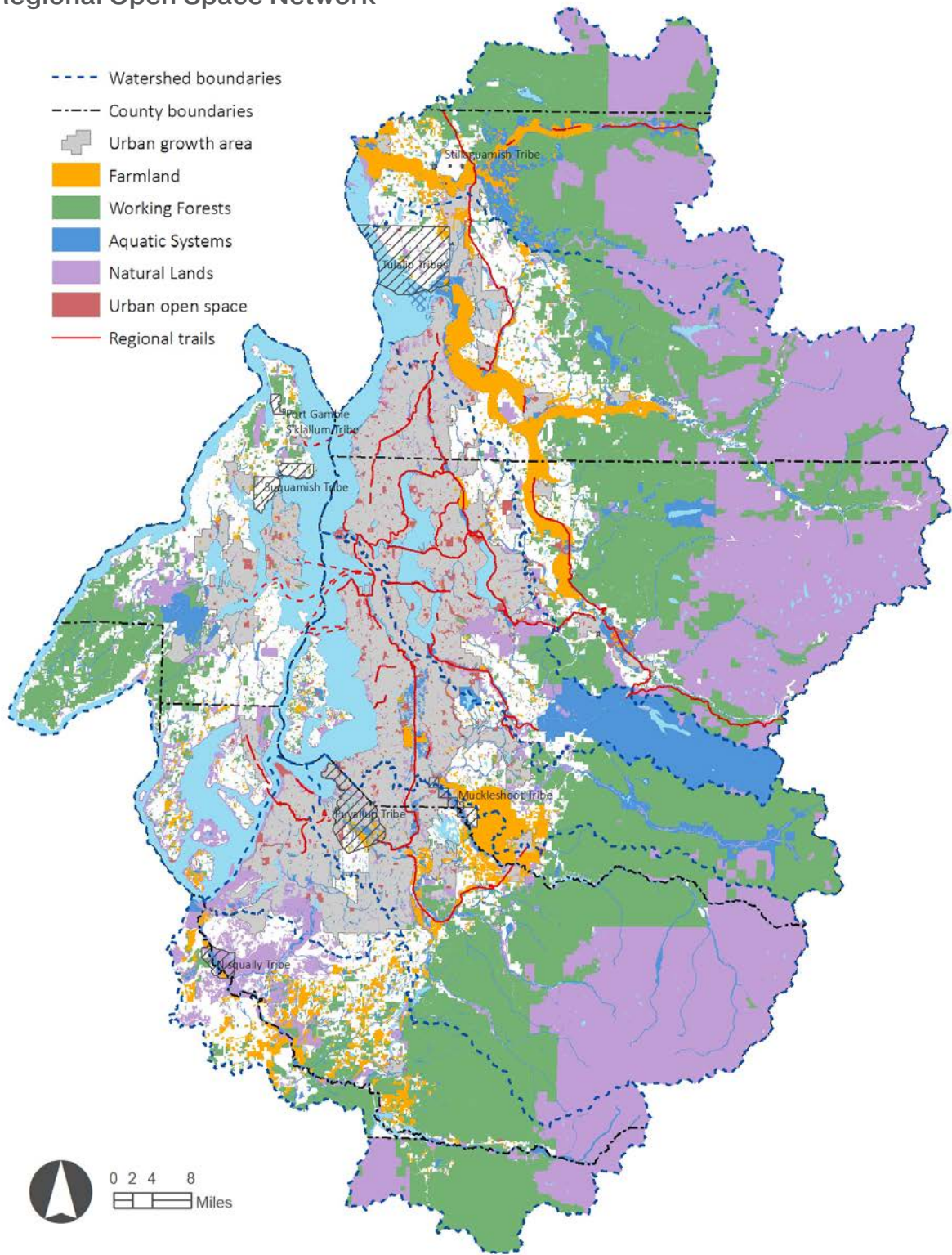
The toolkit is divided into sections that describe four types of conservation tools:

- Policy, planning, and regulatory tools
- Acquisition and easement tools
- Stewardship tools
- Data and mapping tools



In 2018, PSRC completed the [Regional Open Space Conservation Plan](#), which helped to inform VISION 2050’s updated open space policies and the Regional Growth Strategy. The plan maps the network of regionally important open space in King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties and identifies priority actions needed to increase access and sustain open spaces for the long term.

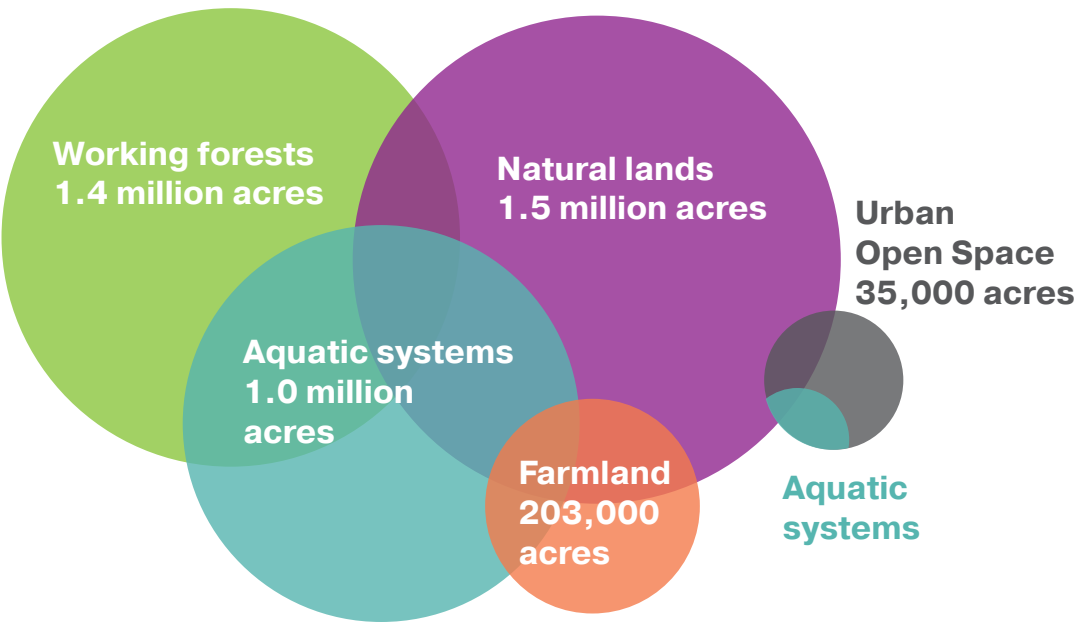
The Regional Open Space Network



The regional open space network covers about 3 million acres of public and private land and 339 miles of trail, including:

- Natural Lands
- Farmlands
- Working Forests
- Aquatic Systems
- Regional Trails
- Urban Open Space

Approximate Acreages of Each Category in the Regional Open Space Network with Overlap Taken into Consideration



Conservation Needs in the Central Puget Sound Region

Watershed	Farmland (acres)	Working Forests (acres)	Aquatic Systems (acres)	Natural Lands (acres)	Regional Trails (miles)
5 - Stillaguamish	24,000	17,700	20,300	3,000	12
7 – Snohomish	30,100	26,600	11,700	12,600	46
8 – Cedar/Sammamish	2,300	2,500	3,500	6,900	40
9 – Green/Duwamish	6,900	5,500	4,300	6,000	43
10 – Puyallup/White	9,700	16,300	5,800	8,100	53
11 – Nisqually	26,600	38,100	6,200	14,200	35
12 – Chambers/Clover	240	270	724	2,400	13
15 - Kitsap	4,400	77,800	9,100	18,900	58
Total	104,300	195,500	61,700	72,200	300

Total across open space types: 463,000 acres

A strong economy in the region continues to accelerate growth and development, which puts pressure on the open space network. The plan identifies approximately 463,000 acres of the regional open space network that are most at risk of conversion.



Policy, Planning, and Regulatory Tools

Conservation is supported by policies, plans, and regulations at the city, county, regional, state, and federal level. However, many of these provisions can be updated to better protect and restore open space, rural, and resource lands. The laws, policies, plans, and regulations in this section are some of the main tools to support open space conservation in the region. Other influential tools are also included.



All of the tools in this toolkit can be used by counties, Tribes, land conservancies, and other organizations. While farms and open space often are outside of cities, many of the tools can also be used by cities and are marked with the urban open space icon.

Planning Framework

Growth Management Act

The Washington Legislature enacted the [Growth Management Act](#) in 1990 to guide planning for growth and development in Washington State. It establishes 14 goals, including some directly related to conservation such as sprawl reduction, natural resource industries, open space and recreation, and environmental protection. The Growth Management Act requires counties to work with their cities to designate urban growth areas as the primary locations for growth and future development. Fast-growing cities and counties must develop comprehensive plans to manage population growth in a manner that supports the Act's goals.

The Growth Management Act also directs all cities and counties to designate natural resource lands (including those related to forestry, agriculture, fisheries, and mining) and identify steps to preserve them. In addition, all cities and counties are required to adopt critical areas regulations to manage and protect wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas.

VISION 2050 Multicounty Planning Policies

[VISION 2050](#), the central Puget Sound's integrated regional plan, contains multicounty planning policies and actions in the topic areas of regional coordination, regional growth strategy, environment, climate change, development patterns, housing, economy, transportation, and public services. These policies and actions help implement the Growth Management Act.

Countywide Planning Policies

The four counties in the central Puget Sound region adopt [countywide planning policies](#) consistent with the Growth Management Act and multicounty planning policies. These policies can help identify and protect needed open space, support a stable urban growth area, and establish goals for rural growth rates.

Planning and Policy Tools



City and County Comprehensive Plans and Future Land Use Designations

Under the Growth Management Act, cities and counties develop [comprehensive plans](#) that outline their goals, policies, and implementation strategies, consistent with VISION 2050 and countywide policies. County plans include a rural and working lands element. Policies and future land use designations established in these plans help protect open space. Agricultural and forestry designations can help keep farm and forest lands as working lands. Cities plan for a share of urban growth, as determined through countywide growth targets, thus limiting new development from occurring in rural areas. Cities also designate open space lands, adopt tree canopy cover goals, plan for parks within their jurisdiction, and plan for the protection of critical areas. Integrating watershed planning into the comprehensive plan can help to illuminate how systems within a watershed can support or impact each other, leading to better informed land use, stormwater, infrastructure, and other decisions (see Watershed Management Plans tool in this section).

VISION 2050 En-Action-4

Local Open Space Planning: In the next periodic update to the comprehensive plan, counties and cities will create goals and policies that address local open space conservation and access needs as identified in the Regional Open Space Conservation Plan, prioritizing areas with higher racial and social inequities and rural and resource land facing development pressure. Counties and cities should work together to develop a long-term funding strategy and action plan to accelerate open space protection and enhancement.

Designating natural resource lands is an important conservation tool. As of 2018, 64 percent of farmland identified in the regional open space network was designated agricultural and 81 percent of working forests in the network was designated forestry (Regional Open Space Conservation Plan).



Maintaining a stable urban growth area and permanent rural and resource lands is critical to conservation. Proposals to expand the urban growth area can undermine long-term protections. City and county comprehensive plans should focus on ways to accommodate growth through infill and redevelopment within existing urban growth areas and seek to minimize impacts on surrounding rural and resource lands.

The policies that counties set for rural development and working lands, including farmland and working forests, can support farming and forestry economies and prevent the fragmentation of resource lands. Policies that support farmland and forestry include: 1) designating agricultural and forestry zones, 2) limiting non-agricultural and non-forestry uses within those zones, 3) establishing large minimum lot sizes in those zones to prevent fragmentation of resources, and 4) maintaining large blocks of contiguous farmland and forest land. Infrastructure policies, such as not expanding roads in rural and resources areas, can also help meet conservation goals.



Integrating Multiple Plans and Strategies

Many plans and strategies, such as comprehensive plans, parks and recreation plans, hazard mitigation plans, and salmon recovery plans, often identify similar recommendations for the same locations. Identifying these overlapping areas can help prioritize actions that have multiple benefits. When there are competing interests in an area, such as farm-fish-flood issues, planning processes are needed to work through issues and plan with stakeholders. Floodplains by Design, covered in the Acquisition and Easement Tools section, is an example of a program that supports this type of integrated planning.

In 2014, the Snohomish County Council designated [Port Susan as a voluntary marine stewardship area](#). This designation led to the development of a community based marine stewardship plan that encourages enhanced stewardship through education, involving the public in scientific research, voluntary measures, increased communication and partnerships, and coordinated enforcement of existing regulation. The Snohomish Marine Resources Committee worked with Futurewise to gather input from stakeholders and identify the top incentives to improve shoreline habitat.



With its [Land Conservation Initiative](#), King County has identified multiple types of open space to conserve, including farmland, forestland, natural areas, trails, and urban parks. The County and cities within the county are working to conserve 65,000 acres of high-value conservation lands within a generation.



Watershed Management Plans

Planning in the context of the watershed can highlight opportunities and challenges to protect and improve water quality, open space, and habitat. It can provide a powerful vision for resource protection within the basin and identify funding priorities and sources. Topics covered in a [watershed management plan](#) can include land use, resilience, stormwater retrofit priority areas, conservation and restoration priorities, water supply, hazard mitigation, public engagement strategies, and funding. The integrated approach can also help to identify multi-benefit green infrastructure opportunities. These types of watershed plans differ from many salmon recovery plans because they address additional topics such as land use and stormwater. Funding to implement a watershed management plan can come from grants, stormwater fees, development fees, and capital facilities funds. The cities of Redmond, Duvall, and Bonney Lake have completed watershed plans. Interest in developing multi-jurisdiction watershed plans is increasing. King County, Snohomish County, Redmond, Woodinville, and Washington State Department of Transportation have collaborated on a watershed management plan for the [Bear Creek basin](#). The Department of Natural Resources is coordinating with jurisdictions, Tribes, and organizations in the Snohomish Watershed in implementing a [Watershed Resilience Action Plan](#). Ecology has a [list of projects](#) that have received watershed protection and restoration grants to do watershed-based land use planning.

The [Floodplains for the Future](#) program is a cross-sector and inter-organizational partnership hosted by Pierce County working to recover floodplain functions and to protect the health and safety of communities around the Puyallup, White & Carbon Rivers. Floodplains for the Future works to balance farm, fish, and flood management values, to provide a safe place to voice varied opinions and needs, and to advance integrated floodplain management solutions.



Integrating Equity

Advancing racial and social equity is an important goal that should be integrated into open space planning so that all people can share in the health and wellbeing benefits that open space provides. Issues to address related to open space equity include:

- ▶ Walkable access for all residents to open space (see the access analysis in Chapter 5 of the [Regional Open Space Conservation Plan](#))
- ▶ Inclusive community engagement
- ▶ Transit to regional hiking trails
- ▶ Nonmotorized access to local and regional bicycle trails

King County's [Open Space Equity Cabinet](#) provides recommendations on policies, funding, programs, and engagement to ensure more equity in providing access to open space.



Critical Areas

Jurisdictions are required to designate and protect [critical areas](#) under the Growth Management Act. Critical areas include wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas. Policies and development regulations to protect critical areas must be developed with the best available science. Comprehensive plans have a key role in conservation as they set the policy in preventing development within riparian areas, wetlands, wetland buffers and lands with geologic or flood hazards. The Regulations section discusses critical areas regulations.



Shoreline Master Programs

The Shoreline Management Act was enacted by the state to manage and protect shorelines by regulating development in the shoreline area. These shorelines include Puget Sound, rivers, streams, and lakes above a certain size, associated wetlands, and land 200 feet landward of the ordinary high-water mark of these shorelines. Under the Shoreline Management Act, counties and cities manage shoreline use to protect natural resources for future generations, provide for public access to shoreline areas, and plan for water-dependent uses. Under updated state guidelines, [shoreline master programs](#) are required to ensure no net loss of ecological function of the shoreline. One issue to address is legacy stormwater systems that often bypass protected stream buffers and dump stormwater directly into waterbodies. Ecology has a grant program to [fund monitoring and adaptive management programs](#) for shoreline master programs.



Open Space Corridors

The Growth Management Act provision for designating [open space corridors](#) is one way cities and counties can identify and protect open space. RCW 36.70A.160 states: “Each county and city that is required or chooses to prepare a comprehensive land use plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas. They shall include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas.” Connectivity of environmental resources significantly enhances the overall ecological value of individual environmental areas. Corridors also prevent fragmentation and maintain the character of open space throughout the rural area. During comprehensive plan updates, open space corridors can be designated to protect habitat and connectivity. Open space corridor standards can be integrated into critical areas regulations.



Maintain designations of resource lands

Comprehensive plan policies should call for maintaining designations of resource lands. Conversion of lands to rural residential uses would likely result in new development and associated impacts. Policies and programs could help ensure that forest lands are replanted following harvests and that farmlands remain available for future generations.

Prohibit upzones in rural areas

Establishing clear criteria for all rural zoning categories can help to protect rural character and control rural development. Avoiding zoning changes that increase densities in rural areas can help to accomplish this. Downzones could also be considered.



Fiscal impact analysis

Bringing an understanding of the [fiscal impact](#) of development into planning decision-making can help jurisdictions get a fuller picture of development benefits and costs. This could be part of a larger community impact analysis, including environmental, social, and economic development impacts. Understanding the costs related to infrastructure and services can also help a community recover those costs as part of the approval or required mitigation.

Support private leasing

Counties and their partners can encourage active use of rural and resource lands through policies and public education programs that support property owners in [leasing land to farmers](#) or foresters.



Community benefit agreements and development agreements

A community benefit agreement is a contract between a developer and community groups. A development agreement is a contract between a developer and a local jurisdiction. Both can be useful in larger developments to achieve community goals around public space, natural resource restoration and conservation, urban design, economic development, and other goals.



Zoning and Development Codes

Local plans are implemented by [zoning](#). Zoning determines the allowed uses and the intensity of development. Many jurisdictions use zoning to protect open space by designating such areas for parks or very low density uses. Development regulations affect the level of impact on the natural environment and help protect open space services by shaping how development occurs and by encouraging development with greater environmental compatibility. The tools in this section generally fall under the categories of zoning codes, subdivision regulations, permit/development review procedures, tree and critical areas ordinances, and stormwater regulations.

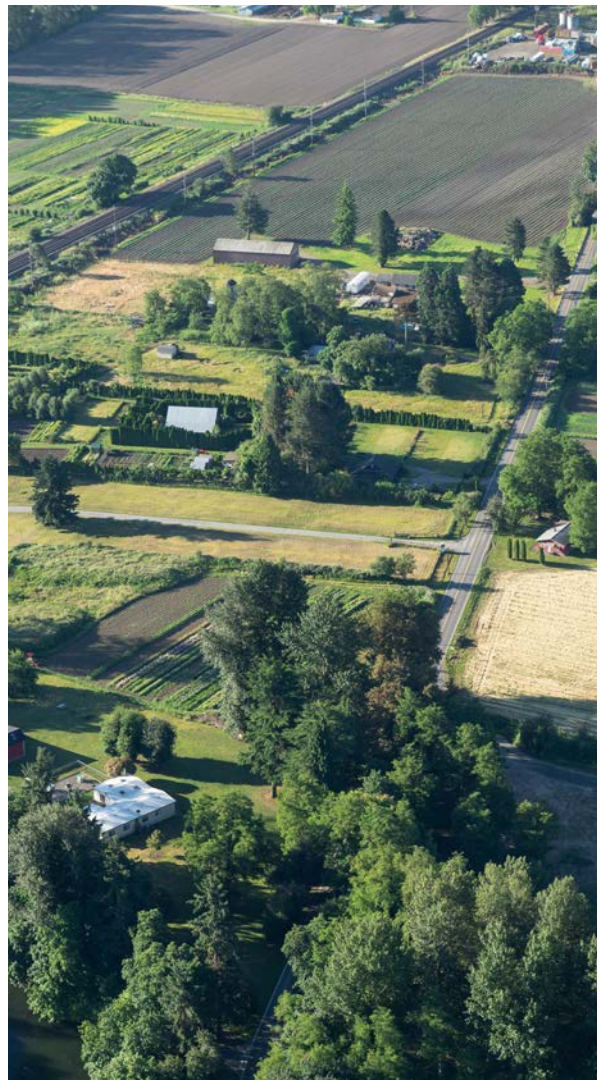
For developed urban areas, development codes can help restore open space through including standards and incentives to provide on-site open space, low impact development and natural drainage practices, habitat restoration, tree preservation, and landscaping. They can also encourage density to minimize the footprint of development and provide an alternative to sprawl in rural areas. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs can further direct growth to urban areas and are often put into place at the time zoning codes are being updated (see Acquisition and Easement Tools section).

Development standards that can support open space and natural systems conservation are described below.

Rural residential requirements

Standards for site development in rural areas can prevent large lots from being cleared and left devoid of vegetation. Rural residential development standards may be similar to those of urban residential zones, although their impacts may be distorted by the large lot sizes in rural areas. For example, a maximum lot coverage standard of 35% in an urban area might result in a typical allowed building footprint of about 2,500 square feet. However, if applied to a five-acre lot, that would result in an allowed footprint of nearly two acres. Where and how development occurs in residential areas can be significant factors for rural areas. For example, development at the edge of a lot may reduce the amount of paving and clearing needed to access the site and preserves the potential for the remaining lot to be used for agricultural, forestry, or general vegetation preservation. Standards that could be evaluated to improve protection of open space, vegetation, and habitat within rural residential areas include:

- **Maximum lot coverage**
- **Maximum impervious surface area**
- **Tree retention**
- **Habitat corridor preservation**



Legacy lots

Numerous small lots were created in rural areas in past decades, often as “vacation lots” that were intended for part time use. As growth has increased and affected wider areas of the region, many of those historic lots are being developed or converted to full-time use. Counties may seek to create specific standards for these substandard lots that do not meet current minimum lot size and other standards. Standards could address maintaining property rights for land use while preserving the rural character and natural features of the area.

Rural lot aggregation

In rural areas, requiring an assessment of undersized lots prior to development can ensure that rural residential development maintains rural character and expectations. Undersized lots in a common ownership may be considered one legal lot. Jurisdictions may also be able to require applicants to evaluate Transfer of Development Rights and Purchase of Development Rights programs prior to development.

Limit accessory dwelling units in rural areas

Accessory dwelling units in rural areas can result in higher densities, impacting infrastructure, services, and open space. Limiting them can help to avoid these impacts.

Avoid institutional developments in rural areas

The development of schools and other institutions in rural areas results in environmental impacts and increased travel, and can attract further development. Institutions often are urban in character and may require urban services. Prohibiting institutional developments in rural areas, except through a Special Use Permit process, can help to limit rural development, avoid the transportation impacts that would result, and allows for conditions to protect rural character and open space.

Prohibit density bonuses in rural areas

Incentives for increasing density, such as density bonuses, should be avoided in rural and resource areas.





Open space requirements

Jurisdictions can require or incentivize developers to provide open space in new developments and subdivisions. A certain amount of public open space and play area can be required per new housing unit for subdivisions. New commercial, multifamily, and mixed-use developments can be required to incorporate a percentage of lot area as green space, plaza, or stormwater features. Incentives may be used to provide public plazas and parks or to encourage environmental restoration that corresponds with required open space. [Open space zoning](#) is another approach.



Clustering

[Cluster developments](#), or clustering, can help minimize the footprint of new development on the land and minimize impacts to wildlife habitat and stormwater drainage. When a developer is subdividing a tract, they can group all potential lots into compact clusters of smaller lot size and leave the remaining land undeveloped and designated as open space. In some cases, additional density may be allowed to encourage developers to use clustering when the tradeoff benefits ecological health, open space, and rural character. When designed appropriately, rural clustering can help preserve land for agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat, and open space.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

Environmental review under SEPA is an important tool to prevent and mitigate potential environmental impacts to rural, resource, and open space lands. While thresholds for categorical exemptions under SEPA can be raised in urban areas, more conservative thresholds should be maintained in rural and resource areas.

In addition to a requirement to provide ground level greenspace, the City of Bellevue offers a density bonus incentive system in the [BelRed Subarea](#) that rewards developments that restore streams and environmental areas as part of the site's redevelopment.





Tree retention

Maintaining tree canopy cover is essential to maintaining open space services in rural areas of the region. Due to large lot sizes, tree clearing of just one rural parcel can result in significant tree loss. Multiplied across hundreds of lots, the rural area could see a significant impact on canopy cover. Counties can [adopt policies](#) to protect and enhance canopy cover that should be tailored to the large parcel and forest conditions of the rural area. Potential tree protections include:

- **Permit requirements for tree activity as a system to monitor tree loss and replacement.**
- **If a tree is removed, replace canopy on site. A multiplier can be used to help increase tree canopy cover.**
- **5-year monitoring and maintenance requirement of trees retained in development or planted as replacements.**
- **Protection of exceptional trees (based on certain size and species) unless there is a hazard. Hazard exemptions can create loopholes, so consider requiring proof of hazard and mitigation.**
- **Protection of groves.**
- **Replacement trees should be of a similar species and ecology type to those removed.**
- **Require all tree service providers to register with the county/city to ensure they comply with ordinances and regulations to protect trees.**
- **Development codes can specify clearing limits and tree canopy retention requirements.**

Within cities, tree retention and landscaping standards can ensure that urban communities retain access to green space and the cooling benefits that trees provide. Cities may seek to preserve a portion of onsite trees, have replacement standards, and protect exceptional trees. However, tree retention provisions within urban areas should be carefully crafted to avoid creating a barrier to housing.





Critical areas

As noted above, jurisdictions are required to adopt [critical areas](#) regulations under the Growth Management Act. Critical areas include wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas.

- In rural areas, critical area regulations have an opportunity to preserve wetlands, streams, habitat, wildlife corridors, and buffers that are largely intact through fully adopting state agency guidance. Preservation of these areas will work to maintain the ecological functions of the areas and preserve its rural quality.
- In urban areas, critical areas regulations also play an important role in preserving open space and ecological function. In urban areas, it is likely that jurisdictions will need to put greater emphasis on restoration of degraded environmental lands and reconnecting fragmented areas. Incentives may increase participation in restoration and stewardship.



Some critical areas ordinances have exemptions and exceptions that can undermine the actual critical area regulations. Limiting opportunities for exemptions and exceptions can help to address this issue.

Developing a monitoring and adaptive management program for critical areas can help determine how well critical areas policies and regulations are being implemented and where changes to either regulations or procedures would improve critical area protection. The Department of Commerce has resources for [monitoring and adaptively managing critical areas](#).



Low impact development

[Low impact development](#) or green stormwater infrastructure is an approach to site design that preserves or mimics the natural hydrology of the site. Low impact development standards can be used to implement stormwater requirements in areas without traditional stormwater infrastructure. Low impact development is achieved by minimizing site disturbance, preserving native vegetation, reducing impervious surfaces, and infiltrating stormwater onsite. Maximum impervious surface coverages can be incorporated into codes for rural zones. Onsite low impact development facilities include rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, and vegetated roofs. The [Building Green Cities](#) guide is a resource for promoting low-impact development and includes a series of tools, including Best Management Practice factsheets, information about incentive programs, and other resources.

Stormwater management continues to evolve as National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements change. For areas not likely to redevelop, and thus not be subject to newer stormwater regulations, providing incentives can help encourage the retrofit of these areas with legacy stormwater management systems. See the Stewardship Tools section for examples of green stormwater infrastructure rebate programs.



Acquisition and Easement Tools

Many conservation projects require purchasing land or acquiring easements. Easements can be acquired through either transfers (see Transfer of Development Rights in this section), donations, or purchases. Many of the programs listed in this section support [purchase of development rights](#) (conservation easements). Increased funding to support these tools would lead to additional open space protection. Increasing open space protection conserves ecologically valuable land while managing growth. Other ways to expand use of these tools is discussed below. The [Snohomish Basin Protection Plan](#) has also compiled information on protection tools and funding strategies.

Local Government Funding Options



Conservation futures

All four counties in the region collect [conservation futures taxes](#). These are a tax on property and may be used to acquire and protect open spaces including habitat, wetlands, farmland, timberland, and urban greenspaces. In 2019, the counties collected a combined \$30 million from conservation futures taxes. Projects must compete for conservation futures funds. Occasional resetting of the tax rate to the original effective rate can preserve this program's benefit. As of early 2022, resetting the tax rate requires voter approval.



Parks levies

Many jurisdictions in the region, including cities, counties, and special parks districts, levy property taxes to fund parks, trails, and open space operations, maintenance, and acquisition. These parks levies are approved by voters in the district.

Through funding from the King County Parks levy, the [Healthy Communities and Parks Fund](#) supports new or enhanced access to recreation, parks, and open space in underserved communities, including investing in capacity-building for community groups.



Real estate excise tax

Cities and counties can levy [real estate excise taxes](#) on the full selling price of real estate in their jurisdiction. Jurisdictions may use a portion of this revenue to fund open space conservation. Currently, money generated from real estate excise taxes cannot be used on maintenance. Funds can be used to support urban open space and aquatic systems. [REET3](#) is specifically for acquisition and maintenance of conservation areas but has not yet been authorized by counties in the region.



Open space bond

An open space bond is a general obligation bond and requires approval by 60 percent of voters with a voter turnout of at least 40 percent.



Special districts

Special districts are independent governmental units that have taxing authority and a special purpose to provide a function to residents. A Flood Control District is one example of a special purpose district. Flood Control Districts have been established in the region to provide funding, coordination, and oversight to protect public health and safety, public and private properties, and transportation corridors from flooding. The [King County Flood Control District updated its policies](#) in 2020 to prioritize multi-benefit flood control projects that could include open space conservation. Conservation districts are another type of special district that are discussed in more detail in the Stewardship section. An open space district could focus on preserving open space within the district. For example, the [Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District](#) in the California Bay Area was founded in 1972 with a mission to acquire and preserve regional open space. Funding comes from property taxes and to date, the district has protected 60,000 acres of open space.



Watershed protection by water utilities

Water utilities often fund watershed protection because the most cost-effective way to provide clean and safe drinking water for a community is to protect the watershed of the drinking water supply, whether from surface water or groundwater. It is estimated that every dollar spent on watershed protection saves about \$30 in treatment costs. Watershed protection also provides many co-benefits, such as habitat, carbon sequestration, and stormwater benefits.



The [City of Bremerton's drinking water](#) is supplied by surface water from the protected watershed of the Union River headwaters and 13 groundwater wells located in the Bremerton vicinity.



Coordinated funding

Acquisition of open space important to a variety of departments and jurisdictions can be coordinated. For example, [interlocal agreements](#) between jurisdictions within Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) help coordinate the implementation of WRIA salmon habitat plans. The purpose of the interlocal agreements is to provide a mechanism, staffing, and governance structure for the joint funding and implementation of the plans.



Coordinated agency funding

Agencies can provide joint, streamlined, and prioritized funding for projects that meet multiple objectives for recreation, habitat, stormwater management, etc. One example is Floodplains by Design (see below under State Programs), a program that funds multi-benefit flood hazard reduction projects. These projects must demonstrate that they provide benefits beyond flood hazard reduction, including but not limited to salmon recovery, habitat restoration, water quality improvement, and channel migration zone protections, among others. Other state agencies are looking into this concept of encouraging multi-benefit projects and may develop supportive policies and programs. Local surface water management funds are sometimes used in coordination with other agency funds when open space projects can demonstrate a water quality benefit.



Options from State and Federal Programs

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Co-investment with partners and innovation are emphasized in the program.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

The [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) within the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides financial and technical assistance to local jurisdictions working to conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. This includes funding for easements on farmlands and wetlands.

The Puyallup Watershed Partnership includes Pierce Conservation District, Pierce County, Forterra, PCC Farmland Trust and other diverse partners. The partnership received funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#). The funding will help the partners assist landowners with permanent conservation easements and implement restoration activities.



Emergency Watershed Protection Program

The [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#), a federal emergency recovery program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, helps communities recover after natural disasters such as floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters that impair a watershed. The program offers technical and financial assistance to urban and rural communities for projects such as removing debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges, reshaping and protecting eroded streambanks, correcting damaged or destroyed drainage facilities, establishing vegetative cover on critically eroding lands, and purchasing floodplain easements.

Healthy Forest Reserve Program

The [Healthy Forest Reserve Program](#) is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and has a goal of helping landowners restore, enhance, and protect forest resources. Part of this program provides payments for permanent easements on working forest lands.

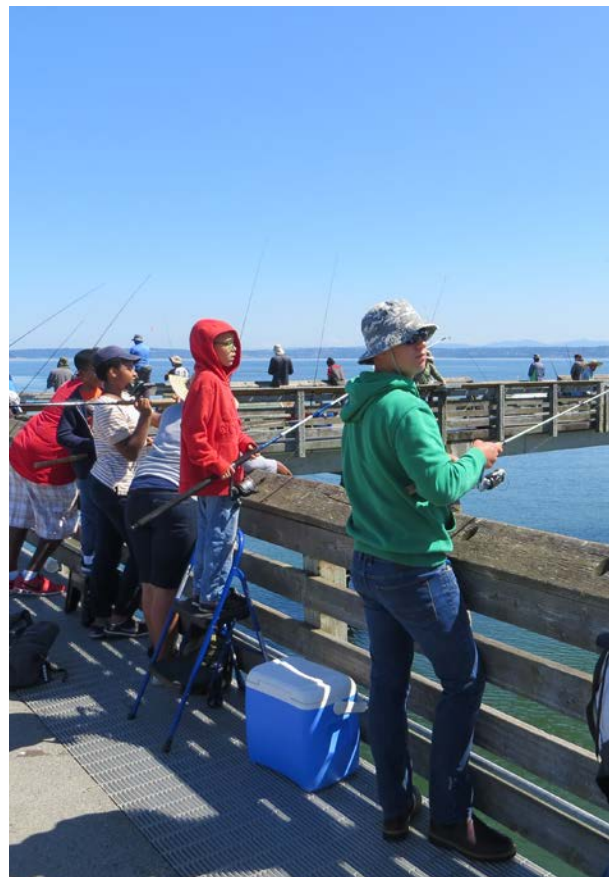
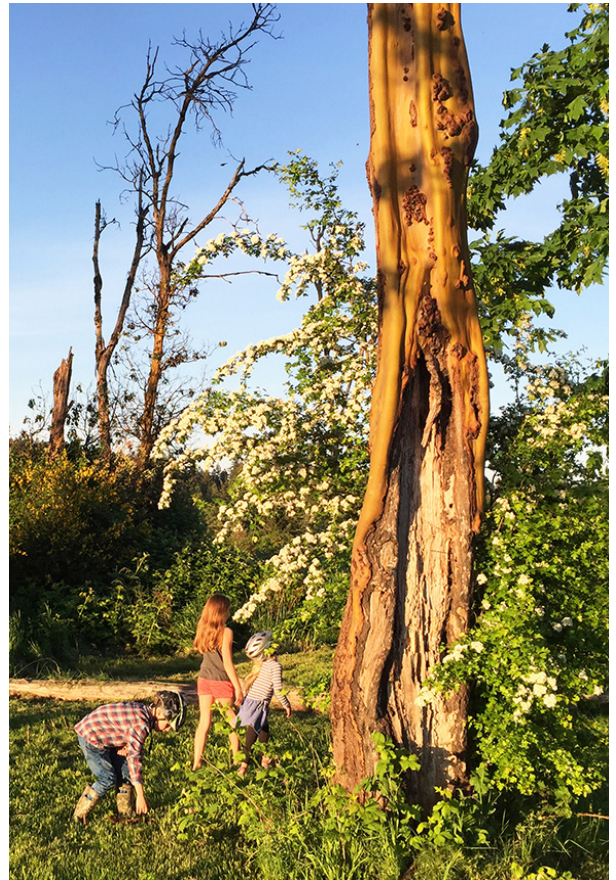
Forest Legacy Program

The [Forest Legacy Program](#) is administered by the US Forest Service and is locally implemented by the Washington Department of Natural Resources. This grant program works to protect working forests that are under threat of conversion to non-forest uses such as commercial or residential development. Grants pay for the purchase of conservation easements that remove development rights from the forestland while leaving the land in private ownership.



Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership

The [Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership](#) provides funding for projects that improve habitat for juvenile fish or advance understanding of their habitat needs. Restoration, land acquisition, and assessment for projects that improve targeted aquatic systems are eligible.





Clean Water Act State Revolving Fund

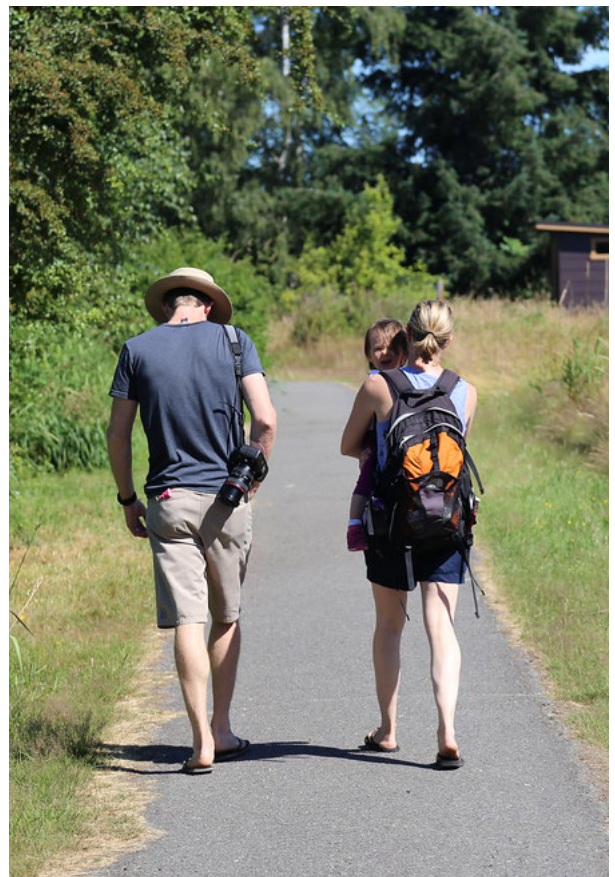
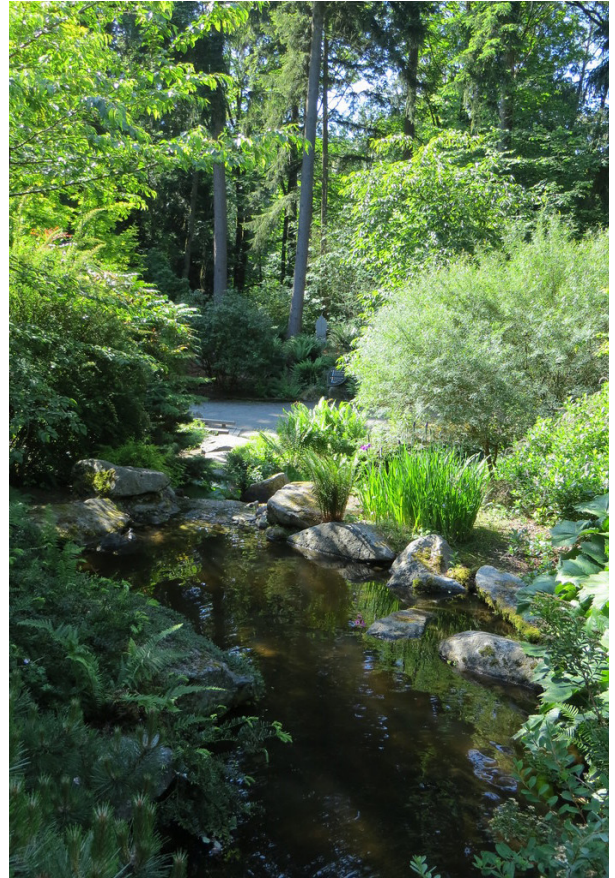
Provided by the federal Clean Water Act, the [Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#) program is funded through the Environmental Protection Agency, state matching funds, and principal and interest repayments on past program loans. The program provides low-interest and forgivable principal loan funding for wastewater treatment construction projects, eligible nonpoint source pollution control projects. It can also be used for conservation projects and planning.



Washington State Recreation and Conservation Grants

The [Recreation and Conservation Office](#) administers 17 different grants that aim to support a variety of conservation activities including new recreation opportunities and land conservation for wild lands, working lands, and salmon habitat. The [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition](#) can provide information on grant programs and connect communities in need to assistance in developing grant proposals. Several online [mapping tools](#) are available to help with grant applications and planning. Some communities may be eligible for a [match reduction](#). Grant programs that can support conservation include:

- **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program** (farmland, habitat, and recreation-specific programs)
- **Aquatic lands enhancement account** (partnership with Department of Natural Resources-regional trails, aquatic systems, natural lands, farmland)
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund** (regional trails, urban open space, aquatic systems, natural lands)
- **Recreational Trails Program**
- **Salmon Recovery Funding Board** (aquatic systems)
- **Puget Sound Acquisitions and Restoration Fund** (aquatic systems)
- **Community Forests Program**



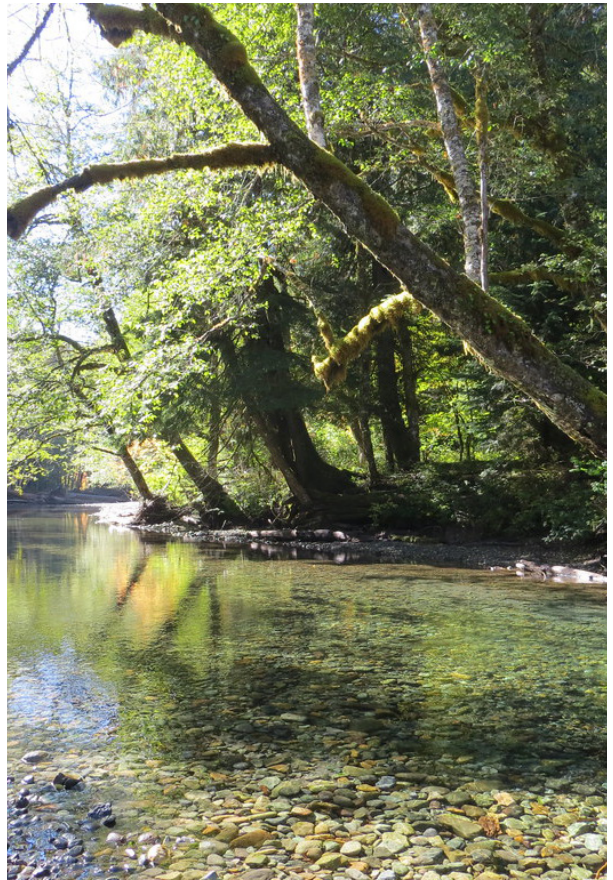


Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program

Led by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Recreation and Conservation Office, the [Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program](#) restores Puget Sound salmon habitat and shorelines by providing funding and technical support to local organizations. It has 4 funding programs: restoration and protection, small grants, regional pre-design, and Shore Friendly. Funding under the various programs can be used for planning, land acquisition, design, and restoration of aquatic systems and natural lands.

Rivers and Habitat Open Space Program

The [Rivers and Habitat Open Space Program](#) is administered by Department of Natural Resources and is available to eligible Washington state landowners who would like to sell a permanent forestland conservation easement to the state. Land considered forestland critical habitat and unconfined channel migration zones are eligible for the program.



Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant

Counties develop countywide hazard mitigation plans in partnership with the jurisdictions in their county. A potential source of funding for open space projects is [FEMA hazard mitigation grants](#). FEMA funds hazard mitigation because studies have shown that every \$1 spent equals \$4 of future damages mitigated. For projects to be eligible for these grants, projects must be listed in county hazard mitigation plans. Typical hazards such as flooding and wildfire can be mitigated by open space projects such as floodplain restoration, forest preservation and restoration, and green stormwater infrastructure installation.



Floodplains by Design

[Floodplains By Design](#) is a program that funds integrated floodplain planning and projects identified from such planning. It is a public-private partnership led by Washington State Department of Ecology, Puget Sound Partnership, and The Nature Conservancy. The program can help protect farmland and restore floodplains and shoreline habitat, including along regional trails.

Streamflow restoration grants program

Ecology's [streamflow restoration competitive grants](#) help state and local agencies, Tribal governments, and non-profit organizations implement local watershed plans and projects to improve streamflow and aquatic resources.

Community forests

A community forest is a working forest that is owned locally and managed for the benefit of local communities. It can be a successful way to conserve working forestland that is under threat of conversion. Community forests are often purchased by the community from commercial timber companies. The community develops a forest plan for the management of the forest, which typically includes environmental, wildlife habitat, and recreation objectives, in addition to generating revenue through timber harvest. The United States Forest Service's [Community Forest Program](#) provides financial assistance through grants to local governments, tribal governments, and nonprofit groups that are starting community forests. Grants can be used for land acquisition, appraisals, land surveys, legal and closing costs, and forest plan development.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources manages another program, the [Community Forest Trust program](#), which provides another mechanism for conserving forestland through the creation of a community forest. The program helps fund acquisition and project-related expenses. Communities that are interested in preserving a working forest can submit a nomination, and if successful, the Department of Natural Resources will work with a local advisory committee to develop a forest management plan that includes financial, conservation, and recreation objectives.

The Recreation and Conservation Office has a [Community Forests Program](#) to provide funding to conserve land for timber harvest and community benefit. All projects must buy land to conserve working forests. On purchased land, projects may also restore forest and habitat health and develop recreational facilities.



The [Nisqually Community Forest](#) is a partnership between the Nisqually Land Trust, Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Nisqually River Foundation, the Northwest Natural Resources Group and other organizations. In 2015, the Nisqually Land Trust obtained a grant from the Community Forest Program, which helped the group purchase 640 acres of forestland. The community forest is being managed for multiple benefits including sustainable forestry, salmon recovery, and recreation. The community forest has grown to 4,120 acres.

Military land stewardship

Central Puget Sound has several large military bases. These bases, while needing large expanses of land for military activities, also protect important habitat. The [Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program](#) is a tool for combating encroachment that can restrict military operations. The program protects military missions by preventing land use conflicts near installations and addressing regulatory restrictions that inhibit military activities such as training and testing. A key component of the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program is the use of buffer partnerships among the Military Services, private conservation groups, and state and local governments. These partnerships share the cost of acquisition of easements or other interests in land from willing sellers to preserve compatible land uses and natural habitats near military installations and ranges. Similarly, the Sentinel [Landscapes Partnership](#) is a collaborative program of the US Department of Agriculture, Defense, and Interior that protects working lands and natural resources near military areas.

On Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the military is working with the [Center for Natural Lands Management](#) and other partners to conserve key prairie species on the base and surrounding areas.

Federal conservation tax deduction

Landowners that donate a conservation easement to a land trust or government agency are eligible to receive a [federal conservation tax deduction](#). The tax incentive offsets some of the loss in property value, making conservation a viable option for more landowners.

Other Funding Options



Philanthropy and nonprofits

Philanthropic and nonprofit organizations can provide funding for or organize funding campaigns to purchase land or conservation easements. Land conservancies, in particular, are focused on this type of work. State and federal programs exist to help land conservancies do their work. For example, the [Washington State Conservation Commission's](#) Farmland Protection and Land Access Program and the Washington State Housing [Finance Commission's Farmland Protection and Affordability Investment Program](#) provide funding for land conservancies to protect farmland. The following is a list of land conservancies that do work to protect farmland, forests, and other types of open space in the central Puget Sound region:

- Bainbridge Island Land Trust
- Center for Natural Lands Management
- The Conservation Fund
- Forterra
- Great Peninsula Conservancy
- Nisqually Land Trust
- South of the Sound Community Farmland Trust
- The Nature Conservancy of Washington
- The Trust for Public Land
- Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust
- Washington Farmland Trust



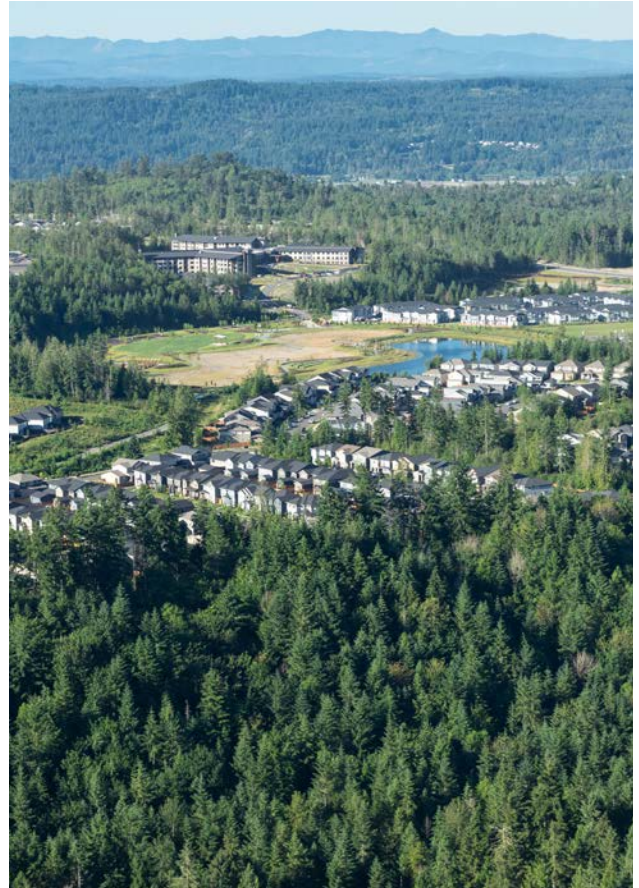
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)/ Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP)

TDR is a market-based mechanism that supports the voluntary [transfer of development rights](#) from areas where a community would like to discourage development to places where that community would like to focus new growth. If a developer purchases development rights from a rural landowner, she or he can use them to build a development with increased units, floor area, height, or similar metric. Cities accepting TDR credits from rural and working lands include Arlington, Bellevue, Everett, Issaquah, Mountlake Terrace, Normandy Park, Sammamish, Seattle, Shoreline, Snohomish, and Tacoma. The framework for regional TDR, transferring credits across both city and county boundaries, is in place.

TDR has removed development rights from over 150,000 acres of open space land in the region, permanently protecting these lands from development. As of 2021, 150,000 acres of open space have been preserved in King County, 160 acres in Pierce County, and 180 acres in Snohomish County.

The Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP, RCW 39.108) provides a financial incentive for cities to participate in TDR. LCLIP allows cities to receive a portion of future county property tax revenue from areas that receive development rights through TDR. Cities use this revenue to fund local infrastructure to support the increased growth associated with this transfer of development rights. More conservation through TDR and LCLIP could occur if more cities develop programs to take advantage of these tools.

An alternative to TDR is an in-lieu fee or density fee that is tied to purchase of development rights for land conservation. Developers pay a fee to the sponsoring public agency to build to a higher density or intensity than baseline zoning allows or to take advantage of other incentives set forth by the program. Funds collected are used by the jurisdiction to purchase conservation easements in high priority conservation areas. Density fees can be set to a specific dollar amount per additional unit of incentive.



Impact investing

Impact investing is a type of public-private partnership and refers to investments made into companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate a measurable, beneficial social or environmental impact alongside or in lieu of a financial return. Private investors provide financing for a municipality or organization to implement an environmental project. As the municipality or organization receives the benefits of the project, it pays the investors back at a negotiated rate of return. Washington D.C. used impact investing, through an [environmental impact bond](#), to finance green stormwater infrastructure pilot projects. Impact investing can be used for acquiring land for habitat or for acquiring easements to protect farmland and working forests.

Puget Sound Partnership's [Nearshore Credits Program](#) sells conservation credits to help federal permit applicants meet obligations to offset impacts to critical habitat and uses funds from those credit sales to implement equivalent conservation projects. The credits represent units of nearshore habitat function (as quantified by a calculator developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service).



Ecosystem services markets

An [ecosystem services market](#) is an organizational structure for buying and selling units of environmental benefit called credits. These markets provide an essential link between the people who are willing to pay for actions that improve the environment and the people who can put conservation actions on the ground. Frequently, those that are paying for credits are entities that have a regulatory need to reduce their environmental impact in some way. Other organizations willing to pay may receive benefits, such as water utilities benefitting from projects that protect the quality of the drinking water supply. Some types of credits are habitat credits, carbon credits, and water quality credits. Some of these are further discussed in the Stewardship Tools section.

Washington Farmland Trust's [Impact Investing](#) program provides flexible capital to protect threatened farmland. Investors receive annual interest payments over a specific time period.



Mitigation banks and in-lieu fee programs

A [wetland mitigation bank](#) is a site where wetlands are restored, created, enhanced, or in exceptional circumstances, preserved, for the purpose of providing compensatory mitigation in advance of unavoidable impacts to wetlands or other aquatic resources. In-lieu fee mitigation is one type of mitigation that can be used to compensate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands. In this approach to mitigation, a permittee pays a fee to a third party (government agency or a nonprofit organization with demonstrated competence in natural resource management) instead of conducting project-specific mitigation or buying credits from a wetland mitigation bank. The fee charged by an in-lieu fee program sponsor represents the expected cost of replacing the wetland functions lost or degraded as a result of the project. An in-lieu fee program typically combines fees collected from one or more impact projects to finance a mitigation project.



Stewardship Tools

Not all open space must or should be acquired. In many places, a more cost-effective conservation strategy can be to work with private landowners to incentivize stewardship. The counties, conservation districts in each county, Washington State University Extension, Department of Natural Resources, and other organizations work with private landowners to encourage stewardship and enhance the viability of working lands. These programs are sometimes paired with the acquisition of conservation easements to maintain property as working land. Increased funding for many of these programs would expand their ability to work with private landowners to steward their lands. Some tools and programs that support stewardship are listed below. Many of these tools are listed in the [Washington Water and Salmon Fund Finder](#), a grant and loan search tool for natural resource funding opportunities in Washington.

Education and Assistance Programs



Indigenous knowledge/Tribal coordination

The Coast Salish Tribes in the region have lived here since time immemorial and have a deep historical connection and legacy of respect for the land and natural resources. With many treaty-protected natural resources lost or severely impacted over time, protecting water quality and restoring the habitat of Puget Sound is of shared critical significance. [Ongoing consultation with tribes](#) throughout the planning process may help identify shared opportunities to support natural resources and open space protection.



Conservation districts

Conservation districts in each county provide a wide variety of stewardship education and assistance programs related to farming, forestry, stream health, and environmental education. One of the best ways to preserve farmland is to improve farm viability, production, and soil and water quality in non-regulatory ways. Agricultural assistance programs help farmers with issues such as farm planning, soil testing, equipment, drainage, and waste management.

- The [King Conservation District](#) has many programs including ones related to farming and food, urban and rural forestry, shorelines and streams, and habitat restoration.
- The [Kitsap Conservation District](#) has agriculture, backyard habitat, stormwater, stream restoration, native plant, and pollinator programs.
- The [Pierce Conservation District](#) has programs on farm planning and agricultural, water quality, habitat improvement, environmental education, climate resiliency, and native plants.
- The [Snohomish Conservation District](#) has programs for farm planning, habitat restoration, urban stormwater, environmental education, horse keeping, and gardening.

All four conservation districts in the region offer opportunities to share costs of implementing best management practices with landowners.

Pierce Conservation District works to [improve riparian habitat](#) through the removal of invasive weeds and replanting with native trees and shrubs. Streamside planting events engage volunteers and environmental education programs include classroom presentations, Family Fun events, workshops, and school field trips.

Kitsap Conservation District's [Rain Garden and Low Impact Development Program](#) works cooperatively with county services, landowners, and local communities to expand knowledge and use of low impact development practices. The program provides information, technical assistance, and financial incentives toward the installation and maintenance of rain gardens and other low impact development solutions.



Washington Conservation Corps

[Washington Conservation Corps](#) works to conserve and enhance natural resources while providing meaningful service opportunities to young adults and military veterans. Washington Conservation Corps completes stewardship projects for partners, including local, state, and non-profit organizations. Services are offered at a cost-share rate.

Washington State University Extension Forest Stewardship Program

[Washington State University Extension's Forestry program](#) provides educational workshops, tours, online trainings, and individual consultation on forestry, wildlife, and other natural resource subjects. This program offers coached planning classes that are a series of short resources to help forest landowners develop management solutions to meet their forest objectives. Washington State University Extension also offers landowner field days that include outdoor seminars on forest health, thinning, pruning, riparian management, wildlife habitat, wildfire protection, and other management techniques.

Washington Department of Natural Resources forest stewardship and technical assistance

The Department of Natural Resources provides [forest stewardship and technical assistance](#) to small forest landowners. Department of Natural Resources foresters work with landowners to assess their forest condition and health, and to develop recommended management practices. The program helps landowners develop Forest Stewardship Plans, which allows landowners to qualify for financial assistance, current use taxation, and certification programs.



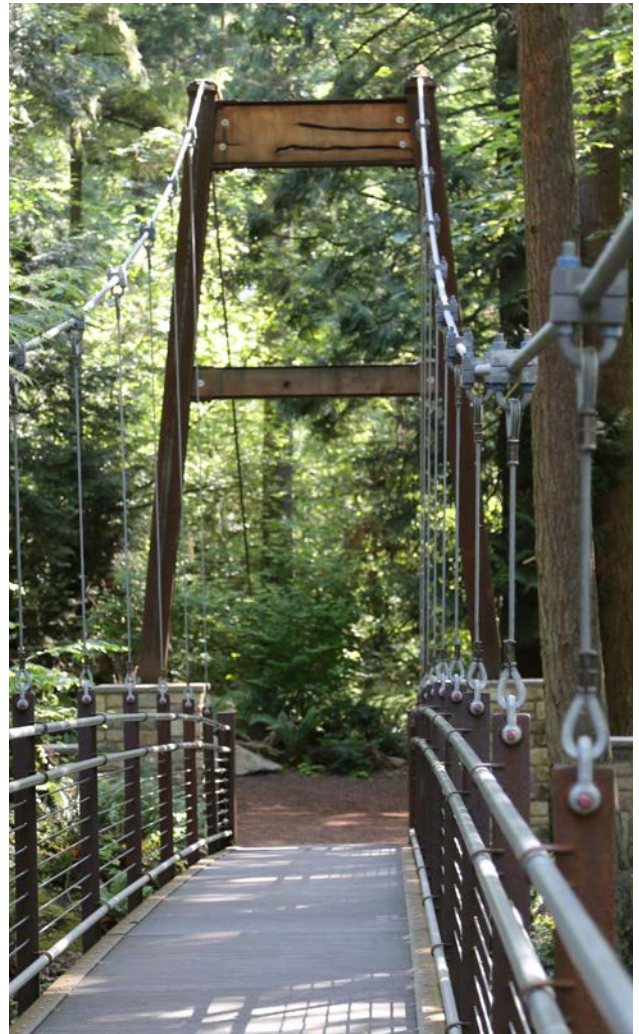
Washington State Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program

The [Washington State Urban and Community Forestry Program](#) provides technical, educational and financial assistance to cities, counties, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions to support urban and community forestry programs that preserve, plant, and manage forests and trees for public benefits and quality of life. Several [new tools for urban trees](#) have been developed through a partnership between the US Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and other partners. Tools and webinars include high-resolution urban tree canopy data, climate tree species guide, and City Forest Credits.



Partnerships between public, private and nonprofit sectors

Partnerships among the public, private and nonprofit sectors can create opportunities for innovative conservation projects. The strengths of one sector can be used to overcome the challenges and leverage the resources of other sectors.



[A bioswale added to a new commercial development](#) at the foot of Seattle's Aurora Bridge removes pollutants from stormwater running into Lake Union. Partners from public agencies, private businesses and nonprofits collaborated on this innovative project.



Shore Friendly

[Shore Friendly](#) is an incentive program for private landowners of marine shorelines in Puget Sound. The goals of the program are to reduce shoreline armor and restore shoreline habitat. There are Shore Friendly programs in all four central Puget Sound counties. Shore Friendly programs can provide education, technical site visits, permit support, engineering designs, and construction cost shares.



[Shore Friendly Kitsap](#) has been working with private waterfront landowners to restore Kitsap Puget Sound shoreline since 2015. To date, projects have been completed on 16 properties, resulting in 1,219 feet of restored shoreline. The photo below shows an example of a timber pile bulkhead removal and the use of soft shore techniques.



DePave

[DePave](#) is a program that replaces unwanted pavement with green infrastructure through the collaborative work of community groups. DePave volunteers in Portland have removed 165,000 square feet of pavement and created 63 new community spaces. Pierce Conservation District has a [DePave Puget Sound](#) program that helps landowners remove unnecessary pavement to transform it into a green space.



Community stewardship programs

Community stewardship programs provide training and support for volunteers that help with stewardship activities. The [Kitsap Watershed Stewardship Program](#) through Washington Sea Grant and Washington State University Extension Kitsap provides classes on a variety of watershed stewardship topics for residents in Kitsap County. Courses include Stream Stewards, Beach Naturalists, Salmon Docents, Septic Sense Workshops, Kitsap Salmon Tours, and Shore Stewards. Washington Sea Grant has many other [volunteer stewardship programs](#).

The Snohomish County Washington State University Extension has a [Beach Watchers](#) program that trains volunteers to help with stewardship, education, and research.



Carbon markets

Carbon markets put a price on carbon and can help conserve open space when credits come from forests, wetlands, and other natural resources that sequester and store carbon. Businesses can offset their carbon emissions partially by purchasing carbon credits. The Washington State legislature passed a bill in 2021 for a [cap-and-trade program](#) that will go into effect in 2023. The State of California has a cap-and-trade program and has established a strict protocol for certifying carbon offsets. Forest practices that lead to additional carbon sequestration can be eligible to sell carbon credits on this market. A voluntary market for carbon credits also exists. Local examples of the use of carbon markets include the [Evergreen Carbon Capture Program](#), King County's [Forest Carbon Program](#), and [Nisqually Community Forest carbon credits](#).



Stormwater Markets

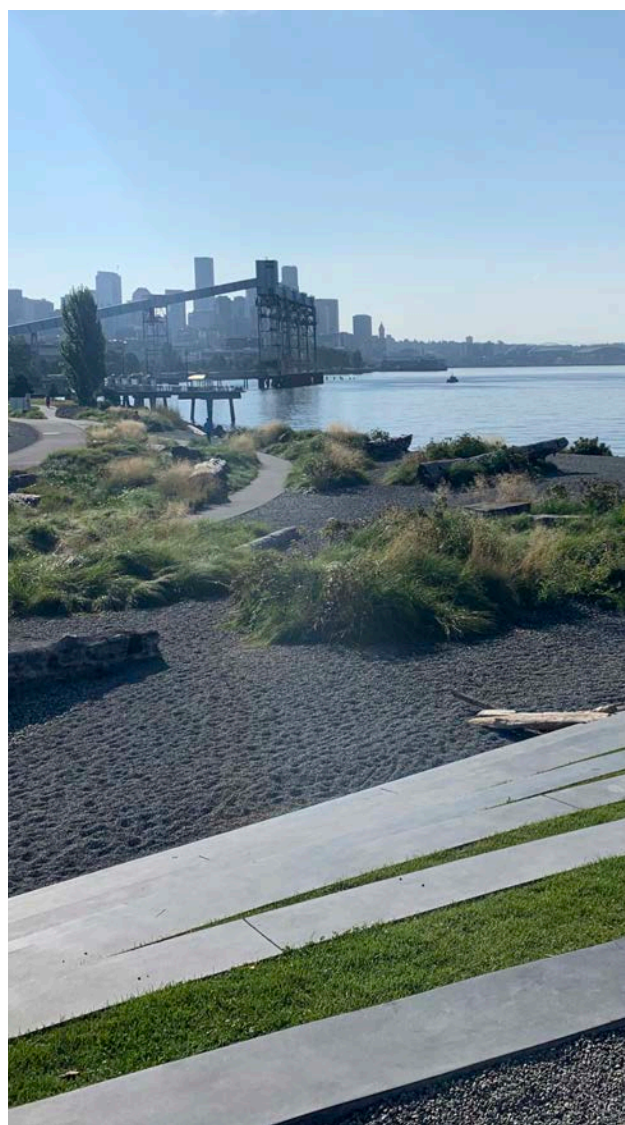
If stricter stormwater standards are established the next time that Washington Department of Ecology updates municipal stormwater permits, it could create the potential to establish a [stormwater credit market](#). These markets work by allowing developments that cannot meet these stricter standards to purchase stormwater credits to make up the difference. The credits would be produced from projects, such as biowales and bioretention facilities, that improve stormwater beyond the requirements in other areas of the watershed.

To address flooding and water pollution, [Washington, D.C.](#) established the nation's first stormwater credit trading program in 2013. Property owners can generate and sell Stormwater Retention Credits to earn revenue for projects that reduce stormwater runoff by installing green infrastructure or removing impervious surfaces.

Incentive Programs

Open Space Taxation/Public Benefit Rating System.

Washington State's [Open Space Taxation Act](#) allows property owners to have their open space, farm and agricultural, and timber lands valued at their current use rather than at their highest and best use to conserve these resources. A [Public Benefit Rating System](#) (PBRs) allows for a tax reduction incentive in proportion to the open space benefits a property provides. King, Kitsap, and Pierce counties have PBRs programs. Snohomish County has an open space taxation program. The more rigorous the program, the greater the open space benefits per taxpayer dollar. The King County PBRs program encourages the conservation of natural resources in King County by conserving its land and water resources. PBRs enrollment and associated tax savings are based on a point system. Points are awarded for each PBRs resource category a property qualifies for such as protecting stream and wetland buffers, preserving significant wildlife habitat, conserving farmland and forestland, and preserving historic landmarks. The total points awarded for a property's PBRs resources translate into a 50% to 90% reduction in the land assessed value for the portion of the property enrolled. Related Current Use Taxation programs include the Timberland, Forestland, and Farm and Agricultural programs.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) is a joint federal and state program that works to restore riparian habitat on farmland. Landowners who volunteer to participate in the program are paid rent for allowing their land to be used for these improvements. The program also covers the cost of restoration work. The program is implemented by local conservation districts.

Forestry Riparian Easement Program

Washington Department of Natural Resources runs the [Forestry Riparian Easement Program](#), a voluntary program that focuses on small forest landowners. Landowners are reimbursed for the value of the timber adjacent to streams, wetlands, seeps or steep slopes that they are required by law to leave in the ground.

Healthy Forests Reserve Program

The [Healthy Forests Reserve Program](#) is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and has a goal of helping landowners restore and enhance forest resources on their property. The program provides financial assistance to landowners who implement conservation practices that support the recovery of threatened and endangered species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration on their forest land.

Natural Resources Conservation Service financial assistance

Natural Resources Conservation Service provides financial assistance to landowners and agricultural producers for implementing sustainable management practices. Programs include the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) and the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#).





Green stormwater infrastructure rebate programs

Cities may offer rebates to landowners that voluntarily install green stormwater infrastructure practices such as rain gardens and cisterns. These facilities help reduce the volume of stormwater going into sewers, which benefits stormwater and wastewater services providers. [King County](#), the cities of [Everett](#), [Puyallup](#), [Seattle](#), and [Shoreline](#), and the conservation districts in the region have rain garden rebate programs. Other rebate programs and resources are listed on the [12,000 Rain Gardens website](#).

Stewardship on Public Lands



Green Cities Partnerships

[Green Cities Partnerships](#) is led by Forterra and aims to enhance publicly-owned urban open spaces. Partner cities develop long-term strategic plans for stewarding their open spaces to improve the benefits they provide, including stormwater retention, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and residents' health and quality of life.



Green stormwater infrastructure

Much of the polluted stormwater entering Puget Sound originates from public rights-of-way. By implementing green stormwater infrastructure along public rights-of-way, cities can have a huge impact on water quality in the region. The National Association of City Transportation Officials has published an [Urban Street Stormwater Guide](#) that helps cities plan for and implement green stormwater infrastructure along urban streets.



Stormwater parks

[Stormwater parks](#) are regional stormwater retrofit facilities that also have a recreational component. Kitsap County's Manchester Stormwater Park treats stormwater from surrounding streets and provides a public space for nearby residents. The City of Arlington constructed a stormwater wetland park, which treats all of the stormwater from Arlington's historic downtown and provides trails and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Forest Resilience Bond

A [Forest Resilience Bond](#) is a public private partnership that can help fund forest restoration. It leverages public funding for forest restoration by using private capital. This spreads the costs and benefits among stakeholders and accelerates the pace of restoration.

The Venema Creek Natural Drainage Project captures and infiltrates 70% of the runoff from 80 acres of roadway and impervious surfaces that originally flowed untreated into Venema Creek in Seattle's Broadview neighborhood. It also increased vegetated open space and added 1,600 linear feet of new sidewalks, and calms traffic. The City of Seattle's [Green Stormwater Infrastructure](#) webpage highlights many completed projects and programs including roadside bioswales, public-private partnerships, and incentive programs.

The [Snoquera Project](#) is a proposed forest and land management project on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. It would pay for conservation actions through a Forest Resilience Bond developed and managed by a public private partnership that includes the US Forest Service, Blue Forest, and local groups.



Data and Mapping Tools



Coastal Resilience Mapping Tool

The [Coastal Resilience program](#) is led by the Nature Conservancy with the goal of reducing coast flooding risk. They have produced a decision-support mapping tool for the Puget Sound area that includes information on flood hazards and risks as they relate to built structures and ecosystem benefits.



Open Space Assessment Tool

The Trust for Public Land developed the [Open Space Assessment Tool](#) through a collaborative effort as part of the Regional Open Space Strategy. The Open Space Assessment Tool is a decision-support mapping tool that allows users to map key open space services in the central Puget Sound region and identify lands that are providing these different services. The tool allows users to run queries to identify lands that are providing specific services of interest to the user.



High Resolution Change Detection for land cover

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's [High Resolution Change Detection](#) project has developed several high resolution (1 meter) land cover datasets to track land cover change over time. These datasets track changes from tree and vegetation cover to development, among other changes. This program also maps tree canopy and visible surface water at a high resolution.



Wildland Urban Interface Mapper

The wildland urban interface is where development meets areas that are covered with more than 50% wildlands (forests, grasslands, etc). As more people live or work in the wildland urban interface, fire management becomes more complex and preparing for wildfire more important. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has a [story map and mapper](#) that describes and identifies Washington's wildland urban interface. It is not a wildfire risk map but can be used to inform land use policies and regulations to reduce wildfire risk.



ParkScore

The Trust for Public Land's [ParkScore](#) tool calculates where residents do and do not have a 10-minute walk to a park. Information is also provided by race, income, and age, so equity considerations can be incorporated into the analysis. Detailed mapping is also available through the tool.



Tree Equity Score Mapper

American Forests [Tree Equity Score](#) tool shows how jurisdictions score based on tree canopy cover and demographic characteristics. Ensuring equitable tree cover across every neighborhood can help address social inequities so that all people can thrive. The tool also shows how scores can be improved.



iTree Landscape

As a companion to the Tree Equity Score mapper, [iTree Landscape](#) features more opportunities to analyze ecosystem services that existing tree canopy provides. It incorporates high-resolution tree canopy data for the urban areas of King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties.



Puget Sound Watershed Characterization

The Washington State Department of Ecology's [Puget Sound Watershed Characterization](#) tool allows planners and resource managers to identify the most important areas to protect and restore watershed resources, and areas more suitable for development. This information will help communities identify land use patterns and actions that improve the health of Puget Sound's land and water ecosystems.



Washington Coastal Resilience Project

The University of Washington Climate Impact Group's [Washington Coastal Resilience Project](#) includes localized sea level projections, sea level rise visualization tools, and other tools to map and understand potential sea level rise.



Puget Sound Hazards Mapper

PSRC's [Puget Sound Hazards Mapper](#) is an interactive regional hazards map. It shows which areas of King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties are vulnerable to various hazards such as sea level rise, seismic, volcanic, and flood. General information about each hazard is provided. Areas with hazards may be more appropriate for conservation rather than development and may be eligible for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants (see the Acquisition and Easement Tools section).



Stormwater Heatmap

The Nature Conservancy's [Stormwater Heatmap](#) is an interactive mapping tool, report generator, and data repository that quantitatively visualizes hotspots of pollution generation and runoff throughout the Puget Sound watershed. The heatmap can be used to help identify and prioritize multi-benefit open space projects.



TerrAdapt

[TerrAdapt](#) is a cloud-based mapping tool that helps decision makers understand the landscape-scale impacts of their local land use decisions on regional species and ecosystems.



Accelerating Conservation

Protecting open space, rural, and resource lands are important goals for the region and have many benefits, including providing habitat and recreation, sequestering and storing carbon, improving resilience to a changing climate, and enabling local food and timber production. The tools in this toolkit provide funding, guidance, and other resources for protecting these lands. They have been used by a variety of organizations that have made much progress in conservation work. Expanded use of these tools and creation of new tools will help to accelerate the pace of conservation to protect these lands that are critical to the region's quality of life. Expanding and evolving these tools to advance racial equity will also be a critical component of enriching quality of life for all.

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