

## **Regional Open Space Conservation Plan Definitions (as of January 2017)**

### **Open space (from ROSS final Report)**

It's not just about parks. Open space is an expansive term that includes a wide spectrum of lands both public and private, rural and urban, large and small that together create the natural infrastructure on which society has always depended. Open spaces can be public parks, local and regional trail systems, wetlands and surface water bodies, wilderness lands, urban green spaces like parkways, rain gardens and green roofs, and resource lands for agricultural and timber production.

Open spaces support our communities in ways easily taken for granted: cleansing air and water, minimizing damage from floods, sequestering or capturing carbon, and providing habitat for wildlife. Access to open space for recreation reduces obesity and stress levels.

These open space services, once lost, are costly or impossible to replace with traditional engineered (grey) infrastructure. The movement to set back levees to improve flood management (green infrastructure) is a case in point. We are now finding that the natural floodplain can provide equivalent flood control benefits at less cost than engineered levees, while also providing a range of other environmental and socio-economic benefits.

### **Conservation**

A careful preservation and protection of something; especially: planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect. Conservation can occur through purchase, easement, or transfer of development rights.

### **Lands of high ecological value (from Puget Sound Partnership Land Development and Cover Vital Sign)**

Areas of high significance and high integrity with respect to hydrological dynamics, habitat quality, or biodiversity.

### **Social equity (from ROSS Social Equity Regional Challenge Paper)**

A system of fairness in which "all people, regardless of where they live, have access to the resources and opportunities that improve their quality of life and let them reach their full potential." "All people" refers to all individuals now and into the future irrespective of race, gender, culture, socio-economic status, age or physical ability (PSRC and Kirwan Institute, 2012). Conversely, inequity, as defined by code in King County, Washington, "means differences in well-being that disadvantage one individual or group in favor of another. These differences are systematic, patterned and unfair and can be changed. Inequities are not random; they are caused by past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, policies and the implementation of those policies" (King County Code, 2015).

### **Biodiversity Area (from WDFW PHS Program)**

A Biodiversity Area is an area that has been identified as biologically diverse through a scientifically based landscape-scale assessment. Within urban growth areas (UGAs), Biodiversity Areas contain habitat that is valuable to fish or wildlife and are mostly comprised of native vegetation. Relative to other vegetated areas in the same UGA, the area is vertically diverse (e.g., multiple canopy layers, snags, or downed wood), horizontally diverse (e.g., contains a mosaic of native habitats), or supports a diverse community of species. Biodiversity Areas within UGAs may have limited wildlife functions compared to Biodiversity Areas outside of UGAs.

### **Biodiversity Corridors (from WDFW PHS Program)**

Biodiversity Corridors are areas of relatively undisturbed and unbroken tracts of vegetation that connect Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas, Biodiversity Areas, or other Priority Habitats.

### **Priority Habitat (from WDFW PHS Program)**

A Priority Habitat is an area with unique or significant value to many species. Priority Habitats have one or more of the following attributes:

- Comparatively high fish and wildlife density or species diversity
- Important fish and wildlife breeding habitat or seasonal ranges
- Important fish and wildlife movement corridors
- Limited availability
- High vulnerability to habitat alteration
- Unique or dependent species

A Priority Habitat may be described by its vegetation types or dominant plant species (e.g., oak woodlands, juniper savannah), successional stages (e.g., old growth and mature forests), or habitat features (e.g., caves, cliffs, snags). Priority Habitats can be terrestrial or aquatic. There are currently 20 Priority Habitats on the PHS List; the most abundant is riparian areas.

### **Priority Species (from WDFW PHS Program)**

A Priority Species is a fish or wildlife species that requires protective measures and/or management actions to ensure its survival. A Priority Species meets one or more of the following criteria:

- State-listed (Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive, or Candidate)
- Vulnerable aggregations
- Recreational, commercial, or tribal importance

There are currently 207 Priority Species on the PHS List; this includes approximately 17% of Washington's vertebrate species and a small fraction of invertebrate species.

### **WDFW Priority Area (from WDFW PHS Program)**

The portion of a Priority Species' habitat which limits that species' population (e.g., breeding areas) or areas that support a relatively high number of individuals (e.g., migration corridors). Examples of Priority

Areas include communal roosts, haulouts, and artificial nesting features. If a species is so rare that any occurrence is important in land use decisions, then the Priority Area is listed as *any occurrence*.