



April 14, 2020

To: Alliance for Healthy South Sound Executive Committee

From: South Sound Technical Team

Subject: Recommendation on Allocation of \$100,000 in “Local” National Estuary Program Funding

Decision needed: Select a project to recommend for the \$100,000 in “local” funding under the EPA National Estuary Program. This year there also is the potential for an additional \$100,000 in matching funding from the Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team if one of their priority projects is selected. Recommendation is due on April 30th.

Options: The South Sound Technical Team reviewed and scored eligible projects and prepared two options for Executive Committee consideration. The first option is to fund the highest scoring project overall. The second option is to fund the highest scoring project which is eligible for matching funding from the Puget Sound Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team.

The technical team considered a third option, where funding would be split between projects; however, this option was not available based on EPA’s funding guidance to Strategic Initiative Advisory Teams for this year.

1) [Mud Bay Habitat Protection](#) – This project involves Capital Land Trust fee acquisition of both the 15-acre Fox Parcel and 40 acres adjacent to the mouth of McLane Creek (Complex), located in Lower Eld Inlet. The Fox parcel has 4.5 acres of tidal mud flats and 550 feet of shoreline. The Complex parcels have five acres of tidal mud flats and 2,700 feet of shoreline. Acquisition of these properties will protect nearshore habitat for juvenile and adult salmon, including coho, Chinook, steelhead, chum and coastal cutthroat. Under future management objectives there may be opportunity for hiking trails for wildlife viewing. These parcels are adjacent to other nearby conserved parcels, significantly increasing the overall all connectivity of conservation in Mud Bay.

This was the highest scoring NTA in the Technical Team scoring process. This option would fully fund the highest scoring NTA and allow Capitol Land Trust to complete the Mud Bay acquisition work.

If this option is selected care will be needed to work with Capital Land Trust and the Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team to ensure funding can be applied to work that is most appropriate to National Estuary Program funding. This likely includes work related to feasibility and other studies necessary to support the acquisition and restoration planning and implementation rather than the acquisition itself. Capital Land Trust has secured other grant funding sufficient to support the acquisition if these other funding needs are met.

2) [Ecological Responses to Nearshore Restoration in South Puget Sound](#). The proposed funding would be used to expand on this multi-year monitoring and research effort, which has been on-going for the last 5 years. This is one of a suite of project sites being monitored for changes following nearshore restoration, which is one of the only regional efforts to conduct a comprehensive, science-based study on the nearshore effects of restoration. The funding would specifically be used to conduct 2 more years of monitoring at the project site and to expand on the current understanding of ecological changes at the site following the restoration of the shoreline via armor removal. Specific parameters that would be monitored would include

changes in forage fish spawning on the beach, changes in substrate and sediment, changes in benthic and riparian biota, and changes in down-drift sediment supply. All parameters would be assessed at the control and treatment sites. This project would allow continued research by teams from the University of Washington, Department of Ecology, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

This was the highest scoring of the three projects that qualify for the \$100,000 in Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team matching funding. Selecting this project would fully fund the Ecological Responses to Nearshore Restoration in South Puget Sound work and allow SPSSEG to complete the project.

NTA Recommendation Process Background and Methods:

Each year, each Puget Sound Local Integrating Organization is given the opportunity to direct \$100,000 in “local” EPA National Estuary Program (NEP) funding. Funding must be directed to a local action included in the Puget Sound Action Agenda and projects must meet additional NEP funding guidelines. In addition, this year the Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team identified approximately 100 projects that are eligible for matching funds. If an LIO selects one of these NTAs for their “local” allocation, the Habitat SIAT commits to investing up to an additional \$100,000, up to full funding for the project. Three NTA’s specific to the South Sound qualify for this matching:

1. Expand South Sound Shore Friendly Programs
2. Ecological Responses to Nearshore Restoration in South Puget Sound
3. Accelerating Riparian Restoration in Thurston County

Puget Sound wide NTAs that include a South Sound component, and NTA’s that would occur mainly in Kitsap County (a tiny portion of which is inside the AHSS geography) are excluded from this list.

As we have done in past NTA scoring process, we contact all potentially eligible NTA project sponsors in South Sound to determine if they were interested in being considered for this funding. Ten project sponsors applied. Special care was made to reach project sponsors for the projects eligible for HSIAT match, and all three applied. Projects that applied are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. South Sound NTAs that Applied for NEP Funding

Near Term Action	NTA ID	Owner Organization
Wilcox Reach - Nisqually River Protection and Restoration	2018-0287	Nisqually Land Trust
Schoolyard Stormwater Management	2018-0166	Mason CD
South Sound Shellfish Recovery	2018-0862	Pierce County
Mud Bay Habitat Protection	2018-0189	Capitol Land Trust
Restore Naturally Functioning Riparian Buffers in South Sound	2018-0206	Mason CD
Clear Choices for Clean Water	2018-0911	Thurston CD
Update Chinook Recovery Strategy in Several key Puget Sound Watersheds	2018-0779	Mason CD
Expand South Sound Shore Friendly Programs	2018-0172	Mason CD
Ecological Responses to Nearshore Restoration in South Puget Sound	2018-0860	SPSSEG
Accelerating Riparian Restoration in Thurston County	2018-0380	Thurston County

Applying project sponsors completed a short survey to describe what they would accomplish with \$100,000 in funding and verify that they could use the funding within the required time frames. Based on this information and information contained in the original project descriptions for the Puget Sound Action Agenda, the South Sound Technical Team reviewed and scored all projects that applied. Scoring criteria and the scoring process are described on the [AHSS website](#) include consideration of consistency, benefit, opportunity, likelihood of success, landowner/stakeholder support, and cost. Table 2 lists scoring results.

Table 2. Technical Team Scoring Results

Near Term Action	Average	High	Low
Wilcox Reach - Nisqually River Protection and Restoration	27.50	32	24
Schoolyard Stormwater Management	22.33	27	18
South Sound Shellfish Recovery	28.33	30	26
Mud Bay Habitat Protection	29.17	34	26
Restore Naturally Functioning Riparian Buffers in South Sound	25.83	29	18
Clear Choices for Clean Water	24.80	31	15
Update Chinook Recovery Strategy in Several key Puget Sound Watersheds	24.67	31	20
Expand South Sound Shore Friendly Programs	23.20	31	15
Ecological Responses to Nearshore Restoration in South Puget Sound	25.00	29	19
Accelerating Riparian Restoration in Thurston County	23.83	29	18

**Bold indicates the NTA qualifies for \$100,000 in HSIAT funding*

Funding for this award is administered through state agency Strategic Initiative Leads. The AHSS project funding recommendation will go to the relevant state agency lead and we expect that the state agency leads will accept local recommendations. (This is how it has worked in the past.) The lead state agency strategic initiative lead will negotiate directly with the project sponsor to create a project contract. Grant funds will be available in the Fall of 2020 and must aim for completion by the end of December 2022.

The Executive Committee has made “local” funding recommendations four other times. Two times it recommended funding for the South Sound Shellfish Recovery project, which distributes funding to shellfish protection districts throughout the South Sound and is administered by Pierce County. Based in part on the AHSS seed money funding, the South Sound Shellfish Recovery project has been able to secure approximately \$1 million in additional NEP funding from the Shellfish Strategic Initiative. In 2018 and 2019, funding was awarded to the South Sound Shore Friendly program, which like the Shellfish Recovery project distributes money to all three South Sound counties.

Additional Information: Elizabeth McManus (emcmanus@rossstrategic.com or 206-890-9268).