
Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Council Meeting
March 20, 2025, 10:00AM - 12:00PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting



Participants

Al Schmauder, Chambers-Clover Watershed Council

Audrey Coyne, Department of Health

Barbara Ann Smolko, Pierce County

Brittany Gordon, Kitsap County

Desiree Radice, City of Tacoma

Dustin Bilhimer, Department of Ecology

Juliana Tadano, Puget Sound Partnership

Krista Harrington, Oregon State University

Lisa Spurrier, Pierce County

Marco Pinchot, Pierce County

Monea Kerr, Puget Sound Partnership

Nora Carman-White, Thurston Conservation District

Pat Tarzwell, Mason County

Rachel Friedman, Community Farmland Trust

Renee Johnson, West Sound Partners for Ecosystem Recovery

Tanya Truong, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

Tom Kantz, Pierce County

Tristen Payne, Thurston County

Meeting Facilitation

Elizabeth McManus, Ross Strategic

Haley Morris, Ross Strategic

Meeting Summary

The Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Local Integrating Organization (AHSS LIO) Council met virtually on March 20, 2025. Discussion was as follows.

I. PhD Research on Climate Adaptation Expertise in the Puget Sound – Krista Harrington, Oregon State University.

Krista provided an overview of her dissertation research focused on the roles of expertise in climate action. This research is broken into two phases; Phase one involves the characterization of expertise being utilized by decision-makers. Phase two will consist of communicating with experts to determine barriers they face in facilitating climate action. Krista is seeking participation from AHSS LIO members for a 45-minute interview to understand how and where folks obtain climate change adaptation information and how it's used in decision-making. Please contact krista.harrington@oregonstate.edu to indicate your interest in participating in this research.

II. LIO Collective Action Plan Next Steps – Healthy Shorelines

Healthy Shorelines has been determined as the next LIO Action Plan topic voted on by the ten LIOs throughout Washington. LIO Action Plans are a simple way to connect local priority work to the Puget Sound [Action Agenda](#) and [Implementation Strategies](#) and allows LIOs to roadmap where local funding is needed to advance work that requires coordinated effort between various actors. LIO Action Plans will help to identify the distinction between regional and local work to ensure that local work is being funded. LIO Action Plans will highlight the connection between pressures and solutions and include a clear project action, estimated cost, and capacity needs. AHSS LIO Council members were asked to provide initial insight on high-priority actions to advance shoreline protection and restoration in the South Sound.

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: There is a lot happening with the shellfish work that requires specific framing. How can this information be categorized to ensure this is addressed at the healthy shorelines point of view?
 - A: This information will be built out in a table. The categories of action are still being developed but we would identify factors to associate with the project/action.
- Monitoring and evaluation would be an important action type to start with as that category of work can be hard to fund. This would help us track how things are doing as we don't always have good benchmarks for that.
- Pierce County is in the early stages of a shoreline management update. There may be opportunities to incorporate some of these healthy shoreline plans into the update. We will need to determine the types of actions that can be included in the regulatory actions such as incentives. Starting with the evaluation and monitoring category of action will allow us to set a baseline to know if we're being effective and ensure that policy is being enforced.
- The SILs are busy with the action agenda work right now. Investment plans and the RFPs would benefit from having LIO priorities captured in an Action Plan like this.
- This will require a look at the layers of involvement for partnerships to support institutional capacity building, including increased coordination with the state level organizations such as the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE), the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

III. Kitsap Natural Resource Asset Management Program – Brittany Gordon, Kitsap County ([PowerPoint Link](#)).

Brittany provided an overview of the [Kitsap Natural Asset Management Program](#) (KNRAMP), which will allow Kitsap County to expand on the standard framework of asset management by treating natural resources such as forests, streams, and marine shorelines as assets to be managed with the same consideration to cost of services and investment priorities as built infrastructure. This proactive approach led by Kitsap County, the Suquamish Tribe, and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe will allow Kitsap County to protect and improve natural assets, create a framework to inform long-term decision-making and priority setting about where to invest natural assets, and support existing statutory environmental requirements. KNRAMP utilizes a "level of service" terminology to describe asset conditions ranging from very low to very high levels of service which helps to determine actions that are needed to either increase or maintain the score to ensure attributes of an asset are functioning at a reasonable level to yield economic and environmental benefits.

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: How does this relate to permit development and review of projects that are proposed?
 - A: Theoretically you could look at the land use scale to determine the level of service, but we are not using it that way right now since it's new and one of a kind. There are not many examples on how to do this. We first need to confirm that the data is completely comprehensive. However, we are using this to guide salmon recovery work and priority work. To utilize this in a regulatory way it would need to go through a more robust process.
- Q: Pierce County has a Nearshore Habitat Assessment from 2003 with very outdated data. When collecting information, were you relying on state data that was really old?

- A: There is a lot of scrutiny on the quality of the data. We have data from the county that was good. The levels of data need to be maintained in Cartograph which is the system that the county uses to maintain their data.
- Q: Did you come up with a goal for the county as a whole?
 - A: We will do that as part of the next comprehensive plan update, but we may do this as part of our final report.

IV. Agriculture Lands – Nora Carman-White, Thurston Conservation District ([PowerPoint Link](#))

Nora shared information on the Thurston Conservation District's (TCD) [South Sound Farm Link](#) and [Farm My Yard](#) programs which both provide technical assistance and economic viability that take into account landowner specific goals to support agriculture best management practices and project implementation. The South Sound Farm Link program assists in keeping farmland in production to ensure affordability and accessibility to all interested farmers. This program is meant to support retiring farmers or those transitioning from urban to rural farming to ensure farmland is kept in production while providing technical assistance to those aging out of farming. The Farm My Yard program connects urban farmers and gardeners with rural property owners who have vacant lots, yards, or other spaces available for lease. This program allows growers and property owners to meet their goals and increase access to locally grown products.

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: What types of farms do you have in Thurston County and how does that compare to other parts of Thurston County?
 - There is a diversity of landscapes and populations. We serve producers across rural and urban landscapes from small scale community supported agriculture operations to larger veggie producers serving hundreds of households. There are hubs in the county to help aggregate farm materials and products such as the Southwest Washington Food Hub and Farm Fresh Washington. We're also doing a lot with conservation grazing through the Sentinel Landscape program to support prairie specific species such as the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly. We also work with goat grazers to support livestock producers, and we provide manure management for water quality improvement.

V. Agriculture Lands – Rachel Friedman, Community Farm Land Trust ([PowerPoint Link](#))

Founded in 1997, the Community Farmland Trust (CFLT) aims to assure affordable land and habitat conservation which is accomplished by purchasing land and removing the development rights through a conservation easement which is then leased to farmers so they can retain the land. Rachel shared examples of three different farms the CFLT supports to steward farmland and protect habitat:

- The Scatter Creek Farm and Conservancy – This 147-acre parcel is owned by the CFLT and is co-managed with the Creekside Conservancy. The stream fed by springs on the property infiltrates into an adjacent field which helps to recharge the groundwater on the property.
- James Historic Farm – This is a 29-acre farm that is owned by Common Ground Farm. CFLT maintains a forested buffer around the lower field which is used solely for hay production. Keeping the land in hay production helps to maintain the habitat buffer of Gary Oak trees.
- Arney Farm – This farm is a 25-acre parcel that is under consideration for acquisition. Scatter Creek flows through the property which consistently floods annually.

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

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- Q: It's understood that selling working lands for development was part of farmers' retirement plan. Do you hear that very much? If so, what do you tell them and how do you persuade them that keeping their land working land is a good idea?
 - A: Rachel shared that this is a tension as farmers want to retire comfortably. We are working diligently to help farmers during their farming lifetime to pay taxes. There are measures that look at whether the land can be re-zoned to lower taxes.
 - A: Nora explained that so much of our work is community based. When a farmer needs to make their next plan, this isn't the first time TCD has worked with them. For example, the Arney farm had worked with us and knew to come to us when they were ready to retire. It's important to refer farmers in this phase of life to TCD or the Community Farm Land Trust to be the link of trust and knowledge.
 - What are other incentives that can help farmers decide to keep farmland in production?
 - Our two models are acquisition or easements. We have a lot to learn to see if there are other opportunities. We also lean on relationship building among organizations so the farmer can keep the land in the end.
 - Does the Nisqually Land Trust Community Forest have any application to your work?
 - We don't do much with forestry as the primary focus is farmland and habitat conservation. However, we are starting to dip into farms with farmland.

VI. LIO Updates

- 2026-2030 Action Agenda Update – Drafts will be shared with LIOs early this summer via the newsletters. If you have experience related to the various topics outlined in the upcoming Action Agenda, the AHSS LIO would appreciate your participation in the review process. Please contact Haley (hmmorris@rossstrategic.com) and Elizabeth (emcmanus@rossstrategic.com) if you would like to be involved.
- South Sound Science Center – A South Sound Science Center can help to foster a space for foundational and applied research in the South Sound to inform recovery efforts and allow scientists, institutions, and natural resource managers to seek and administer funding to support monitoring and identify gaps in knowledge. The next steps are to discuss this opportunity with the South Sound Science Center Symposium Planning Committee to identify notable research questions and gaps in data. We may seek to partner with an academic institution or organization to advance this work. The goal is to minimize duplication of efforts but to instead create a focus center to amplify and add to recovery work.

VII. Round Robin

- Marco Pinchot, Pierce County shared that the county has received half a million dollars to do eelgrass monitoring along Pierce County shorelines. This is a three-year allocation of funding that will be accomplished in partnership with the DNR Nearshore Habitat Program. Eelgrass was last surveyed in 2003 in Pierce County so this will ensure there is current data.
- Tom Kantz, Pierce County shared that the request for proposals requesting a project manager for the [Chambers Bay Estuary Restoration project](#) is live and closes on April 2, 2025. This project will be under contract by the end of April.

VIII. Next Steps

The Council will meet next on June 26, from 10:00am-12:00pm. If you have suggestions for agenda topics, please email Haley, hmmorris@rossstrategic.com.