
Alliance for a Healthy South Sound (AHSS) Council Meeting
September 19, 2024, 10:00AM - 12:00PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting



Participants

Ali Brown, City of Lacey
Amy Hatch-Winecka, TRPC
Barbara Ann Smolko, Pierce County
Brian Combs, DES
Brienne Blackburn, Pierce County
Cindy Callahan, TPCHD
Desiree Radice, City of Tacoma
Jesse Barham, City of Olympia
Karin Strelieff, Thurston CD

Additional Participants

Kym Foley, City of Olympia
Lisa Spurrier, Pierce County
Mack Kleiva, DERT
Meridith Greer Jacobo, Greer Consulting
Monea Kerr, PSP
Natalie Weiss, City of Olympia
Renee Johnson, WSPER
Robyn Denson, Pierce County
Tom Kantz, Pierce County

Meeting Facilitation

Elizabeth McManus, Ross Strategic
Haley Morris, Ross Strategic

Meeting Summary

The Alliance for a Healthy South Sound LIO Council met virtually on September 19, 2024. 18 Council members were present. Discussion was as follows.

I. City of Olympia Climate Action and Resilience

Natalie Weiss, City of Olympia presented on a variety of initiatives and programs that the [City of Olympia Climate Team is currently leading](#):

- The Climate Change & Resiliency Chapter in the [City of Olympia's 2045 Comprehensive Plan](#) is currently being developed by the Climate Advisory Committee made up of Tribal members, the Olympia Planning Commission, and a variety of City of Olympia Departments. The Comprehensive Plan development started in 2023, and the draft chapter will be released in 2025. The Climate Team is currently assessing vulnerability and risk through working group meetings with the Climate Advisory Committee.
- The [2019 City of Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Plan](#) is a guiding document for all sea level rise planning in Olympia. The plan includes projections on near term, mid-term, and long-term strategies as sea level rise increases. Near-term strategies have been completed on schedule and the City is moving toward mid and long-term strategies which include interventions to adapt moderate and high sea level rise.
- [Energize Olympia](#) is a ductless heat pump purchasing program that offers exclusive benefits to Olympia residents through financing incentives, installation, and free site assessments from a vetted installer.

AHSS Council Comments:

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- The [Coastal Storm Modeling System \(CoSMoS\)](#) recently released a tool that makes predictions of storm-induced flooding and erosion impacts over large geographic scales.
 - Kim Foley provided detailed information on how the climate chapter ties into the eleven other chapters in the 2045 Comprehensive Plan. The Climate Team effectively worked with subject matter experts across departments to note the intersections between each chapter. The team parsed out which aspects of climate action around mitigation are actually centered on transportation, energy, etc. to more effectively write policy that backs up decision making for each chapter rather than including it all in the climate chapter. It's important to meet with folks from different department to ensure that policy is not being written in one chapter that could potentially be in conflict with policy written in another chapter.

II. Riparian Restoration and Recovery along the Lower Deschutes River in Tumwater

Meridith Greer Jacobo, Greer Consulting provided an overview on behalf of the City of Tumwater on the [Pioneer Park Restoration project in Tumwater, Washington](#). The lower Deschutes River runs through the city-owned public park and there is a regional effort to better manage the river in a way that is conducive with multiple uses. Pioneer Park is needing a 48% reduction in fine sediment and over a 50% increase in shade. The City of Tumwater is approaching the restoration from a water quality perspective. The City has received two grants from the Department of Ecology to fund the project which has been split into two phases. Phase one is the upland phase, that is encouraging the river to enter into channels when flooding is increased which is anticipated to wrap up in 2025. Phase two is the water work phase to reactivate and re-engage historic channels to provide benefits to the bank by reducing erosion and restoring in-water habitat for salmon and aquatic species that are important for the health of the river. The project is anticipated to wrap up in 2028.

Deschutes River Watershed Recovery Phase 1

Meridith also shared information on a Floodplains by Design proposal that members of the WRIA 13 put together in May 2024. Various organizations and entities collaborated to develop an idea of what watershed recovery should look like in the Deschutes watershed and how these efforts could be implemented. A 10-year, \$50 million dollar plan was initially developed and split into three parts that reflect different sections of the river that present varying needs. The lower watershed is in an urban area which poses significant water quality concerns. Much of the middle area is privately owned and is operated as working lands. While a vast majority of the upper watershed is owned by Weyerhaeuser as timberland. This group submitted a Floodplains by Design application to fund the eleven projects that will cover the length of the Deschutes River. Ultimately, \$10 million was requested and about 70% of the total budget was suggested to go towards implementation projects such as construction that would directly benefit the watershed. Currently the project is ranked 12th on the Floodplains by Design list but a decision won't be made until July 2025.

AHSS Council Comments:

- Amy Hatch-Winecka noted that the AHSS LIO is empowered to advocate for this funding. There is potential for Floodplains by Design to fund all the projects on the list, as that is not unheard of.

III. Restoring the Deschutes Estuary

Brian Combs, Department of Enterprise Services provided an update on the [Deschutes Estuary project](#) which is one of the highest priority projects in the watershed. One of the aims of the project is to memorialize some of the history in this geography through art installations. Integrating Heritage Park into the design and planning for this project is a key element due to its connecting piece between the

estuary and the campus, along with its risk of significant flooding. The project will enhance civic activities and will include a boardwalk and trail, water access points, opportunities for nature immersion and connection to the campus. 15% of the design was completed in quarter 3 of 2024 and 30% of the design is expected to be completed at the end of 2024. 60% is projected to be completed in 2025, leading to 100% of the project to be completed in 2026. Some actions that will be taken include dredging, salt marsh development, construction of a boardwalk, and the implementation of water access points. Brian also shared the plan to build a new 5th Avenue bridge along with the dam removal. Moving into 2025 there will be opportunities to attend public meetings and community events. Updates on this project can be found [here](#).

AHSS Council Comments/Questions:

- Is a majority of the cost of implementing this project centered around the bridge?
 - The cost of the bridge and the habitat elements are split fairly evenly 50/50. The total cost estimate right now is \$350 million. These projects will be funded through federal and state funds. Transportation and urban planning funding is anticipated to fund a significant piece of this.
- Can you reiterate anything about the timing of the project implementation?
 - The construction is slated to start in 2027 which will include dredging, the reuse of sediment, and the bridge development. The anticipated completion of this project is 2033.

IV. Group Reflection

Are there any thoughts or reflections that the Council would want to offer on how we got from where we were 15 years ago to now?

- Amy Hatch-Winecka noted that resilience is what has gotten us to where we are now. The community needs to be ready and willing to push forward on projects before any progress is made.
- Tom Kantz built off Amy's comment to suggest that resilience is important, while also underscoring that approaching problems in a multi-faceted way is critical in making connections and allows projects to move forward more smoothly.
- Jesse Barham shared that long-term maintenance plans and reliable funding provides assurance on what the outcome of projects will look like. Unreliable funding was a barrier for a very long time.

Think down the road to the people who come after you, who will be talking together in 10, 15, or even 20 years? What's the next multifaceted project going to be?

- Tom Kantz shared that the Chambers Watershed has many of the same elements as the Deschutes Watershed such as a dam removal, bridge replacement, and estuary restoration that will require an estimated \$50 to \$60 million.
- Jesse Barham suggested that working with railroads along the shoreline would serve as an important potential future project.

V. LIO Updates

Elizabeth shared several LIO updates with Council members including:

- Monea Kerr is the new Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator with the Puget Sound Partnership overseeing the AHSS LIO. Monea can be contacted at monea.kerr@psp.wa.gov.

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- The Puget Sound Action Agenda is being updated to be reflected in the 2026-2030 Action Agenda. Different pieces of the Action Agenda will be renamed while the strategies and general architecture will stay fairly consistent.
 - The Alliance Executive Committee identified the need for a South Sound Science Center to create a home for coordination, collaboration, and funding needs for foundational science around restoration and recovery work in the South Sound.
 - The AHSS LIO has received supplemental OSS funding to implement measurable, on-the-ground projects. AHSS has worked with the local health jurisdiction and Tribal partners to identify work that is needed. The Nisqually Tribe has identified Henderson Inlet as a place of focus as a Tribal Treaty harvest shellfish bed hotspot. The LIO is currently coordinating with the Squaxin Island Tribe to identify a second hotspot.
 - The [South Sound Science Symposium](#) is happening on Wednesday, October 16th at the Little Creek Casino Resort near Shelton, Washington from 8am to 4pm. This is a great opportunity to learn about foundational science needs.

VI. Round Robin

- Jesse Barham shared that the City of Olympia helped the Thurston Regional Planning Council get a grant through the Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead to do a Thurston County-scale retrofit water quality planning study to identify pollution hotspots and priority projects. By the end of 2024 there will be some stakeholder engagement opportunities to understand what the priorities are.
- Barbar Ann Smolko announced that the Key Peninsula-Gig Harbor-Island Watershed Council will be hosting their annual State of the Watershed Forum on Wednesday, October 23rd at 5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting with the in-person meeting taking place at the City of Gig Harbor City Hall/Civic Center. The Watershed Coordinator can be contacted [here](#).
- Karin Strelieff announced that the Thurston Conservation District is hiring a [Natural Resource Specialist of Senior Specialist](#) along with some other positions. Karen also shared that the [Deschutes River Preserve](#), which was once a working farm has been purchased by Olympia Ecosystems. An airport is being built upstream of the river. There are many grant proposals being submitted to focus on floodplain reconnection and habitat restoration along this stretch of the river.
- Lisa Spurrier shared information on the WRIA 10/12 nearshore habitat assessment project that will cover about 30 miles of shoreline in the Puyallup-White and Chambers-Clover watersheds. The project will look at small stream embankments on the nearshore. The Enhancement Group also submitted an application for the ESRP Learning and Sharing Grant to do a project in the same geography with a focus on fish use.
- Amy Hatch-Winecka shared that the Salmon Recovery Funding Board would be making [funding decisions](#) the following week after the Recreation and Conservation Office's review of submitted projects. Contracts will start to go out by the first of the new year.

VII. Next Steps

The Council will meet next on December 19, from 10:00am-12:00pm. If you have suggestions for agenda topics, please email Haley, hmorris@rossstrategic.com.

