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**Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Council Meeting**  
**September 18, 2025, 10:00AM - 12:00PM**  
**Virtual Zoom Meeting**



**Participants**

Alan Chapman, LIO Member	Desiree Radice, City of Tacoma
Amy Hatch-Winecka, WRIA 13 Lead Entity Coordinator	Karin Strelieff, Thurston Conservation District
Audrey Coyne, Department of Health	Kristen Durance, PWR LIO
Barbara Ann Smolko, Pierce County	Kym Foley, City of Olympia
Becca Book, Pierce County	Lisa Petorak, City of University Place
Brianne Blackburn, Pierce County	Lisa Spurrier, Pierce County Department
Brittany Gordon, Kitsap County	Lynda Nashed Zeman, Thurston County
Cindy Callahan, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Maya Teeple, Thurston County
Dakota Oliver, Mason Conservation District	Tanya Truong, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
	Tom Kantz, Pierce 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 September 18, 2025. Discussion was as follows.

**I. Thurston County Comprehensive Plan Update**

Maya Teeple, Thurston County provided an overview of Thurston County’s Comprehensive Plan update, [Thurston 2045](#) which began in 2022 and is approaching completion. She explained that the plan aligns with recent changes in state law, such as the Growth Management Act (GMA) which provides guidance on reducing sprawl, concentrating urban growth, permitting, and open space and environmental protection. Key updates regarding natural resource lands, land use, and housing chapters include revised population projections, development code changes, and a focus on reducing rural growth to support sustainability and ecosystem recovery. The climate chapter will feature climate and development regulation updates, emphasizing sector-based climate policies focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing resilience across ecosystems, infrastructure, and public services. The next step for this update is to review the plan with the Planning Commission Board at a work session prior to a public hearing which will be held in November with hopes of a final action by December 2025. If you would like to receive updates on this process, sign up for the web mailing list [here](#). View Maya’s presentation [here](#).

**LIO Member Comments/Questions:**

- Tom Kantz asked if land conversion is a reluctance, or if it’s an effort to try and prevent land conversion and habitat loss?

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- Maya explained that the 5% rural growth goal aims to significantly reduce projected development in rural areas over the next 20 years, primarily to protect habitat. While a blanket downzone is the simplest tool to achieve this, Thurston County is also considering more nuanced, performance-based approaches tied to watershed health and habitat metrics.
  - Tom Kantz mentioned that farmers and small woodlot landowners sell their land for conversion to housing development as part of their retirement plan. He asked if Land Use Planners see that as part of the economic driver for land conversion, and if there's anything we can do to try and reduce that
    - Maya answered by sharing that the community had a strong desire to designate more land to become a 1:20 or 1:40. Thurston County chose not to designate more lands dedicated to agriculture. Instead, the county is exploring more flexible land use strategies like agricultural overlays and clustered housing that aim to preserve large tracts of land while still allowing limited development with reduced environmental impact.
  - Tom Kantz asked how much coordination there is in developing a comprehensive plan between counties and cities within the counties?
    - Maya shared that there is a lot of regional overlap for plans that inform the comprehensive plan updates such as watershed and wildlife corridor plans.
  - Brittany Gordon asked what challenges they see around implementation of any of the updates, and what resources would be helpful for the county to have.
    - Maya noted that money and dedicated staff are critical resources for the county to have.

## **II. Pierce County Comprehensive Plan Update**

Becca Book, Pierce County, shared the extent of Pierce County's Comprehensive Plan update which was adopted in December 2024. The Plan included major updates to critical areas ordinances, particularly around wetlands and fish and wildlife habitat conservation based on best available science, resulting in expanded buffers, stricter mitigation requirements, and new stream typing. Becca highlighted three out of twelve of the policy areas in Pierce County's Comprehensive Plan: housing and land use, capital facilities and transportation, and environment and climate. Regarding housing and land use, the plan focuses on increasing housing density in urban areas with existing infrastructure and limiting rural development to protect ecosystems and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Relevant changes to the capital facilities and utilities element include new policies to support the creation of a county water utility and adopted policies to ensure that new facilities account for the risk of wildfires, floods, and heat waves during project scoping. Lastly, the GMA suggested a pathway to address climate resilience by integrating strategies into a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan which was developed in 2023 and will likely require updates down the road. To prioritize which policies to integrate into the climate mitigation section, a 2019 emissions inventory was referenced which allowed the Planners to predict emissions reduction goals such as adopting a goal of conserving up to 10,000 acres of forests and farmland to sequester carbon. View Becca's presentation [here](#).

### **LIO Member Comments/Questions:**

- Tom Kantz asked how Pierce County can prevent additional habitat loss and land conversion
  - Becca answered by stating that Pierce County implemented development code changes to limit growth in certain areas and is working to expand its Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program to help landowners access economic value without developing their land.

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- Tom Kantz followed up by asking if the abundance of land still available for development in Pierce County would reduce demand for the TDR Program, since developers may not need to purchase rights when land is already accessible?
    - Becca noted that typically the projects that are buying development rights are already in urban areas and are trying to encourage denser development, so they are giving away the density that they would prefer people pay for.
  - Brittany Gordon asked if the Comprehensive Plan identifies which departments will do the implementation, and how they work together to implement those policies?
    - Becca shared that the policies do not have that level of detail.
  - Lisa Spurrier asked if there were any other downzoning actions taken based on critical areas
    - Becca explained that they looked at the number of critical areas in the desktop analysis for the UGA retraction. They also had another proposal to take away the highest density rural zone which didn't get approved by the Council, but it was heavily considered.
  - Elizabeth McManus asked what the trade-off is between shrinking Pierce County's urban growth area (UGA) versus downzoning inside or outside the UGA?
    - Becca explained that the original intent of the UGA was for these areas to eventually be incorporated or annexed, but Pierce County still has a large unincorporated urban area due to limited progress on incorporation.
  - Elizabeth McManus asked what the advantages of incorporation are
    - Becca noted that incorporation enables areas to have their own elected officials and planning department which is a benefit due to their familiarity with local needs.

### III. Healthy Shoreline Action Plan Next Steps

Elizabeth McManus, AHSS LIO Coordinator shared that the AHSS LIO is nearing the development of a Healthy Shoreline Action Plan, which aims to organize and elevate work to improve shoreline health in the South Puget Sound. These Action Plans serve as a bridge between regional strategies and local efforts, helping to ensure that funding is directed toward community-identified priorities. They also offer LIOs an opportunity to collectively review and update their Ecosystem Recovery Plans and allow regional funders to use the plans to better understand local needs and align funding opportunities accordingly.

The Action Plan will be submitted to the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) in late September but can be updated as needed. Key themes that are emerging in the draft Action Plan include the development of incentives and funding sources for shoreline landowners, education for shoreline landowners and contractors on opportunities for shoreline restoration and regulations, increasing county capacity to fund and implement shoreline master programs, and additional funding to advance local shoreline restoration projects such as Chambers Bay and the Deschutes Estuary restoration project. Council members noted that monitoring for eelgrass and kelp, a shoreline effectiveness study, and engaging permitting staff in outreach should be included in the Action Plan. Additionally, the new Salmon Recovery Planner at Pierce County should review this Action Plan before submitting it to PSP.

### IV. LIO Updates

- **South Sound Science Center** – To continue scoping a South Sound Science Center, AHSS LIO Coordinators will continue to connect with local partners to identify key science and research needs and science funding gaps. Next steps will involve developing an ad hoc committee to help refine the objectives, building the structure, and identifying potential funding opportunities.

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- **Strategic Initiative Lead Integrated Watershed Planning Funding** – The AHSS is receiving a one-time funding allotment from the Stormwater SIL to support a Nisqually Watershed Scale Integrated Planning project to advance salmon recovery by using Thurston County’s Visualizing Ecosystem Land Management Assessments Modeling Tool (VELMA). This work will be led by Thurston County in collaboration with the Nisqually Indian Tribe and other watershed partners.
  - **Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB) Local Forum** – The ECB Local Forum will be hosted by the AHSS LIO on November 5 in Olympia and will be focused on the history and future of estuary restoration in the South Sound. The Local Forum will highlight the importance of restoration in smaller estuaries and embayments as well as the strong history of local collaboration around south sound estuary restoration projects such as the Nisqually, Shelton Harbor, Oakland Bay, and Whiteman Cove estuaries as well as ongoing work at Chambers Bay and the Deschutes Estuary.

#### V. Round Robin

- Amy Hatch-Winecka shared that the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) made the final approval on riparian projects for the 2025 grant round. Additionally, the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) projects are in legal review.
- The Pierce Conservation District has posted a job opening for a [Marine Shoreline Senior Program Manager](#) that is responsible for implementing the Pierce County Component of the South Sound Shore Friendly Program.
- Brittany Gordon, Kitsap County provided information on the upcoming Kitsap Natural Resources Asset Management Program virtual workshop on September 24 from 1-3pm. The intended audience for this workshop includes city and county jurisdictions, Tribes, and watershed partners across Puget Sound. Register for the workshop [here](#).
- Karin Strelioff, Thurston Conservation District (TCD) provided the following TCD updates:
  - TCD will be posting agriculture jobs soon
  - Solicitation requesting public comment on TCD’s Strategic Plan update will be coming out soon
  - TCD will be hosting its annual Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 4 from 10am-3pm at the South Union Grange in Olympia. Learn more [here](#).

#### VI. Next Steps

The Council will meet next on December 18 from 10:00am-12:00pm. If you have suggestions for agenda topics, please email Haley Morris, [hmorris@rossstrategic.com](mailto:hmorris@rossstrategic.com).