

Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Local Integrating Organization (AHSS LIO)
Executive Committee Meeting
September 3, 2025, 11:00AM - 12:00PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting



Executive Committee Members

Daniel Kuntz, Squaxin Island Tribe
David Troutt, Nisqually Indian Tribe
Pat Tarzwell, Mason County
Robyn Denson, Pierce County
Ryan Mello, Pierce County

Additional Attendees:

Amy Hatch-Winecka, Thurston Regional Planning Council
Elizabeth McManus, AHSS LIO
Haley Morris, AHSS LIO

Meeting Summary

The Alliance Executive Committee met virtually on September 3, 2025. Five of six members were present. Discussion was as follows.

I. 2025-2026 Capacity Contract Tasks

Elizabeth McManus, AHSS LIO Coordinator, updated Executive Committee members on the progress of the following optional tasks from the 2024-2025 contract that Executive Committee members decided on:

- **One or more topical focused LIO convenings** – In partnership with the Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead (HSIL), the AHSS LIO hosted a joint Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy convening with the Puyallup-White River (PWR) LIO on April 2, 2025, to allow LIO members to share local kelp and eelgrass priorities with the HSIL.
- **South Sound Science Center coordination** – AHSS LIO Coordinators connected with members of the South Sound Science Symposium Planning Committee and Lead Entity coordinators to gauge interest and to identify key scientific questions that a South Sound Science Center can explore.
- **Ongoing work to support on-site sewage funding** – The AHSS LIO coordinated with partners to identify a project that this funding will support. The AHSS LIO will convene these partners in fall 2025 to discuss the implementation of this funding and determine if there are any adaptive management needs.
- **Stormwater Integration Funding** – Work is underway to secure funding to support a Nisqually Watershed project. Please see details below.
- **LIO Local Forum** – Planning for the November 5, 2025, Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB) meeting is underway. Please see details below.

Next, the Executive Committee provided their support on the following activities for the 2025-2026 contract to spend additional funds on:

- The AHSS LIO will continue to send bi-monthly newsletters to the AHSS LIO contact list that include funding opportunities, events, relevant news, and job opportunities.
- Host and facilitate a local convening on a topic of interest in the South Sound and/or a site-visit in the LIO geography to demonstrate local work that advances LIO priorities.
- Continued support for the concept of a South Sound Science Center.

- David Troutt, AHSS LIO Chair reminded the Executive Committee that the South Sound Science Center concept was initially suggested to explore developing organizational strength to tap into funding sources beyond the Puget Sound Partnership and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure that the AHSS LIO can function without these funding sources should the funding disappear in the future. The next step is to develop a structure and identify a nonprofit to house this within.
- Develop a strategic approach for addressing culverts on private lands/roads.
- One or two additional Action Plans in addition to one required Action Plan.
- The Executive Committee suggested reviewing the South Sound Recovery Strategy to ensure that the structure of the AHSS LIO that was developed over 10 years ago, is still serving the intended purpose. It was suggested that a half-day retreat be planned to dedicate time to evaluate how the AHSS LIO is operating and is organized to ensure it's still working effectively.

II. AHSS Local Forum on Estuary Restoration in November

The ECB Local Forum hosted by the AHSS LIO on November 5 in Olympia 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. Executive Committee members suggested identifying legislative changes that could leverage this work, to emphasize the importance of monitoring, and to emphasize the role that watershed and ecosystem recovery groups in the South Sound played in fostering and furthering collaboration around estuary restoration efforts.

III. Healthy Shorelines Action Plan

The Healthy Shoreline Action Plan aims to organize and elevate work needed to improve shoreline health in the South Puget Sound by coordinating with AHSS partners to understand opportunities, barriers, and associated actions for healthy shorelines. These Action Plans serve as a bridge between regional strategies and local efforts, helping to ensure that funding is directed toward community-identified priorities. The Action Plan will be submitted to the Puget Sound Partnership 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 increasing funding to advance local shoreline restoration projects such as Chambers Bay and the Deschutes Estuary. Executive Committee members suggested developing a strategic approach to provide guidance on the application of tools such as the Nearshore Project Selection Tool and the Coastal Catchment Analysis Tool.

IV. Updates

- **Integrated Watershed Planning Project** - With funding from the Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead, the AHSS LIO will be supporting the Nisqually Watershed Scale Integrated Planning project. This project will involve the use of Thurston County's in-house Visualizing Ecosystem Land Management Assessments (VELMA) modeling capacity to inform land use policy, and county programs via a watershed-scale integrated planning effort for the Nisqually watershed.

- The Puyallup-White River LIO will be supporting the Pierce County Urban Forestry and Green Stormwater Infrastructure Management Plan which will prioritize benefits to stormwater and climate resilience by integrating green stormwater infrastructure best practices and salmon recovery planning.
- **LIO Commitments** - The Puget Sound Partnership has drafted [LIO Commitments](#) to be included in the next Salmon recovery Plan Addendum. AHSS LIO Executive Committee members were supportive of these commitments.
- **Deschutes Estuary Watershed Council progress** - The AHSS LIO is working with the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team (DERT) staff to help identify funding opportunities such as local family foundations, municipal funding, or state funding to support the development of a Deschutes Estuary Watershed Council.

V. Next Steps

The next AHSS LIO Council meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2025. Scheduling for future Executive Committee meetings will happen in early October.