



**Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Council Meeting**  
**February 19, 2026, 10:00AM - 12:00PM**  
**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

**Participants**

Alex Chacon, Thurston Conservation District	Kristen Durance, PWR LIO
Ali Brown, City of Lacey	Lisa Spurrier, Pierce County/WRIA 10/12
Amy Hatch-Winecka, WRIA 13 Lead Entity	Monea Kerr, Puget Sound Partnership
Coordinator/Thurston Regional Planning Council	Mary Krauszer, Pierce County
Audrey Coyne, WA State Department of Health/Shellfish SIL	Rachel Latchford, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife/Habitat SIL
Claire Swearingen, Thurston County	Rebecca Brown, Department of Natural Resources/Habitat SIL
Chanele Holbrook, Department of Ecology/Stormwater SIL	Scott Steltzner, Squaxin Island Tribe
Daniel Einstein, Oly Ecosystems	Tanya Truong, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Dustin Bilhimer, Department of Ecology/Stormwater SIL	Tom Kantz, Pierce County
Karin Strelieff, Thurston Conservation District	Tye Menser, Thurston County
	Vladimir Nekrutenko, Mason County Public Health

**Meeting Facilitation**

Elizabeth McManus, AHSS LIO  
Haley Morris, AHSS LIO

**Meeting Summary**

The Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Local Integrating Organization (AHSS LIO) Council met virtually on February 19, 2026. The meeting centered on the theme of urban forestry, and featured presentations from local leaders engaged in forestry-related projects, an Action Plan scoping discussion, updates from the AHSS LIO, and a round-robin for members to share their own updates. The discussion proceeded as follows.

**I. Pierce County Urban Forestry Management Plan**

Ann Koenig, Pierce County, provided an overview of Pierce County’s Urban Forestry Management Plan, funded through a Department of Ecology grant awarded to the Puyallup River Watershed Council and directed to Pierce County to support plan development alongside a consultant (Ross Strategic). Ann explained that the inspiration for the plan emerged from [Sustainability 2030](#), Pierce County’s Resilience and Climate Action Plan which includes an action to *identify priority urban forestry sites and implement a tree planting project that serves as a model for developing and Urban Forestry Management Plan to reduce stormwater runoff and urban heat*. The Urban Forestry Management Plan aims to maximize benefits of trees to reduce heat, stormwater runoff, and improve community health. The plan will be guided by both an internal Pierce County workgroup and external collaboration with Tribes and cities within the County. Key deliverables will include recommendations for code updates and design standards to preserve and expand tree canopy/green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), opportunities for cross-jurisdictional actions, locations of priority sites for tree planning and GSI, maintenance plans, and guidance for planting and maintaining a resilient urban forest. View Ann’s presentation [here](#).

**LIO Member Comments/Questions:**

- Q: Tom Kantz inquired about a timeline for the project.

- 
- A: Ann informed the AHSS LIO that the project is expected to begin in spring or summer or 2026 with a deadline to complete the project by the end of 2027.
  - Q: Commissioner Menser attended a workshop focused on the City of Tacoma’s Tree Work Plan. He asked whether Tacoma’s plan connects with the Pierce County Urban Forestry Management Plan or if they are separate efforts.
    - A: Rebecca Brown shared the recording of the [Balancing Housing and Urban Tree Canopy Workshop](#) that Commissioner Menser referred to.
    - A: Ann noted that Pierce County will coordinate with Tacoma and other jurisdictions to determine how the County can support their urban forestry efforts, particularly for smaller cities that lack capacity to collect urban-forestry-related data. Because Tacoma has dedicated Urban Forestry staff and ongoing initiatives, Pierce County intends to align efforts where helpful but will avoid duplicating work already led by the City of Tacoma.

## II. Thurston County Tree Canopy Plan

Claire Swearingen, Thurston County, presented on Thurston County’s recent tree canopy work which includes a comprehensive [2025 Tree Canopy Report](#) that maps rural canopy cover using high-accuracy LiDAR data and highlights where restoration is most feasible, where forests are encroaching on prairie soils, and how these dynamics affect ecologically significant species such as Oregon white oak. The plan provides guidance for balancing forest protection with the preservation of prairie ecosystems, which offer unique carbon-sequestration and fire-resilience benefits and hold deep cultural significance for Indigenous communities. These findings help inform Thurston County planning efforts, including the [Forest Lands Conversion Ordinance](#) adopted in 2024, ongoing monitoring of tree-removal permitting, updates to the [Critical Areas Ordinance](#), and the recently adopted [Thurston 2045 Comprehensive Plan](#), which sets goals and policies for tree protection, canopy monitoring, forest management planning, and prairie restoration. View Claire’s presentation [here](#).

### LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: Commissioner Menser asked whether the language in the 2045 Comprehensive Plan describes Thurston County’s current urban forestry management efforts or if it’s instead setting future priorities beyond existing initiatives.
  - A: Claire noted that Thurston 2045 addresses both ongoing work and future efforts such as developing a formal tree canopy monitoring program and setting specific canopy targets for different land-use types.
- Q: Commissioner Menser also asked whether aligning Thurston County’s Forest Conversion Ordinance with the subdivision code will be proposed this year.
  - A: Claire was unsure and agreed to get confirmation for Commissioner Menser.
- Q: asked about opportunities to engage partners and provide staff training related to Thurston County’s Tree Conservation Code, as well as ways to strengthen outreach efforts.
  - A: Claire shared that this idea has not been discussed but will be added to the list of follow-up actions from the first year of monitoring which they are beginning to reevaluate.
- Q: Alex Chacon was also curious whether the Tree Canopy Report addresses risk of conversion in addition to restoration.
  - A: Claire noted that the Tree Canopy Report is focused more on restoration as opposed to conversion risk.

## III. Floodplains and Estuaries Action Plan Process

---

The next AHSS LIO Action Plan will focus on floodplains and estuaries, marking the LIO's third Action Plan. The LIO's previous plans, on-site septic and healthy shorelines, have successfully leveraged funding to support local projects. Action Plans serve as a bridge between regional strategies and local priorities, ensuring that funding is directed to community-identified needs. They also provide LIO's an opportunity to collectively review and update their Ecosystem Recovery Plans, while offering regional funders insight into local priorities to better align funding opportunities. Each Action Plan is structured around topic strategies and actions from the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda to strengthen connections between local and regional efforts.

AHSS LIO members can expect an email in March or April which will contain a list of the 44 floodplain and estuary Action Agenda actions, asking partners to identify which ones are applicable to South Sound. The email will also include a tool for partners to add projects that are not already captured. A final draft of the Action Plan will be shared with the AHSS Council for review by September.

#### IV. LIO Updates

- **South Sound Technical Team Restart:** The South Sound Technical Team (consists of representatives from the Nisqually Tribe, Squaxin Island Tribe, Pierce Conservation District, Thurston Conservation District, Lead Entity Coordinators from WRIA's 10/12, 11, 13, and 14, City of Olympia, Thurston County, Pierce County, and the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group) has reestablished to review technical resources, coordinate technical work, and track local projects. For 2026, the team will focus on updating mapping tools and improving their functionality, as well as assessing completed conservation work and identifying remaining gaps to better understand how organizations prioritize restoration, acquisition, and conservation projects. LIO members with suggestions for areas the Technical Team should explore are encouraged to email Haley Morris ([hmorris@rossstrategi.com](mailto:hmorris@rossstrategi.com)).
- **Stormwater In-person Meeting Interest:** AHSS LIO members are supportive of an in-person stormwater-focused meeting that will likely take place in early summer. Please look out for more information on this in the spring.
- **Capacity Funding Needs:** Elizabeth asked participants whether they have small to mid-sized capacity needs for projects or programs they are seeking to fund.
  - Q: Dan Einstein shared that Oly Ecosystems is looking for design and permitting funding to supplement a Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Program to support a stormwater project. Dan noted that Oly Ecosystems was previously awarded a Neighborhood Stormwater Education and Assistance grant offered by Ecology and was curious if another RFP will be released for this funding opportunity.
  - A: Chanele Holbrook noted that this was a one-time funding opportunity through the Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead (SIL). If they receive additional funding from EPA, they will look into releasing another funding opportunity.

#### V. Round Robin

- **Microplastic Strategy Workshops:** The Stormwater SIL is hosting Microplastics workshops on March 17 and May 5. Learn more [here](#).
  - **Workshop 2: March 17** – This workshop will focus on current **Microplastic Prevention & Source Control Intervention Actions** in Washington and will include examples from other states. [Register here](#).

- 
- **Workshop 3: May 5** – This workshop will focus on **Microplastic Exposure & Risk Reduction Intervention Actions** and will include a listening session for actions that Puget Sound stakeholders would like to do. [Register here](#).
  - **South Sound Science Symposium:** The 2026 South Sound Science Symposium will be on October 15, 2026, from 8am-4pm with a poster gala following the main event. It will take place at Little Creek Event Center (91 W St Rt 108, Shelton, WA). Registration is coming soon.
  - **Thurston Conservation District (TCD) Updates:**
    - **Native Plant Sale:** Plants can be picked up on March 7 from 10am-3pm at the Thurston County Fairgrounds.
    - **National Estuary Program (NEP) Funding:** TCD received NEP funding to support partnership and collaboration with nearby jurisdictions to ensure stormwater work in Thurston County is as efficient and collaborative as possible.

## **VI. Next Steps**

The next AHSS LIO Council meeting is on April 30, 2026. If you have suggestions for agenda topics or newsletter content, please email Haley Morris ([hmorris@rossstrategic.com](mailto:hmorris@rossstrategic.com)).