



Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Council Meeting
April 30, 2026, 10:00AM - 12:00PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Participants

| | |
|--|--|
| Amy Hatch-Winecka, WRIA 13 Lead Entity | Jean Frost, Thurston County |
| Barbara Ann Smolko, Pierce County | Keith Dublanica, Deschutes Estuary Restoration |
| Coordinator/Thurston Regional Planning Council | Team |
| Amelia Schwartz, Thurston County | Kevin Hansen, Thurston County |
| Ashley Arai, Thurston County | Kristen Durance, PWR LIO |
| Audrey Coyne, WA State Department of Health/Shellfish SIL | Lara Tukarski, Thurston County |
| Austin Jennings, Pierce County | Lisa Spurrier, Pierce County/WRIA 10/12 |
| Brianne Blackburn, Pierce County | Marianne Lincoln, |
| Claire Swearingen, Thurston County | Matt Kennelley, LOTT Clean Water Alliance |
| Chanele Holbrook, Department of Ecology/Stormwater SIL | Matt Lurie, WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife |
| Colleen Keltz, LOTT Clean Water Alliance | Monea Kerr, Puget Sound Partnership |
| Cynthia Harbison, WA State Department of Natural Resources | Nannette Huber, |
| Cynthia Taylor, Thurston County | Pat Tarzwell, Mason County |
| Derek Day, Thurston County | Robyn Denson, Pierce County |
| Dustin Bilhimer, Department of Ecology/Stormwater SIL | Sarah Shadid, Ross Strategic |
| Emily McCartan, Thurston County | Stephen Taylor, WA State Department of Health |
| Hap Clemons, Puget Sound Estuarium | Tanya Truong, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department |
| Jacob Murray, Mason Conservation District | Tom Kantz, Pierce County |
| Jade Cooley, Thuston County | Tristen Payne, Thurston County |
| | 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 April 30, 2026. The meeting centered on the theme of Integrated Water Resources Management and featured presentations from local leaders in the integrated water space, 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. LOTT Clean Water Alliance (LOTT) Reclaimed Water Projects

Matt Kennelley, LOTT Clean Water Alliance Executive Director, provided an overview of LOTT (Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and Thurston County) which is a regional public utility that treats wastewater to very high environmental standards by removing pollutants. Matt also shared a couple of upcoming projects at LOTT including a Class A+ Reclaimed Water pilot project which will serve as an advanced water purification process that produces highly treated, potable-quality water using technologies like reverse osmosis and carbon-based treatment. The project tests and compares these methods at a small scale, without connecting to the water system, to show that wastewater can be safely transformed into

reusable drinking-quality water and help reduce discharge into Puget Sound. It also aims to build public understanding and acceptance of water reuse while positioning the region for future water supply resilience in response to growth and climate change. LOTT also invested in nutrient removal upgrades of a 30-year-old system that significantly improves efficiency and control of nitrogen removal through advanced treatment processes and operator tools. The project adds key infrastructure such as supplemental carbon dosing to enhance nitrification and denitrification, allowing the facility to achieve much lower nitrogen discharge levels and exceed regulatory requirements. View Matt's [slide deck here](#).

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: Dustin Bilhimer asked if LOTT has data for total nitrogen removal performance from November to February.
 - A: Matt explained that LOTT is permitted at the Budd Inlet Treatment Plant for total ammonia and shared data from November through March. Total inorganic nitrogen is not in this permit for Budd Inlet, but it is in the Martin Way Reclaimed Water Plant.
- Q: Vladimir Nekrutenko asked if LOTT is accepting septage from septic systems.
 - A: Matt shared that LOTT accepts septic waste primarily from its partner jurisdictions (Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater), which operate step sewer systems and require solids to be removed and treated at LOTT's facility. However, due to tight treatment capacity and the disruptive impact of large septic loads, LOTT has had to limit the amount of septage accepted, especially from commercial haulers. LOTT is also exploring advanced treatment technologies through their Class A+ pilot to remove emerging contaminants like PFAS, though these solutions are currently expensive to scale.

II. Thurston County One Water Framework Project

Derek Day and Kevin Hansen, Thurston County, shared information on an innovative integrated planning project led by Thurston County in the Nisqually watershed that brings together multiple jurisdictions, disciplines, and partners to manage growth, environmental health, and water resources at a watershed scale. Using advanced models like Visualizing Ecosystem Land Management Assessments (VELMA) and MODFLOW, the project evaluates how development, climate change, and land-use decisions affect hydrology, habitat, and fish populations, while testing different future scenarios such as maximum development versus optimal ecological outcomes. The goal is to break down traditional planning silos, engage the community, and create a shared framework that guides policy, investment, and land-use decisions to balance growth with long-term environmental sustainability. View Derek and Kevin's [slide deck here](#).

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- Q: Tom Kantz asked if Thurston County is integrating validation monitoring to confirm that what they think will happen is in fact going to happen.
 - A: Kevin noted that backward looking field data and a forward-looking model must run together to better ground the data in reality. The VELMA watershed modeling stacked with fish habitat models will evaluate how different land-use and environmental scenarios affect habitat conditions and fish outcomes. Rather than predicting exact fish population numbers, the models are used to show directional trends and relative differences between scenarios, helping identify which approaches are better for ecosystem health.
- Q: Marianne Lincoln asked how much of the modeling is based on movement of surface water versus the movement of water in the aquifers beneath?

-
- A: Kevin noted that in addition to modeling surface water, there are also groundwater simulations they are evaluating.
 - Q: What is the timeline?
 - A: While there isn't a set timeline, the project team is anticipating having the max fish and zoning baseline by the end of summer. The team doesn't want to move too fast, which could consequently affect the number of representatives (cities, towns, agencies) guiding the project direction.
 - Tom mentioned pulling Environmental Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) modeling from the Chambers Clover Watershed which is similar to the hydrology in the Nisqually Watershed for the project team to reference.
 - Derek noted that Thurston County commissioners are signaling their support for this project, demonstrating a great example of how political will can work.

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. 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.

The LIO coordinating team is connecting with partners involved in floodplain and estuary work and simultaneously reviewing various plans (e.g., Shoreline Master Programs, Flood Hazard Management Plans, Salmon Recovery and Watershed Management Plans, County Comprehensive Plans, etc.) to begin identifying barriers, opportunities, and projects which were included in [slides 10-14 here](#) (this is not a comprehensive list). To ensure that all local and regional barriers, opportunities, and projects are included in the final plan, the AHSS Council was asked on April 30 to identify gaps in the pre-identified projects, barriers, opportunities and to provide additional ideas that will be added to the Action Plan, which are noted below:

LIO Member Comments/Questions:

- **Strategy 1: Habitat Acquisition & Restoration**
 - Review Deschutes River TMDLs and Water Quality Improvement Plans.
 - Review Pierce County Basin Plans that provide flooding and fish issues and programmatic recommendations.
 - Review of the 2019-2020 Streamflow Restoration Plans.
 - Support a quicker process which currently takes two years for permitting, bid collection, and contracting for larger projects before anything happens on the ground.
 - Address right-of-way issues around landowner permissions which are currently making access to projects increasingly difficult.
- **Strategy 2: Land Use Planning & Flood Risk**
 - Restoration projects are often treated the same as major developments. To better support environmental goals, policies need to shift toward limiting development and encouraging restoration. Although, this is challenging due to differing county regulations and processes.
 - For the Community Rating System (CRS), it's important to parse out the intended purpose of restoration in the floodplain and floodways and to distinguish between restoration and development projects.

-
- Update flood maps after a project is implemented.
 - Make Ecology the CLOMER/LOMR connection rather than FEMA.
 - **Strategy 3: Regional Coordination (Farm, Fish, Flood)**
 - Include additional local grant programs beyond Conservation Futures.
 - Review the Habitat SIL Working Lands Conservation Strategy to identify recommendations related to agriculture viability.
 - Increase Mason County's funding resources which are currently limited.
 - **Strategy 4: Reach-Scale Project Implementation**
 - Include the need for a Hydrologic assessment on the middle river for Deschutes.
 - Integrate a shoreline analysis piece to compare one round of photos to the next to categorize change over time.
 - This is related to the multi-LIO project to assess permitted versus unpermitted shoreline armoring in the Puget Sound.
 - Consider including the need for kelp and eelgrass monitoring dollars in the South Sound.
 - **Strategy 5: Regulatory Protections & Incentives**
 - Work with the ECB Land Use Subcommittee to assist with developing and reviewing information for shoreline regulations and provide recommendations to Ecology.
 - Review Thurston County landowner incentive work in conjunction with the Thurston Conservation District which is folded in with other landowner incentives.
 - There's a need to have strong incentives that attract landowners while also working with jurisdictions to create those incentives so that there are options.
 - Increase education with landowners and the public and find common ground to help them understand the "why" behind projects and needs.

IV. LIO Updates

Participants were asked whether they have small to mid-sized capacity needs for projects or programs they are seeking to fund. The following capacity funding needs were shared:

- The Puget Sound Estuarium is looking for funding for a permanent exhibit of the Deschutes Restoration project.
- Funding for systems in Pierce County to take in water from the Chambers Bay Treatment Plant and infiltrate it.
- The Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team is hoping to fund a strategic planning process.

V. Round Robin

- [Pierce County Watershed Small Grants Program](#) deadline has been extended to May 20, 2026
- Register for the next [South Sound Science Symposium](#) on October 15 at the Little Creek Casino Resort near Shelton, WA, here: [2026 South Sound Science - Intellistack](#)

VI. Next Steps

The next AHSS LIO Council meeting is on June 23, 2026. If you have suggestions for agenda topics or newsletter content, please email Haley Morris (hmorris@rossstrategic.com).