

# Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Executive Committee Meeting

**September 17, 2026, 2:00-3:00PM**  
**Virtual Teams Meeting**

## **Executive Committee Members Attended:**

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

## **Additional Attendees:**

Amy Hatch-Winecka, WRIA 13  
Bran Combs, Mason Conservation District  
Elizabeth McManus, AHSS LIO  
Haley Morris, AHSS LIO  
Haley Harguth, Hood Coordinating Council  
Tom Kantz, Pierce County

## **Meeting Summary**

The Alliance for a Healthy South Sound Local Integrating Organization (AHSS LIO) Executive Committee met virtually on September 17, 2026. Four of six members were present. Discussion was as follows.

### **I. Shoreline Armoring and Permitting Assessment Project**

Haley Harguth, Hood Canal Coordinating Council, provided an overview of a Puget Sound-wide shoreline armoring and permit compliance analysis funded by six participating LIOs through resources allocated to projects identified in their Healthy Shorelines Action Plans. The methodology, developed by Herrera and reviewed by a technical workgroup that includes representatives from the six participating LIOs, relevant state agencies, and the Puget Sound Institute, is largely complete and awaiting final review and approval by the Puget Sound Partnership before analysis begins. Scheduled to run through June 30 of next year, the projects primary objectives are to conduct a shoreline development change analysis, compile and analyze shoreline-related permit records, and evaluate compliance by comparing observed shoreline modifications with issued permits.

To identify changes over roughly the past decade, the project will combine multiple GIS datasets, including Ecology's recently developed [shoreline condition dataset](#), historical shoreline inventories, aerial imagery, and permit records. Analysis will focus on shoreline armoring, overwater structures such as docks and piers, buildings, boat ramps, and mooring buoys. Because buoy data are currently incomplete and inconsistent across agencies, the project will develop a new contemporary buoy inventory using existing datasets and aerial imagery, creating a stronger baseline for future analyses. Results will include a final report, a shared permit database, GIS mapping products, and county- and LIO-level datasets. While most of the work will be conducted through desktop GIS analysis, limited field verification will be completed by boat to validate selected findings. Haley emphasized that the resulting information should help identify shoreline development trends, permit compliance patterns, and priority areas for future management and coordination across the region.

## **Executive Committee Members Questions and Comments:**

- David asked how the project is being approached geographically?
  - Haley H. will take this question to the management team as there hasn't been a geographical approach established.

- Executive Mello asked how we can ensure the findings from this project are effectively communicated to and used by local jurisdiction staff, decisionmakers, and others involved in ongoing Shoreline Management Program updates, so that the information reaches the people who need it most?
  - Haley H. agreed that developing a strategy to communicate the findings will be an important responsibility for LIO coordinators before the report is released, particularly to ensure the information reaches local governments and other key audiences. While there will be many opportunities to share results within the Puget Sound recovery community, each LIO will need to work with its partners to determine how best to present potentially significant findings, including anticipated high rates of unpermitted shoreline development, and use them to inform local action and discussions.
  - Elizabeth noted that the AHSS has several important touchpoints with the counties it coordinates with and will help keep county partners informed and updated throughout the project's implementation.
- It was noted that mooring buoys may present future policy and legislative considerations, making the project's effort to improve buoy data particularly valuable. Given the current lack of a comprehensive and reliable buoy dataset, establishing a new inventory and baseline will be an important outcome of the project.

## II. Shoreline Visioning Project and Nearshore/Upland Mapping

Elizabeth McManus, AHSS LIO Coordinator, described a shoreline visioning project within the Alliance geography that will evaluate how natural resource priorities for shoreline protection and restoration align with local shoreline development policies, including shoreline management programs, zoning, codes, and land use designations. The project is compiling and overlaying existing datasets to compare conservation and development visions for the shoreline, identify areas of alignment and potential conflict, and provide information that can support future discussions and planning efforts. Working closely with the South Sound Technical Team, the project will produce maps, analyses, and other deliverables that help partners better understand these relationships. Like the Shoreline Armoring and Permit Compliance project, this effort is funded through the LIO Shoreline Action Plan process and is scheduled for completion in June 2027.

To complement the above project, the Alliance is also updating its long-standing vision for South Sound shorelines, building on more than 15 years of partner collaboration around aspirational targets for shoreline protection and restoration. The original [South Sound Strategy](#) envisioned success as protecting all shoreline areas identified as conservation priorities and restoring all priority restoration areas. While partners recognize that fully achieving this vision is unlikely due to existing shoreline development, the aspirational targets provide a framework for identifying important places, measuring progress, and guiding future investments and actions. To update that vision, the Squaxin Island Tribe GIS team is working on an effort to merge the Nearshore Project Selection Tool, the Nearshore Catchment Analysis and AHSS nearshore and upland maps into a single South Sound Strategy tool. As part of this effort, the Squaxin Island Tribe and AHSS are compiling datasets used to develop the original South Sound Strategy and are conducting a broad change analysis to assess progress toward the original shoreline vision. This work is expected to provide an updated assessment of shoreline conditions, priorities, and aspirational targets, helping guide future shoreline planning and recovery efforts across the South Sound.

### Executive Committee Members Questions and Comments:

- David asked whether the Alliance should establish more measurable, numeric goals for nearshore habitat conditions, such as setting aspirational targets for drift cell functionality. He suggested that combining new shoreline condition data with analyses of shoreline armoring and other structures could create a baseline for assessing current conditions and tracking progress toward specific restoration and protection goals over time.
  - Tom agreed that establishing goals based on natural shoreline function is a worthwhile concept but noted that significant data gaps make it difficult to determine the full restoration potential or current condition of individual drift cells. He emphasized that shoreline function is influenced by interconnected marine, upland, and watershed processes, many of which may be beyond direct management control. Tom highlighted the importance of ongoing efforts to improve baseline ecological data, including shoreline condition assessments and eelgrass mapping, noting that a better understanding of existing natural assets and their functionality is a critical first step before developing meaningful performance targets.

### III. Updates

- **Floodplains and Estuaries Action Plan Next Steps:** The AHSS is finalizing its Floodplains and Estuaries Action Plan, which intends to synthesize and elevate existing needs and barriers identified through plans, planning efforts, and collaborative processes across South Sound jurisdictions, including Lead Entities, Conservation Districts, and County Shoreline Management Programs. Prior to submission to the Puget Sound Partnership, the draft plan will be shared with the AHSS Executive Committee and Technical Teams for final review and feedback.
- **South Sound Symposium Preview:** The next [South Sound Science Symposium](#) is on October 15, 2026, at the Little Creek Casino Resort in Shelton, hosted by the Squaxin Island Tribe.

### IV. Next Steps

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 17 at 2pm.