

PUGET SOUND

National Estuary Program

MARINE VEGETATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Our nearshore environments are home to numerous marine vegetation species, including eelgrass and kelp, which provide critical habitat and ecosystem services to a wide array of marine life found in Puget Sound. Kelp also holds important cultural significance to indigenous peoples of the broader Pacific Northwest. While historically abundant, there has been an observed decline in marine vegetation populations across the Puget Sound.

The Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy is the newest strategy to join the Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead's (HSIL) portfolio. This strategy will build off a foundation established through two regional plans, the *Puget Sound Eelgrass Recovery Strategy* and the *Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Restoration Plan*. Each of these plans were collaboratively developed and identify specific goals and strategies necessary for conserving and restoring marine vegetation across Puget Sound.

VITAL SIGN INDICATOR TARGET STATUS

Marine Vegetation indicators will fall under the newly revised Beaches and Marine Vegetation Vital Sign and will include both eelgrass and kelp recovery targets.

The recovery target for the sound-wide *Eelgrass Indicator* is a 20 percent increase in the area of native seagrasses in greater Puget Sound by the year 2020 relative to 2000-2008. *This indicator is below the 2020 Target. This indicator is not improving.* A new eelgrass site status indicator will be released with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda.

The *Puget Sound Floating Kelp Canopy Vital Sign Indicator* is currently under construction and will be submitted to Puget Sound Info in May 2023.

Understory kelp condition has been identified as a future indicator for development.

Learn more:

<https://vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov/>



STRATEGIES FOR PUGET SOUND RECOVERY

Puget Sound Eelgrass Recovery Strategy

The Eelgrass Recovery Strategy identifies specific strategies to achieve the following goals:

1. Conserve existing eelgrass habitats
2. Reduce environmental stressors to support natural expansion
3. Restore and enhance degraded or declining eelgrass beds
4. Identify eelgrass research priorities
5. Expand outreach and education

Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan

The "Kelp Plan" identifies specific strategies to achieve the following goals:

1. Understand and reduce kelp stressors
2. Improve understanding of the value of kelp to Puget Sound ecosystems and integrate into management
3. Describe kelp distribution and trends
4. Designate kelp protected areas
5. Restore kelp forests
6. Promote awareness, engagement, and action from user groups, Tribes, the public, and decision-makers.



PUGET SOUND

National Estuary Program



STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The first step to develop the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy is to identify, assess and support the current and future efforts to operationalize the strategies identified in the Kelp and Eelgrass regional recovery plans. Through this process, the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Lead will engage with key partners and stakeholders to understand remaining needs and opportunities that can be best supported through a formalized Implementation Strategy and amplified through targeted National Estuary Program investments.

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

A coordinated effort among tribal, federal, state, and local agencies will be necessary to advance planning, research, and outreach opportunities identified in the regional Kelp and Eelgrass plans and the future Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy. Opportunities include:

- Share information about your projects at the Puget Sound Kelp Research and Monitoring Work Group.
- Identify opportunities for integrating marine vegetation considerations into your local Shoreline Management Plan and Comprehensive Plans.

- Participate in ongoing efforts to operationalize the kelp and eelgrass regional plans.
- Integrate information about the importance of marine vegetation into your community outreach and education programs.

There are also numerous collaborative processes underway aimed at advancing discussions on regional plan implementation. Please reach out to the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Lead if you are interested in learning how you can get involved.

For More Information & Contact

Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan
<https://nwstaits.org/media/3185/pugetsoundkelpconservationandrecoveryplan.pdf>

Puget Sound Eelgrass Recovery Strategy
https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/aqr_nrsh_eelgrass_strategy_final.pdf

Elizabeth Spaulding – *Habitat Strategic Initiative*
Elizabeth.spaulding@dnr.wa.gov



This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement PC-01J89501 through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency or the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

