

WHITE HOUSE BUDGET PROPOSES ELIMINATING CRITICAL FUNDING FOR PUGET SOUND ECOSYSTEM RECOVERY AND PROTECTION

The recently released White House budget proposal zeroes out Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) geographic funds nationwide for 2018 and may also eliminate the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PC-SRF), managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Other cuts that will affect Puget Sound's ability to reach our shared ecosystem recovery goals are proposed as well.

The White House budget does not represent the final word by any means—there is a long road between this proposal and the enacted

budget. Between here and there stand some very committed legislators and other leaders who are ready to fight for what is in the best interest of our region and our state. Our values and dedication to protecting clean water, saving endangered species, having a thriving and sustainable agricultural sector, ensuring safety and resiliency in the face of climate change, and honoring our tribal treaty responsibilities are shared by most Washingtonians. We remain undeterred in our efforts to carry out the Puget Sound Partnership's mission—to support our partners in recovering and protecting Puget Sound and the quality of life we all hold dear.

FOLLOWING ARE A FEW COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED CUTS, AND OUR RESPONSES.

If implemented, how would the proposed federal budget cuts affect Puget Sound recovery?

The health, economic wellbeing and resiliency of the people of our region depend on healthy Puget Sound ecosystems. Extensive effort, investment and learning have, to date, brought us to a critical point, where some measures of the rate of recovery and restoration are starting to outpace ongoing degradation. Terminating the multitude of actions needed to reach the point where this complex system is headed in the right direction will result not only in backsliding, but also in failing to achieve the full benefits of past investments, as well as the unraveling of extensive recovery infrastructure that has been painstakingly built.

The efforts undertaken to date are effective and non-regulatory, and are designed to serve the needs of local, regional and state partners. They have leveraged \$24 for every federal dollar invested. This translates into tangible benefits including jobs, protection of critical infrastructure and safer communities. If these efforts are discontinued, the resulting degradation will result in economic as well as environmental costs and may necessitate stricter

regulatory approaches in the future to compensate for lost time. The harm that occurs in the interim may be irreversible. The Puget Sound resident orca population, for example, may fall below recoverable limits and certain populations of salmon may also be lost. Partners at every level and from multiple sectors, as well as 19 sovereign tribal nations with treaty rights, depend on these funds and the outcomes they produce.

Table 1 shows how the \$28 million in 2016 EPA geographic funds was allocated to entities engaged in Puget Sound recovery. All entities receiving geographic funds are required to use these funds to implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda. Managed by the Puget Sound Partnership, the Action Agenda is the overarching plan that charts the course to Puget Sound restoration. The EPA geographic funds are the only federal funding source directed specifically to Puget Sound recovery. This primary focus is lost without the EPA geographic funds.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF 2016 EPA GEOGRAPHIC FUNDS IN PUGET SOUND

FROM ANNUAL FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS: OCT 1, 2015–SEP 30, 2016	FUNDING (IN \$ MILLIONS)	ACTIONS
Puget Sound Partnership	2.6	The EPA geographic funds help to fund implementation of the Puget Sound Action Agenda to protect and recover Puget Sound. Geographic funds also support planning efforts for ecosystem recovery across nine collaborative watershed groups and seven Marine Resource Committees.
Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead: Department of Ecology Department of Commerce Washington State University	5.2	The Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead facilitates implementation of actions to prevent pollution from urban stormwater runoff. The lead convenes local and regional partners in the development of Implementation Strategies, which direct the spending of EPA geographic funds on ranked Near Term Actions, or NTAs. NTAs are scientifically vetted project proposals that, if implemented, help to meet specific 2020 Vital Sign indicator targets for improving watershed function within the Puget Sound basin.
Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead: Department of Fish & Wildlife Department of Natural Resources	5.2	The Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead develops Implementation Strategies for achieving the 2020 ecosystem recovery targets for the Puget Sound Vital Signs and prioritizes and awards funds to NTAs that protect and restore habitat, as well as protect local communities from flooding. These NTAs—over time and collectively—support improved health of the marine and nearshore resources of Puget Sound and help to protect human health and well-being.
Shellfish Strategic Initiative Lead Department of Health	5.0	The Shellfish Strategic Initiative Lead engages partners and stakeholders in developing and realizing Implementation Strategies for achieving the 2020 recovery targets for the reopening of shellfish and prioritizes and directs EPA Geographic funds to projects that decrease loadings of pathogens, and decrease adverse impacts on shellfish beds from pathogens to Puget Sound.
Tribal Lead Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	4.0	This award supports activities and strategies aligned with the Puget Sound Action Agenda and that meet high-priority ecosystem restoration and protection needs of tribes across Puget Sound.
Tribal Organizational Capacity	3.7	This award supports tribal government and recognized tribal consortia.
EPA Staff/Operations	1.0	These funds support the EPA staff and programs needed to facilitate research and restoration projects throughout the Puget Sound basin.
Federal Interagency Agreements	0.5	These agreements between the EPA and other federal agencies support projects and programs directly linked to Puget Sound recovery efforts consistent with the Puget Sound Action Agenda, salmon recovery priorities, and tribal habitat priorities plans.
University of Washington, Puget Sound Institute (PSI)	0.63	PSI provides expert advice based on vetted scientific information and principles to support restoration and protection of the Puget Sound ecosystem.
TOTAL	27.85	

Of the \$2.6 million in geographic funds allocated to the Puget Sound Partnership, \$675,000 is passed through to nine collaborative watershed groups, and \$800,000 is passed through to the Northwest Straits Commission. The watershed groups implement the Action Agenda at the local level. The Northwest Straits Commission and the associated seven Marine Resource Committees implement the Northwest Straits Initiative.

The Puget Sound Partnership also oversees activities associated with salmon recovery in Puget Sound. A significant source of money for critical salmon recovery projects in Puget Sound is the federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF), which is distributed to salmon recovery projects statewide. Increasingly, PCSRF money supports multi-benefit projects that balance farmland protection and reduced flood risk with improved salmon habitat. In Puget Sound, the money is distributed to watershed groups for salmon recovery projects in each watershed. The total award of PCSRF

statewide for 2016 was \$19.1 million from both state capital bond funds and the federal PCSRF. Puget Sound received \$5.6 million from both state and federal sources (about \$4.3 million from PCSRF). The state provided about \$1.3 million as a match for PCSRF funding. (See Table 2.)

Without either the EPA geographic funds or the NOAA PCSRF money, only state-funded programs such as the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (or PSAR) program, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program, and Floodplains by Design would remain to support Action Agenda and salmon recovery project implementation. These programs depend on capital budget appropriations by the state Legislature every 2 years. Increasing demands on the state's capital budget to fund other important priorities—like school construction—are reducing the amount of bond capacity available to fund Puget Sound and salmon recovery programs.

How much of the Puget Sound Partnership's total funding would be eliminated under the President's budget blueprint?

Of the \$28 million in 2016 EPA geographic funds, the Puget Sound Partnership received \$2.6 million. Table 2 provides an overview of the Partnership's federal funding over the past 10 years. It is not clear how the EPA base funds will be treated in the full White House budget. These funds, which annually have totaled about \$600,000, are the consequence of participating in the National Estuary Program. Puget Sound is one of 28 estuaries nationwide designated as an Estuary of National Significance. Each such estuary receives

base funding. The Puget Sound Partnership uses these funds to support agency operations, including Boards, communications and other elements of Puget Sound recovery that are considered backbone—guiding, supporting, and measuring the work of our partners.

TABLE 2. FEDERAL FUNDS TO THE PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP 2007–2017

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
EPA Base Funding	\$ -	\$418,000	\$594,000	\$640,000	\$800,000	\$599,000	\$597,000	\$512,000	\$538,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
EPA Geographic Funds to Puget Sound Partnership for planning, monitoring, Action Agenda	\$ -	\$450,000	\$6,850,000	\$ -	\$6,000,000	\$470,000	\$3,000,000	\$2,800,000	\$2,850,000	\$5,592,800	\$2,560,000
EPA Geographic Funds to Puget Sound Partnership for Stewardship	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$2,000,000	\$1,010,785	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$989,215	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
PCSRF to Puget Sound Partnership	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$814,162	\$814,162	\$839,162	\$689,162	\$806,379	\$641,404

* The Puget Sound Partnership is currently receiving federal funding under a Continuing Resolution, which carries forward the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016 allocation levels to FFY17, the current federal fiscal year. In his proposed budget for FFY17, President Obama included \$30 million for the EPA geographic allocation to Puget Sound. Because this budget was not enacted by Congress, the Continuing Resolution is in effect.

EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency PCSRF = Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund

What are some specific examples of projects funded by the EPA geographic funds?

MAURY ISLAND, VASHON ISLAND AQUATIC RESERVE, SHORELINE ARMORING REMOVAL

The Maury Island, Vashon Island Aquatic Reserve is the only stretch of King County shoreline known to provide habitat for all three species of forage fish—Pacific sand lance, surf smelt, and Pacific herring. In addition, 60 species of fish, 90 species of birds, several species of marine and terrestrial-based mammals, and

a variety of invertebrates use the reserve area. The reserve is home to Washington’s largest Madrone forest.

PROJECT SPONSOR: King County

PROJECT GOAL: Restore natural shores and coastal processes to shoreline with high habitat value

GEOGRAPHIC FUNDS CONTRIBUTION: \$519,000

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

- Acquire roughly 17.3 acres and 1,112 feet of marine shoreline bordering the Maury Island Aquatic Reserve.
- Remove more than 700 feet of shoreline armoring, reconnecting about 700 feet of feeder bluff to Puget Sound.

DOSEWALLIPS FLOODPLAIN & ESTUARY RESTORATION

PROJECT SPONSOR: The Wild Fish Conservancy

PROJECT GOAL: The Wild Fish Conservancy implemented a series of restoration actions in the Dosewallips State Park to improve salmon habitat by increasing floodplain and estuarine ecological processes in the lower Dosewallips River and estuary.

PCSRF FUNDS CONTRIBUTED: \$389,251

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

- Remove diking, revetment, and levee
- Build three log jams and place woody debris in the river to serve as resting areas for salmon
- Remove invasive plants and replace with native plants.

SKOKOMISH RIVER FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION AND SHELLFISH BED IMPROVEMENT *(five projects)*

The Skokomish River floods more frequently than any other river in Washington. Mason County has imposed a moratorium on further development in the floodplain. In addition, the river channel often goes dry during migration of Fall Chinook salmon, which are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Over the course of a 10-year process that

PROJECT'S CONTRIBUTION TO PUGET SOUND RECOVERY:

- Contribute to the Shoreline Armoring Vital Sign target
- Help to protect and restore spawning habitat for forage fish
- Enable landward shifts of species assemblages, such as forage fish spawning areas and sea grasses, as sea level rises

PROJECT'S CONTRIBUTION TO RECOVERY OF SALMON AND PUGET SOUND:

- Improve water quality
- Reduce flooding and improve floodplain function
- Increase number of Chinook salmon

has included extensive input from local landowners, five ecosystem restoration projects that also provide flood relief were identified and designed.

PARTNERS: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mason County, Skokomish Tribe, Mason County Conservation District, Skokomish Watershed Action Team (SWAT)

GOALS: Recover salmon populations, reduce flooding, support agricultural producers, protect private property owners

FUNDING SOURCES: EPA geographic funds, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Skokomish Tribe, Mason County, Floodplains by Design, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration program.

FUNDED ACTIVITIES:

- Install 2 miles of large woody debris
- Remove and setback levees
- Complete large-scale side channel restoration

SNOHOMISH SUSTAINABLE LAND STRATEGY INTEGRATED FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

For decades, many groups and individuals throughout the Puget Sound region have worked to protect and restore fish habitat in floodplains, while many others have sought to prevent the conversion or flooding of farmland located in those same floodplains. Generally, fish and farm-focused stakeholders have viewed their goals as being incompatible, and therefore have rarely coordinated their efforts. This reluctance to cooperate intensified after Chinook salmon were listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Today, stakeholders who continue to focus solely on fish, farm, or flood control issues often find themselves competing with one another for limited funding and public support. As a result, polarization, distrust, and conflict have increased, making it extremely difficult to implement actions aimed at achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. Initiated in 2010, the Snohomish County Sustainable Lands Strategy (SLS) program aims to bring representatives of fish, farm, and flood control interests together to discuss and resolve conflicts, develop multiple-benefit habitat restoration and protection projects, and create integrated floodplain management plans. A key objective of the SLS program is to support long-term agricultural viability.

PARTNERS: Tulalip Tribes, Stillaguamish Tribe, Snohomish Conservation District, Snohomish County Agricultural Board, Ducks Unlimited

PROJECT'S CONTRIBUTION TO RECOVERY OF SALMON AND PUGET SOUND:

- Improve water quality
- Reduce flooding and improve floodplain function
- Reopen of shellfish beds
- Increase number of Chinook salmon

GOALS:

- Reduce barriers to cooperation and coordination among divergent stakeholders in the Snohomish and Stillaguamish river basins
- Develop multiple-benefit ecosystem restoration and protection projects that are eligible for funding through capital funding sources such as the Floodplains by Design (FbD) program.
- Integrate salmon recovery and support of agricultural production while reducing flood impacts
- Create programs that promote economically viable, resilient agricultural producers
- Balance flood control, agricultural productivity and salmon recovery interests

FUNDING SOURCES: EPA geographic funds, PCSRF, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Washington State Conservation Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service (CREP, EQIP), Floodplains by Design, Snohomish County, and others.

FUNDED ACTIVITIES:

- Collaborative development of reach scale planning and management frameworks
- Convene regular meetings of SLS stakeholders to collaboratively pursue agreed upon objectives
- Complete reach-scale integrated floodplain management plans for the Lower Snohomish, Snohomish Estuary, Lower Skykomish, and Lower Stillaguamish. Each of these plans will include a 10-year capital funding component
- Identify and develop broadly supported funding priorities for multiple-benefit ecosystem restoration and protection projects
- Form basin-focused teams to provide technical, design, and implementation assistance to project proponents.

CONTRIBUTION TO RECOVERY OF SALMON AND PUGET SOUND

- Improve water quality
- Reduce flooding and improve floodplain function
- Increase number of Chinook salmon
- Keep land in agricultural production and stewardship