

Puyallup-White River (PWR) LIO Quarterly Meeting: Fish Passage Barriers
March 4, 12:00-2:00pm
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Welcome, Purpose, & Agenda Review

Cindy Haverkamp, PWR LIO Chair, kicked off the meeting by providing an overview of the agenda. Haley Morris, PWR LIO Assistant Coordinator, led participants through an interactive activity using their video cameras, where turning the camera on signaled “yes” and turning it off signaled “no” in response to a series of prompting questions to encourage connection and engagement.

I. City of Puyallup Deer Creek Restoration Project

Paul Marrinan, City of Puyallup. View Paul’s presentation [here](#).

The Deer Creek restoration project focuses on designating a high-priority area within the Deer Creek basin for major stream restoration, to replace aging and undersized culverts, improve shallow gradients, and reduce flooding, fish passage barriers, and habitat degradation in the wetland areas. The city plans to replace four culverts, relocate and restore nearly 2,000 feet of stream channel, reconnect floodplain areas, and enhance wetland and riparian habitat, but progress is heavily constrained by funding challenges, making recent success in securing the Department of Ecology Streamflow Restoration Grant crucial for moving the project forward.

II. Tacoma Tideflats: Restoration Through the Lens of Photojournalism

Robin Evans-Agnew, University of Washington, Tacoma. View Robin’s presentation [here](#).

Robin described his work with students and his own research on land-based education and documentary photography, using the Tacoma Tideflats as a case study to explore relationships between people, place, pollution, and restoration. Through “photo voice” methods, students critically examine environmental conditions such as waste, diesel pollution, and limited public access, while reflecting on why these issues exist and how to take action. His personal research involves long term photographic documentation of the Tideflats, highlighting changing access, ecological shifts, and the loss and regrowth of vegetation, all framed within questions about community engagement, environmental justice, and how Tacoma has turned its back on this contaminated yet vital landscape.

III. Lower Wapato Creek Mitigation Site

Kristin Evered, Port of Tacoma. View Kristen’s presentation [here](#).

The Port of Tacoma’s Lower Wapato Creek Advanced Mitigation Site is a recently constructed 20acre habitat restoration project that replaces old fish blocking culverts with a full span bridge, re-meanders the creek toward its historic alignment, and restores nearly eight acres of tidal wetland while preserving surrounding upland buffers. Built in two phases between 2021 and 2023 after extensive tribal consultation with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the project removed large volumes of dredged and contaminated material, incorporated culturally significant trees, and was completed with community involvement, including first graders planting the final trees. Early monitoring shows the site is meeting or exceeding most performance standards, including tidal inundation and vegetation targets, though upstream drying in Wapato Creek is currently limiting fish passage; long-term stewardship will continue in perpetuity with support from Conservation Corps crews.

IV. December 2025 Flood Event in Pierce County

Kathleen Berger, Pierce County. [View Kathleen's presentation here.](#)

Kathleen Berger provided insight into how Pierce County made it through the December 2025 atmospheric river event relatively well due to a combination of luck, intact but aging infrastructure, and most importantly, years of strategic investment in floodplain reconnection projects, levee setbacks, and property acquisitions through the Floodplains for the Future partnership. While neighboring counties experienced major damage, Pierce County saw reduced impacts in areas like Clear Creek and Orville Road, where previous buyouts and restoration efforts removed people and structures from high-risk zones. Although some communities still suffered significant damage, many of the hardest-hit areas were already identified for future projects, reinforcing the effectiveness of watershed-scale planning and the importance of continuing integrated floodplain management.

V. Floodplains and Estuaries Action Plan Scoping

Kristen Durance, PWR LIO Coordinator, shared that the LIO is beginning its third Action Plan, which will be focused on floodplains and estuaries. Previous Action Plans on onsite septic systems and healthy shorelines successfully brought new funding into the watershed, though future funding is not guaranteed. This new plan will outline the specific local actions, needs, partners, and policy supports required over the next 2–4 years to advance Puget Sound Action Agenda strategies, especially across habitat restoration, land-use planning, regional coordination, reach-scale project implementation, and regulatory tools. Kristen emphasized that the plan does not need to list every project in the region, given there are roughly a thousand already identified in existing plans and lists, but should instead focus on what is needed to unlock progress on priority actions, potentially through an in-person convening to clarify barriers, partners, and next steps.

LIO members participated in the conversation to share considerations when developing the Action Plan and suggestions for engaging the right partners. Kathleen Berger emphasized the importance of staying committed to projects already underway to leverage existing momentum and funding needs, while incorporating new priorities like the Deer Creek restoration project. Tom Kantz, Pierce County, highlighted a critical gap in understanding true flood risk in Pierce County, due to outdated flood-risk assessments for mainstem rivers which should be added to the Action Plan. Tom also recommended engaging experts such as Dennis Dixon, climate scientists, Ecology, and FEMA to ensure that we are effectively capturing floodplain and estuary projects in Pierce County. Stephanie Eckard, Washington State University Stormwater Center, added that restoration planning should integrate green stormwater infrastructure to avoid creating ecological traps, particularly where roadway runoff could undermine newly restored habitats.

VI. PWR LIO Updates

Kristen Durance, PWR LIO Coordinator, provided an overview of the following projects funded by the Puget Sound Partnership to advance local and regional priorities from the LIO's Healthy Shorelines Action Plan:

- **Support Pierce Conservation District environmental education and outreach activities:** This will likely involve partnering with Communities for a Healthy Bay and will be connected to some of the environmental education work led by Peirce County.

- **Multi-LIO shoreline assessment to evaluate the magnitude of un/under-permitted shoreline**
 - LIOs will contribute funding toward a Puget Sound–wide Shoreline Development and Permitting Assessment, a cooperative multi-LIO project evaluating the magnitude of unpermitted shoreline development from approximately 2014–2024. The assessment will compare newly constructed shoreline structures—such as armoring, docks, mooring buoys, piers, stairs, and outbuildings—with county Shoreline Master Program permits and WDFW Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPAs) to determine whether appropriate authorizations were obtained. The project will use the new Ecology boat-based shoreline dataset (expected Fall 2025) and the Beach Strategies baseline to identify changes in shoreline conditions.
- **Bluff Recession GIS Analysis for Restoration/Resilience/Relocation (BRGAR) project**
 - Participating LIOs will provide match funding to support completion of the BRGAR project. BRGAR has completed a pilot study for the Northwest Straits Foundation (covering Skagit, Clallam, Jefferson, and Whatcom Counties), available via the NWSF Shore Friendly PRISM site. The ESRP Learning Grant would expand this work Sound-wide in partnership with Ecology’s Applied Coastal Research and Engineering (ACRE) group, which has already secured match for its portion of the work.

Kristen updated the LIO on an integrated stormwater and land use project funded through additional Stormwater SIL resources made available to support this type of project. The PWR LIO Leadership Team selected the following project to receive this funding:

- **Pierce County Urban Forestry Management Plan:** Pierce County Planning and Public Works will work with Ross to develop a countywide Urban Forestry Management Plan that aligns with County and incorporated areas’ urban forestry goals. The Plan will prioritize benefits to stormwater and climate resilience by integrating green stormwater infrastructure best practices and coordinating with salmon recovery planning and urban heat island mitigation planning.

Capacity Funding Needs: The LIO coordination team continues to track grant opportunities that can help meet small to mid-sized capacity needs. Kristen encouraged partners to let the team know about any funding opportunities they are pursuing for specific projects or programs so we can help identify potential connections.

VII. Round Robin Updates

- The Puyallup Watershed Conservation Land Trust now has a website which can be visited at pwclt.org.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next quarterly PWR LIO meeting is scheduled for June 3, 2026, from 12-2pm. If you have suggestions for agenda topics or newsletter content, please email Haley Morris (hmorris@rossstrategic.com).

List of Participants

Name	Agency
Ava Hays	Puyallup Tribe of Indians

Beatrice McAlister	Riparia Environmental
Brianne Blackburn	Pierce County
Cat Mason	Puyallup Watershed Conservation Land Trust
Chanele Holbrook	Department of Ecology/Stormwater SIL
Char Naylor	Puyallup Tribe of Indians
Cindy Haverkamp	Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Desiree Radice	City of Tacoma
Elizabeth McManus	AHSS LIO Coordinator
Glenn Johnson	Pierce Conservation District
Hannah King	WA Department of Natural Resources
Hannah Stevens	Puyallup Tribe of Indians
Jaal Mann	Pierce County
Kathleen Berger	Pierce County/Floodplains for the Future
Kristin Evered	Port of Tacoma
Krystal Kyer	Pierce County
Lorin Reinelt	Puyallup Watershed Conservation Land Trust
Matt Lurie	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
Paul Marrinan	City of Puyallup
Rachel Latchford	Department of Fish and Wildlife/ Habitat SIL
Robby Wright	City of Sumner
Robin Evans-Agnew	University of Washington Tacoma
Rob Olsen	Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Stephanie Eckard	WA Stormwater Center
Tom Kantz	Pierce County
Haley Morris	PWR LIO Assistant Coordinator
Kristen Durance	PWR LIO Coordinator