

PUGET SOUND nearshore PROJECT



A partnership between the citizens and governments of the State of Washington and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies.

What is the Puget Sound Nearshore?

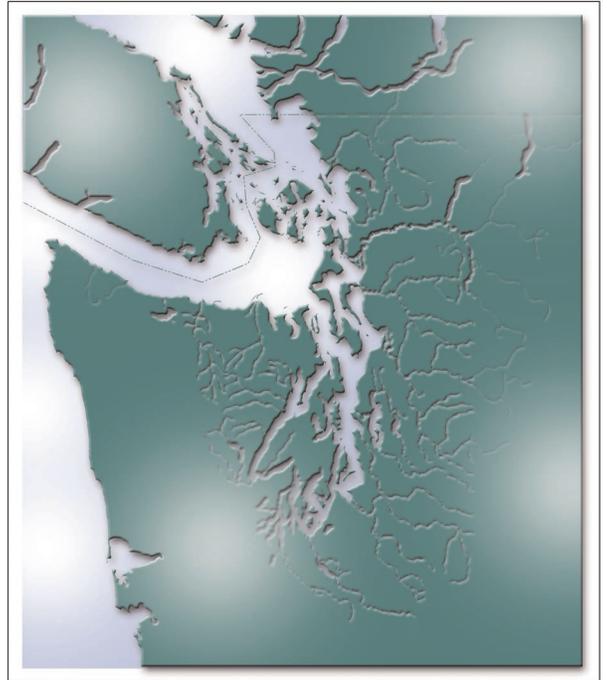
The Puget Sound Nearshore extends from the bluffs and the shoreline to approximately 30 feet deep into the waters of the sound. The nearshore boasts an essential, diverse, and abundant network of plants and animals.

Changes to the nearshore such as artificial structures (tide gates and bulkheads) and pollution from various sources including failing septic systems and agricultural and industrial activities can cause significant harm to the complex, fragile system.

Who needs the Puget Sound Nearshore?

For centuries, people have been drawn to the nearshore for economic and recreational purposes. Today, within the Northwest our lifestyles and economy rely on the Puget Sound Nearshore.

Shellfish and salmon industries, ports, and recreational activities all depend on the tidelands and shoreline.



What is the problem with the nearshore?

Life within the nearshore is in jeopardy. That jeopardy can cause further harm to people who live near or depend on the nearshore, as well as to the greater Puget Sound environment. Nine of the 10 species listed as endangered or threatened within the Puget Sound region inhabit the nearshore.

Federally Listed Species	Habitat Used		
	Uplands	Nearshore	Offshore
Bald Eagle	●	●	
Marbled Murrelet	●	●	●
Puget Sound Bull Trout	●	●	●
Aleutian Canada Goose	●	●	
Humpback Whale		●	●
Stellers Sea Lion		●	●
Hood Canal Summer Chum Salmon		●	●
Puget Sound Chinook Salmon		●	●
Spotted Owl	●		
Howelia Aquatilis	●	●	

People have changed the nearshore much faster than plants and animals could adapt. Since 1970, 1.7 million people have been added to the population of Puget Sound, which now is home to 3.9 million people. By 2020, nearly 5 million people are expected to live in the Puget Sound region. If the nearshore is to survive, we must find ways to reverse the rapid deterioration of the ecosystem and dependent economy.

Development has modified shorelines and reduced the necessary movement of sediment, which is critical to successful spawning for forage fish and productive shellfish.

For example, the shoreline of Seahurst Park in Burien has been degraded by a rock intertidal structure built to assist public access. The result has been wide-scale changes in the beach shape, makeup, and use by aquatic species.

Alterations to the Sound's productivity have travelled throughout the food chain. Pollution in parts of Puget Sound have caused lesions and tumors in flatfish that eagles, seals, birds, and porpoises eat. Reductions in forage fish populations from sea grass impacts due to human development and shoreline modifications have direct effects on salmon survival and possibly to the orca that feed almost entirely on herring, baitfish, and salmon.

What has been done to fix the problem?

Many organizations have attempted to preserve and restore parts of the nearshore through a variety of methods. Within the past 30 years, small-scale restoration projects have resulted in some improvements; yet, the ecosystem continues to degrade at a rate faster than restoration has occurred. Local efforts have been made to protect critical habitat; however, the efforts have addressed a very small portion of the entire problem.

What is needed?

A comprehensive and coordinated approach to the restoration and preservation of the Puget Sound Nearshore that is proportional to the magnitude of the tasks is needed now.

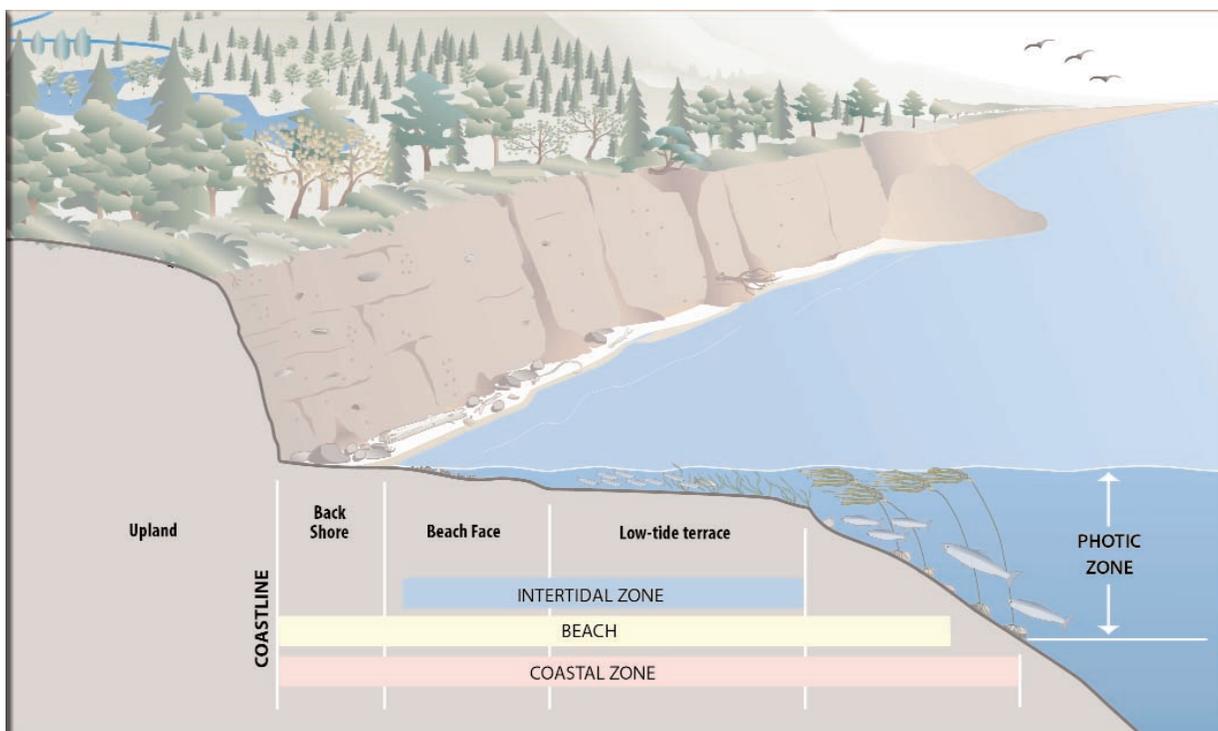
The Puget Sound Nearshore Project is a collaborative partnership among the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, tribes, other state and federal agencies, environmental organizations, local governments, and industries.

The partnership is committed to solving nearshore problems together, and it knows that the individual organizations have been unable to remedy the deterioration alone.

The nearshore project team has rapidly gained support and acknowledgement from industry and environmental groups who recognize the importance of the team's efforts and the promise of success.

In 1999 Congress authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do a general investigation of the nearshore with funds appropriated for the study in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000.

We need continued support to restore the Puget Sound Nearshore.



Nearshore Section Illustrating Typical Zonation

State of the Nearshore Report

Map produced by:
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