

SOAP Action Update

Sustainable Lands Strategy



The Snohomish County [Sustainable Lands Strategy](#) (SLS) is a collaborative process involving a broad stakeholder group to address traditionally competing land use priorities within the Snohomish and Stillaguamish River basins. It was convened by federal, state, municipal and tribal governments and other stakeholders, and participation is voluntary. Snohomish County Public Works has helped staff, fund and coordinate the efforts of the SLS.

The SLS mission is to develop tools and strategies that will generate net gains (measurable improvements) for both fish and farms within the floodplain areas, including flood control, tribal culture and environmental quality considerations.

The innovative SLS framework includes providing:

- a shared, integrated information system based on GIS mapping and analysis;
- an engagement process with a streamlined regulatory path;
- technical support for design, engineering and permitting; and
- partnering to seek funding for implementation of multi-benefit projects.

SLS is based on reach scale planning and assessments that include geomorphic assessments, hydraulic modeling, and GIS. Its success depends on mutual respect between participants and a willingness to help each other achieve improvements in productivity and sustained health of fish and farm communities.

The SLS process has helped to advance regulatory streamlining and funding approvals, as demonstrated by creation of a programmatic drainage maintenance program for Diking District 5.

environmental goals

- **Goal 6:** Promote Ecological Preservation and Healthy Ecosystems
 - **Objective 6S:** Manage county land, facilities and infrastructure in a way that minimizes negative impacts to the natural ecosystem while meeting the functional needs of the site.
 - **Objective 6T:** Protect water resources and watersheds from actions that can degrade water quality.
- Goal 7:** Lead by Example
- **Objective 7U:** Prepare county government to be more resilient and adaptive to climate change impacts.

environmental benefits

- Develop Reach Scale Plans for the Skykomish River, Lower Snohomish, and the Lower Stillaguamish River reaches.
- Generate net gains (measurable improvements) in floodplain areas with the development of tools and strategies that benefit both farmers and fish recovery, such as flood fencing, regulatory streamlining, and agricultural waste processing via digesters.
- Ensure floodplain farmland is maintained in agriculture to alleviate development pressure.
- Maintain resilient floodplains to mitigate future impacts of climate change.
- Support Salmon recovery by achieving 10 Year Estuary restoration goals (Stillaguamish 548 acres, Snohomish Estuary 1,237 acres).
- Protect and improve watershed functions including habitat and water quality.

economic case

- Agriculture will continue to thrive in floodplains providing personal income as well as economic benefit to the community.
- The coordination of floodplain projects that benefit both agriculture and salmon resources would help to reduce flood damage and protect vital infrastructure, which will in turn be an economic benefit for the county, local flood control districts, and the rest of the floodplain community.