



WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

Open Space is an embracing term for a diverse spectrum of lands across a rural and urban continuum. Open Space includes:

- wilderness lands
- resource lands for agricultural and timber production
- national, state, county and city parks
- water bodies and wetlands
- local and regional recreational trail systems
- urban green spaces like parkways, rain gardens, tree canopy, and green roofs

Open Space provides a vast number of critical services + benefits on which the region depends:

Ecosystem services, such as air and water quality, flood control, air quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and disaster mitigation.

Economic vitality from our timber, agricultural and fisheries productivity, recreational tourism and the ability to attract anchor businesses thanks to our quality of life and stunning landscape.

Human health and access, playing a role in reducing obesity and stress, and providing accessible recreational benefits for all.

Together these lands create a unique regional identity and sense of place, celebrate our cultural and geological history and provide vital educational resources for future generations to come.

WHY A REGIONAL OPEN SPACE STRATEGY?

While numerous ongoing open space and environmental protection projects exist, they are often siloed and their effectiveness can be greatly enhanced by making connections, optimizing benefits, and directing resources to the most critical priorities. Ecological systems must be considered at the watershed scale, and protecting threatened rural and resource lands, public health, and community development require inter-jurisdictional solutions. Decisions, actions and investments to improve open space networks would be best served through regional coordination.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

There is momentum for this work, notably the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Vision 2040, which calls for the development of a Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS). The ROSS has support from The Bullitt Foundation, The Russell Family Foundation, National Park Service, leadership at the University of Washington and an esteemed regionally-representative Executive Committee. Work is underway in partnership with a number of organizations working on major initiatives that can be leveraged to support open space planning in the region. Together, this coalition of partners is working to position green infrastructure alongside other investments such as transportation or education to shape future policy development and ensure the quality of life we have all come to expect in the Central Puget Sound region.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The ROSS project will present an integrated strategy that aligns current ecological management efforts, identifies key actions that cannot be achieved by individual jurisdictions, exhibits the benefits and tradeoffs associated with green infrastructure investments, and links ecosystem recovery to broader community objectives to attract support and investment in the region's open space system. A Governance + Finance Task Force is being formed to recommend new organization and multi-benefit conservation funding structures, develop recommendations for a new regional governance structure and/or nongovernmental alliance that can advance ROSS goals.

The overall strategy is further informed by a committee of regional experts developing an ecosystem services analysis to assess regional green infrastructure planning and five task forces focused on the regional challenges of climate adaptation + mitigation, social equity + justice, biodiversity management, human health and economic development as well as the role open space plays in planning for a resilient future.

PILOT WATERSHED STRATEGIES

The ROSS watershed approach was piloted in the Puyallup-White (WRIA 10) watershed and is currently being used in the Snohomish (WRIA 7) watershed and the Green Duwamish led by King County.

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www.openspacepugetsound.org

