

Briefing Document: LIO Ecosystem Recovery Plan Sequenced List of Priority Ecosystem Components & Human Wellbeing Vital Signs

Background

- The Sno-Stilly LIO priority ratings shown below reflect the group’s **understanding of the ecosystem components that are most threatened and where opportunities to address them currently exist**. The prioritization represents **current thinking on how to sequence recovery actions**. In addition to using ranked categories, the Sno-Stilly LIO **emphasized that all of the identified components are important to long-term recovery** of the Snohomish and Stillaguamish watersheds, and future **adjustments** to strategies will address them.
- The LIO also recognized the ***strong link between human wellbeing and ecosystem health***, and determined that most of the human health and human quality of life components would be **best addressed alongside all of the ecosystem components/Vital Signs—embedded within the approach to each ecosystem component**—rather than prioritized within the list of ecosystem components.

High Priority Ecosystem Component Vital Signs

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|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chinook Salmon * ¹ | Freshwater Quality * ³ |
| Floodplains * | Shoreline Armoring |
| Estuaries * ² | Marine Water Quality |
| Land Development and Cover * | Shellfish Beds ⁴ |
| Summer Stream Flow * | Toxics in Fish |

Human Health and Quality of Life Linkages

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|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Good Governance | Economic Vitality |
| Cultural Wellbeing | Sense of Place ¹⁰ |
| Sound Stewardship | Outdoor Activity ¹¹ |

Medium Priority Ecosystem Component Vital Signs

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Marine Shorelines and Nearshore + | Freshwater Wetlands + |
| Onsite Sewage Systems ⁵ | Drinking Water ⁷ |
| Eelgrass ⁶ | Marine Sediment Quality |

Low Priority Ecosystem Component Vital Signs

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|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pacific Herring ⁸ | Birds |
| Orcas | Local Foods ⁹ |

- Summer Stream Flows is one of six Very High priority Vital Signs from 2015.

Summary of Human Health and Quality of Life Vital Signs

- **Good Governance:** “Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is **participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable, and inclusive and follows the rule of law**. It assures that corruption is minimized, accounts for the views of minorities and assures that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.” Engagement with local residents through the pilot projects revealed that some of the primary sources of individual stress revolve around not feeling empowered to access and make decisions about natural resources, particularly for those in rural areas.

- **Cultural Wellbeing:** The Cultural Wellbeing Vital Sign addresses the extent to which people feel able to maintain their cultural traditions.
- **Sound Stewardship:** The Sound Stewardship Vital Sign tells us 1) about the effectiveness of our management actions related to human behaviors that can affect the health of Puget Sound and 2) the degree to which engagement in stewardship contributes to people's wellbeing.
- **Economic Vitality:** The Economic Vitality Vital Sign tells us **how well natural resource industries** (including timber, fisheries, shellfish aquaculture, agriculture, and tourism and recreation) are **doing economically over time**. These long-established industries also contribute significantly to residents' cultural wellbeing and sense of place. Balancing recovery of natural resources with their economic use is critical to sustaining the social-ecological system.
- **Sense of Place:** Sense of place is defined as the extent to which people identify with and feel positively attached to a specific place. Several studies have demonstrated that not only does a strong sense of place contribute to human wellbeing, but that it can also contribute to a desire to protect the natural environment.
- **Outdoor Activity:** The Outdoor Activity Vital Sign tracks residents' **participation in nature-based recreation or work activities**. Whether for recreational or occupational purposes, participation in nature-based outdoor activities is beneficial in multiple ways; physical movement, breathing fresher air, absorbing vitamin D, and clearing one's thoughts all **contribute to improved human wellbeing**. Nature-based outdoor activities often include spending time with others as well and research has shown that positive **social interactions** are one of the greatest contributors to human wellbeing.