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Snohomish Marine Resources Committee Completes Pilings-Removal Prioritization Report

More than 15,000 independent pilings were analyzed with 45 percent identified as high priority for removal

EVERETT, Wash., September 17, 2020 – The Snohomish Marine Resources Committee (MRC) and Snohomish County Public Works, Surface Water Management (SWM) staff have completed a [prioritization plan](#) for the potential removal of independent [pilings](#) in the Snohomish Estuary. The project, funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, consisted of mapping all pilings on private and public lands within the estuary and developing a prioritization plan for removal based on the highest potential to improve estuary habitat and water quality. The goal of this report is to provide detailed information to agencies and private landowners of high-priority piling removal opportunities.

The study identified 15,564 independent pilings in the Snohomish Estuary. The report focused on pilings no longer in use, or not clearly associated with providing structural support for adjacent infrastructure. GIS and LiDAR data were used to identify, locate and map each piling. SWM staff verified the data in the field and recorded additional piling attributes. The study found that nearly 16 percent of the pilings in the estuary are creosote treated. The cost to remove creosote pilings varies significantly depending on whether they can be removed by crane from land or if they must be removed by boat. It can cost upwards of \$50,000 just to mobilize crews for removal.

“It’s helpful to confirm which pilings in the Snohomish Estuary are creosote and which ones are not since creosote pilings cause greater water quality concerns,” said Elisa Dawson, Snohomish County SWM Senior Planner. “Prior to this work, detailed data had not been collected on the characteristics of all of the pilings in the Snohomish Estuary. It is often typical that pilings in a marine environment are treated with creosote so they will last, but through our research we learned that many untreated pilings were placed as short-term infrastructure for log-rafting.”

The study used a prioritization approach based on both the ecological benefit of removing a piling and the feasibility of removing it, with “high priority” being assigned to pilings that had the highest feasibility for removal and highest ecological benefit when removed. Multiple attributes were considered for both the ecological benefit and the feasibility of removing a piling. Of the more than 15,000 independent pilings mapped in the Snohomish Estuary, 45 percent are deemed high priority for removal.

“By developing a prioritization plan for piling removal, this gives local agencies and stakeholders the ability to take action in the most impactful way,” said Gregg Farris, Snohomish County SWM Director. “With limited resources, agencies and stakeholders can focus their funds on the removal of pilings that will provide the most ecological benefits to the Snohomish Estuary.”

During the second phase of this project, to begin this fall, the MRC members and SWM staff will continue to engage in conversations with partners, stakeholders, and private landowners around opportunities to remove high priority pilings.

About the Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee

The Marine Resources Committee (MRC) is a service provided by Snohomish County Surface Water Management, a division of Public Works. The MRC’s goal is to understand, protect, and restore the marine and estuarine ecosystems of the county. Local citizens appointed by County Council use science-based information to develop and implement projects and help shape local and regional marine conservation policy. MRC members work to complement ongoing efforts by both government and non-profit agencies. There are seven MRCs in the Northwest Straits region of the Puget Sound. For more information, visit www.snocomrc.org.

About Snohomish County Public Works

The Snohomish County Public Works Department constructs and maintains county roads; controls and manages surface water quantity, quality, and fish habitats; and oversees the recycling and disposal of solid waste. The department’s main office is located at 3000 Rockefeller Ave., Everett, WA 98201. For more information about Snohomish County Public Works, visit www.snohomishcountywa.gov/PublicWorks.

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