# *Levee Vegetation Policy Considerations in Puget Sound: Background and Context*

*Workshop on Levee Vegetation Issues*

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# *Topics*

- *Objectives and context*
- *Feedback provided*
- *Recent activity*
- *Options for sponsors*
- *Looking for progress*

## *Our Objectives*

- *Safe levees*
- *Habitat for salmon recovery*
- *Cost effective management*

# *Context*

- *The target for floodplain management:*
  - **"By 2020, 15 percent of degraded floodplain areas are restored or floodplain projects to achieve that outcome are underway across Puget Sound and there is no additional loss of floodplain function in any Puget Sound watershed relative to a 2011 baseline."**

- *Targets for salmon recovery: 1.5X to 133X the 1996-2000 average abundance:*

- *Salmon Habitat Strategic Initiative for the Action Agenda update happening now – floodplains addressed*

- *Levees protect people and $B/Millions in investment in property and infrastructure*

- *Levee setbacks can eliminate the conflict, but aren't always achievable*

# Current Conditions

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# *Importance of Riparian Habitats*

*Many native species, including listed salmon, rely on riparian habitats and their functions[1]:*

- *Shade*
- *Streambank stabilization**
- *Sediment control**
- *Litter Input*
- *Large woody debris (LWD)*
- *Nutrient input*
- *Microclimate*

[1] – Found at *Spence, B. C., G. A. Lomnicky, R. M. Hughes, and R. P. Novitzki. 1996. An ecosystem approach to salmonid conservation. TR-4501-96-6057. ManTech Environmental Research Services Corp., Corvallis, OR. (Available from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Portland, Oregon.)*

# Riparian Habitat Function

## *Feedback from Puget Sound*

- *Policies not in alignment with regional objectives and drivers*
- *February 2010 proposed PGL variance process was "onerous"*
- *SWIF endpoint has to support habitat objectives*
- *Policy should be science-based*
- *Incorporate the region's experience from decades of working with vegetation on levees*
- *Allow discretion for approving alternative management to the Division or District*
- *Corps should consult with NMFS on the national standard to address ESA sufficiency*

## *Recent Activity*

- *PGL February 2010*
- *Washington state leaders weigh in*
- *Seattle District Project and matrix, discussed at workshop (July 2011)*
- *System-Wide Improvement Framework discussed at workshop (July 2011) and revised SWIF guidance (November 2011)*
- *ERDC research report*
- *Green River study: National standard would raise temperatures on the Green River to acutely lethal levels for salmon*
- *60-day notices filed in Washington, Idaho, California*

## *What's a Levee Sponsor to Do?*

- *Drop out of PL 84-99?*
- *Implement the national standard (ETL 1110-2-571)?*
- *Apply for a variance?*
- *Initiate a System-Wide Improvement Framework program?*
- *Set back the levees?*

## *Looking for progress*

- *Eligibility informed by vegetation management performance*
- *Regional program supporting levee sponsors to achieve good outcomes*
- *Decision authority closer to the ground*
- *Focused, prioritized science program to reduce uncertainties*
- *Safe levees, improved riparian habitat, cost-effective management*