

# Skagit Wildlife Area Island Unit Alternatives Analysis



The Island Unit covers approximately 268 acres on two islands in a tidally-influenced reach of the Skagit River. WDFW owns and manages the Island Unit as part of the 17,000-acre Skagit Wildlife Area. The site was a tidally-influenced estuary until the late 1800's, when it was diked. WDFW has actively farmed the area since the 1950s to provide enhanced winter forage for waterfowl. The site—sometimes referred to as the “farmed island”—is a productive and popular waterfowl hunting area.



## Planning for the future

WDFW needs to evaluate how to respond to a changing landscape on the Island Unit. Aging infrastructure,

anticipated sea level rise, and changing habitat needs are factors the agency must consider as we plan for the future. Chinook salmon, which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, use tidal estuaries to rear before heading out to Puget Sound. The Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan identifies estuarine habitat restoration as the highest priority for recovering salmon in the area.



WDFW is considering a habitat restoration project on the Island Unit, and will assess several options that range from no restoration to restoring all 268 acres. WDFW will evaluate options based on state requirements and policies, as well as community values and input from an advisory group and the public.

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For more info visit: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/skagitislandunit>

November 2019

## Alternatives Analysis

WDFW is completing an alternatives analysis — a land use planning process used to evaluate a range of choices relative to a set of common criteria. WDFW will evaluate up to four conceptual designs ranging from no restoration to full restoration. Some of the issues that will be considered include:

- Cost and funding availability
- WDFW policies, obligations and agreements, including permit feasibility
- Recreational access
- Salmon and waterfowl conservation
- Input from the public, stakeholders, government agencies, and tribes

## Stakeholder Engagement

The Island Unit process will involve significant input from stakeholders, as well as tribes, governments and the public. As part of this, WDFW will convene a series of stakeholder advisory group meetings from fall of 2019 through fall of 2020, to gather feedback on potential alternative conceptual designs. The stakeholder advisory group is made up of individuals representing a variety of interests including waterfowl hunting, wildlife viewing, recreational fishing, salmon recovery, agriculture and conservation. The Island Unit Advisory Group will help WDFW connect with other user groups and stakeholders, while working to share WDFW plans, goals, and objectives with the broader community. WDFW will also provide other means for the broader community to provide feedback at key points in the process.

## What Happens Next?

At the conclusion of the stakeholder process, WDFW will select a preferred alternative to move forward into the next phase of design. Input from the stakeholder advisory group, tribes, governments and the public will be part of the information WDFW considers in selecting a preferred alternative.

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