

Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead

HSIAT May 2024 Briefing Memo

Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team

June 2024 Meeting Brief

Purpose

The Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy is the newest strategy to join the Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead's (HSIL) portfolio. The purpose of this briefing is to provide the Habitat Strategic Initiative Advisory Team background on the proposed process to develop the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy in order to inform discussion at the June 2024 HSIAT meeting.

Background

In response to observed decline in distribution and abundance of kelp and eelgrass, the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy was identified as a need to provide a cohesive roadmap for recovery and to inform the Puget Sound Action Agenda. The Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy will integrate two collaboratively developed regional conservation plans, the [Puget Sound Eelgrass Recovery Strategy](#) and the [Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan](#). Since 2021, the HSIL has been working with partners to support ongoing kelp and eelgrass planning and recovery efforts. In 2024, HSIL is initiating efforts to synthesis existing strategies and priorities into the Implementation Strategy working in close coordination with ongoing forums, tribes, and partners for input and alignment.

HSIL Objectives:

- Coalesce the priorities and needs from the two regional recovery plans into one comprehensive strategy to increase capacity, create synergies and leverage opportunities across the two habitat types.
- Support holistic, streamlined recovery planning at the ecosystem scales.
- Increase opportunities for funding and coordination across the National Estuary Program and the Puget Sound recovery community.
- Strategy builds upon on existing efforts to integrate different sources and ways of knowing to inform recovery approaches and implementation.

Draft schedule of activities:

- March 2024 – August 2024: Planning
 - Internal planning. Identify resources, coordination with existing efforts, initiate conversations with tribes and partners and revise process as needed.
- August 2024- March 2025: Phase 1
 - Iterative strategy development and coordinated input through existing workgroups such as, but not limited to: the WA State Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup, PSEMP Nearshore Workgroup, PS Kelp Conservation and



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Recovery Plan, and Kelp and Eelgrass Health and Conservation Plan executive work group.

- Dialogue with and input from individual tribes and partners (e.g. Local Integrating Organizations, Marine Resource Committees, ect..) outside existing groups if desired.
- Gaps in existing plans will be identified and through iterative strategy development either addressed in this phase or in future strategy updates.
- March 2025 – July 2025: Phase 3
 - Draft integrated strategy based upon existing reviewed and vetted plans released.
- July 2025-October 2025: Phase 4
 - Finalize strategy. Use strategy to inform 2026-2030 Action Agenda development.

Contact: Bree Turner, Marine Vegetation Lead, Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead,
Bree.Turner@dnr.wa.gov, (360) 870-7158

Homework

- Please read Action Agenda Strategy 16, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation:
<https://actionagenda.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov/Strategy/Detail/16>
- Please review one or both of the following storymaps:
 - a. Exploring Puget Sound Kelp Forests – [PSRF's Kelp Expedition Storymap](#)
 - b. Sea Grass Monitoring in Puget Sound (2000-2020) - [WA DNR Storymap](#)
 - c. Eelgrass in Island County [Storymap](#)
 - d. Samish Indian Nation Kelp [Storymap](#)

