

**Port Susan** provides a place for us and our families to live, learn, and play. Port Susan, bordered by Snohomish County to the east and Island County (Camano Island) to the west, is comprised of a diversity of landscapes, including forests, farms, marine shoreline, and the Stillaguamish River delta. The region is home to an impressive variety of wildlife including migratory Gray whales, numerous bird species, salmon, Dungeness crab, and productive shellfish beds.

Land and sea provide bountiful opportunities for us to fish, swim, boat, paddle, watch wildlife, and walk the beach. Yet, the ecological systems that support these activities are threatened. Human activities resulting in habitat loss, degraded water quality, and many other stresses are becoming increasingly prevalent as the human population in Port Susan grows and expands.

### CONSERVATION GOAL

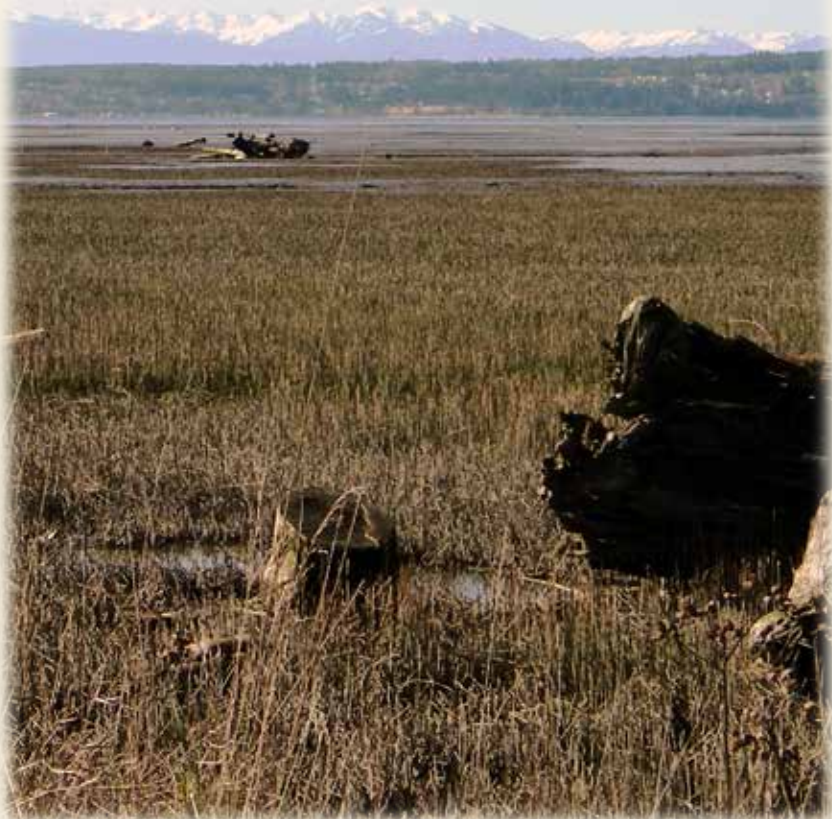
The Port Susan MSA Plan aims to achieve a healthy marine and estuarine ecosystem with thriving biodiversity and strong recreational and resource based industries. It encourages citizen participation and a common community vision, but the designation carries no regulatory authority.

To implement the plan and restore and protect Port Susan, a diverse planning group was formed, consisting of partners from area jurisdictions and groups. Learn more inside.

# Port Susan

## Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan

July 2012



### WHAT IS A MARINE STEWARDSHIP AREA?

A Marine Stewardship Area (MSA) is a non-regulatory conservation strategy that generates responsibility within relevant authorities and users of marine environments for the conservation of natural, cultural, economic, and scenic values.

## THREATS TO PORT SUSAN ECOSYSTEM TARGETS

- § Bank Hardening
- § Levee Maintenance
- § Agricultural Runoff
- § Loss of Vegetated Buffer
- § Increased Flooding (due to Climate Change and Development)
- § Acidification
- § Spills
- § Derelict Gear
- § Illegal Harvest
- § Increased Storm Events (due to Climate Change)
- § Incompatible Recreation
- § Invasive Species
- § Incompatible Harvest
- § Municipal Discharge
- § Docks and Piers (Overwater Structures)
- § Incompatible Forest Practices
- § Pollution from Stormwater
- § Septic Failure
- § Tide Gates
- § Water Withdrawal
- § Removal of Natural Wood
- § Urban Pests

## CONSERVATION ACTION PLANNING

The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process is guiding the project. CAP begins with the identification of a set of ecosystem 'targets'. Targets are representative of the biodiversity of the system, such that conservation of the targets will ensure the conservation of all native biodiversity within the project area. Target viability, or health, was then assessed and threats to targets identified. Threats are those things negatively affecting the targets. Based on the identified threats, conservation strategies were developed for each target and ranked based on benefit, cost, and feasibility. Implementation of strategies is forthcoming and measures will be developed to monitor progress and adapt the plan as necessary.



Conservation Action Planning is an iterative process, consisting of four main planning themes: defining the project, developing strategies and measures, implementing strategies and measures, and using results to adapt and improve. To date, the Port Susan MSA team has worked to define the project and develop strategies and measures and has started implementation work planning.

## CONSERVATION TARGETS

The targets identified are shorebirds, Chinook salmon, forage fish, embedded invertebrates, Dungeness crab, the Stillaguamish River delta, and beaches.

## CONSERVATION TARGET VIABILITY

Overall Viability Rank	Conservative Targets
Good	Shorebirds
Fair	Chinook Salmon
Good	Forage Fish
Good	Embedded Invertebrates
Good	Dungeness Crab
Poor	River Delta
Fair	Beaches
Fair	Project Biodiversity Health Rank

- § **Very Good** - Ecologically desirable status; requires little intervention for maintenance.
- § **Good** - Within acceptable range of variation; some intervention required for maintenance.
- § **Fair** - Outside acceptable range of variation; requires human intervention.
- § **Poor** - Restoration increasingly difficult; may result in extirpation of target.

## COLLABORATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In addition to the project team, over 225 technical advisors, managers, citizens, and stakeholders were engaged in developing the plan through working groups and a series of public workshops that benefited from local and scientific knowledge.



## CITIZEN SCIENCE

Alongside the CAP process, a citizen science project was developed to address knowledge gaps. A group of volunteers collected data on the Port Susan nearshore for this project. As part of the adaptive management process, these data can be used to update the viability assessment and inform strategic actions.

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Through the CAP process and with the help of many partner organizations, stakeholders, and local citizens, more than 30 prioritized strategies are identified in the MSA Plan. For example, one strategy that the MRCs are working to implement is:

*MRCs facilitate implementation of education programs targeted at contractors, engineers, realtors, and landowners to encourage soft armoring and bioengineering, and raise awareness about the impacts of shoreline hardening by 2015.*

The strategies were presented to citizens in both Snohomish and Island Counties and vetted by local resource managers and scientists. In December 2011, both Snohomish and Island County MRCs voted to endorse the Port Susan MSA plan. Recognizing much of this plan is beyond the scope and capacity of individual authorities, the MSA team is relying on the cooperation of partner organizations and the community to implement this plan.

For more information or to read the complete Conservation Action Plan visit: [www.snocomrc.org](http://www.snocomrc.org)

## PROJECT FUNDING

This project was funded by a grant from the Northwest Straits Commission with matching support from the Tulalip Tribes, The Nature Conservancy, Snohomish County, Island County, Washington Sea Grant, and Washington State University Extension Beach Watchers.



## PLANNING GROUP

- § Island and Snohomish County Marine Resources Committees (MRCs)
- § The Tulalip Tribes
- § The Stillaguamish Tribe
- § The Northwest Straits Initiative
- § The Nature Conservancy
- § Washington Sea Grant
- § Washington State University Extension Beach Watchers



Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area