

***Managing Levee Vegetation to Help Reach Targets for
Salmon and Puget Sound Recovery***

***Levee Vegetation Information Session
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Topics

- 1. Why riparian habitats are important*
- 2. Some context for this project*
- 3. Thoughts on the March 2010 draft PGL variance framework*
- 4. Making this work better toward recovery goals*
- 5. Achieving these outcomes*

Importance of Riparian Habitats

Many native species, including listed salmon, rely on riparian habitats and their functions:

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









Some Context for this Project

- *Levees protect people and significant investments in property and infrastructure – levee integrity is a priority*
- *New Partnership 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.”**
- *Riparian degradation = listing factor for salmon (and orcas)*
- *Levee setbacks offer significant habitat and flood storage benefits*
- *Some levees aren't going to be moved in the foreseeable future: keep these levees safe and improve habitat*
- *Achieving recovery goals will need more than vegetation on levees and levee setbacks can offer*

Thoughts on the March 2010 Draft PGL Variance Framework

- *Sponsors must justify habitat improvements rather than the opposite*
- *Technical and financial burden for variance is on levee sponsors that go to PL 84-99 for funding support*
- *Sponsors remain in the middle of the conflict between ESA and standards for PL 84-99 funding eligibility*
- *Ultimate decision-making authority on variances is in DC rather than local*

Making this Work Better Toward Recovery Goals

- *Flexibility for management that is tailored to our watersheds and rivers*
- *Local discretion in developing and implementing management actions to meet levee safety and habitat objectives*
- *Cost effective management of our leveed reaches (should local sponsors pay for effective on the ground work, mitigation, defense against ESA lawsuits, or variance applications?)*
- *Fact-based, science-based standards*
- *Performance-based, adaptive management*
- *Most/all levee sponsors take advantage of flexibility to maintain safe levees and improve habitat conditions*

How do We Achieve These Outcomes?

- *Complete the project with the Seattle District*
- *Make sure the final PGL (DRAFT IN SEPTEMBER?) supports and allows for the use of the project products by levee sponsors*
- *Work with levee sponsors and stakeholders to use the products from the Seattle District project*
- *Implement a long term program to evaluate and improve the products over time to ensure that levee safety and habitat benefits are being achieved*

Thank you!