

INTRODUCTION

The *State of the Sound 2007* reports on the health of Puget Sound and the status of its water quality, habitat, marine life and climate.

The latest report in a continuing series, *State of the Sound 2007* tracks more than two dozen environmental indicators—from eelgrass and orcas to stream flow and oil spills—to provide insight into the current condition of Puget Sound and the threats to its resources. These indicators also help us understand emerging trends.

In addition, *State of the Sound 2007* reports on other leading issues affecting the health of Puget Sound and defines some of the continuing challenges it faces.

This report also charts progress made by the Puget Sound Action Team in 2005 and 2006 to improve Puget Sound's health. The Action Team is made up of federal, state, tribal and local governments, citizens and businesses working together to define, coordinate and implement the State of Washington's environmental agenda for Puget Sound.

Beauty, prosperity and growth

Most of us feel privileged to live in the Puget Sound region. Surrounded by soaring snow-capped peaks, defined by rich river valleys, and filled with islands, rocky beaches and picture-postcard bays and inlets, Puget Sound is a cornerstone of our regional identity, providing recreational, environmental and economic benefits.

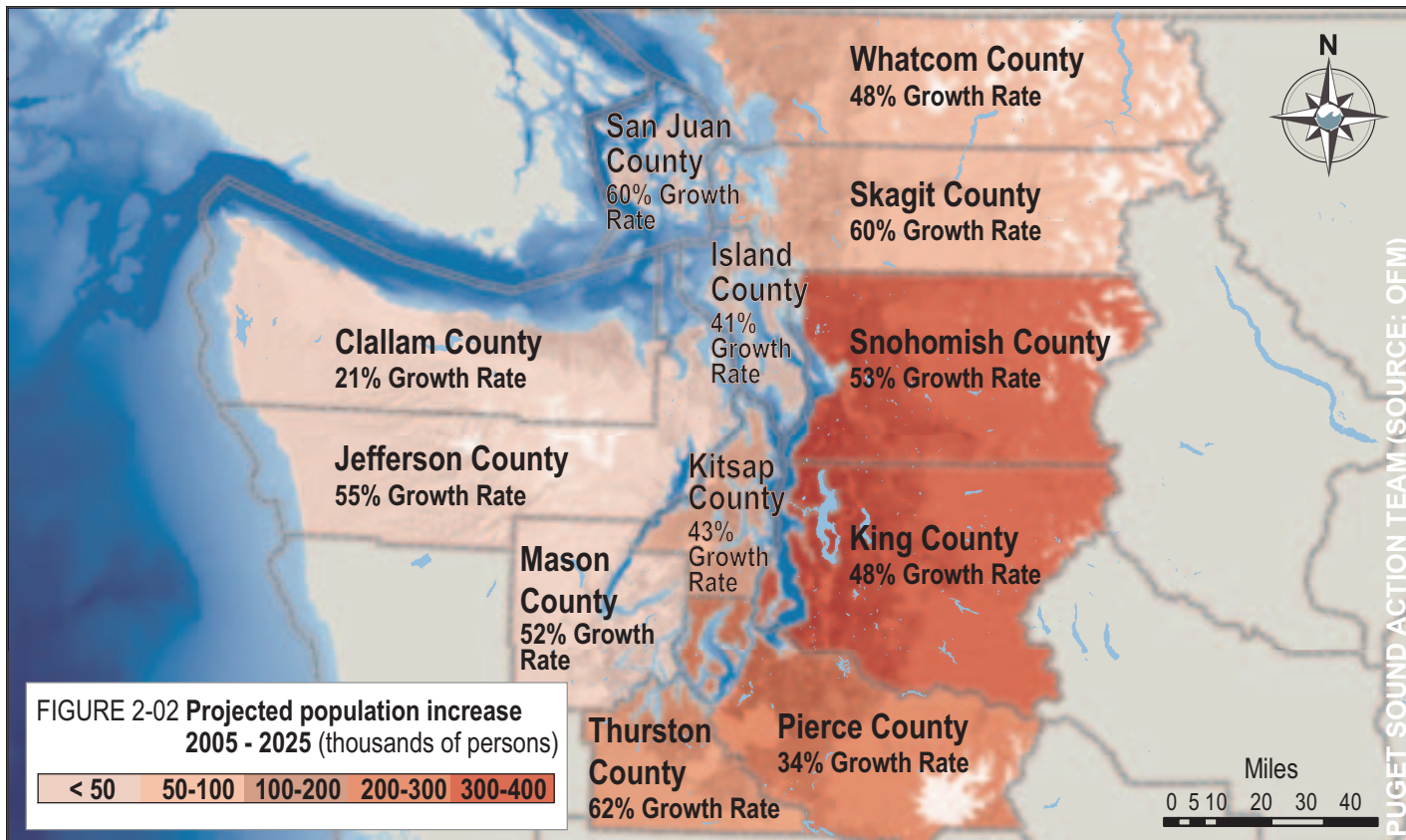
The Puget Sound basin is home to a spectacular array of life—200 species of fish, 26 kinds of marine mammals, 100 species of sea birds and thousands of invertebrate species such as clams, oysters and shrimp.

Four million of us make our home here, relying on a healthy Puget Sound ecosystem to supply us with water, food and places to live.

Puget Sound is also at the heart of our state's prosperity. Together, the ports of Seattle and Tacoma are number two in the nation for container traffic. We are a world center for software development and information technology.

But the value of a beautiful, diverse and thriving Puget Sound cannot be measured solely in dollars and cents. This living landscape, with its beauty and bounty that sustain us, is a priceless legacy we inherited from our parents, and it is up to us to pass on this treasure to our children and grandchildren.

PHOTO: (opposite page) Sailboat rounding the south end of Vashon Island. | Rae A. McNally



Projected growth a continuing concern

The Puget Sound basin includes five of the top 10 fastest-growing counties in the state.

Between 2000 and 2006, Puget Sound counties added 315,965 people, a rate of more than 50,000 people per year.

This rapidly increasing population places significant stress on our natural environment, adding more pavement, more waste, more demands on resources such as fresh water and more destruction of critical habitats.

The projected growth in the region is a continuing concern (Figure 2-02). As many as 1.4 million new residents are expected to move into the region by 2025. Under the state's Growth Management Act, local cities and counties must plan for population growth over a projected 20-year period. Source: Action Team; State of Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM).



PHOTO: Lime Kiln Lighthouse on San Juan Island. | Shutterstock.com/David Gaylor

PSAMP: Monitoring environmental trends

The data summarized in this report come from the Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program (PSAMP) and other scientific investigations underway in Puget Sound. PSAMP brings together local, state and federal agencies—coordinated by the Puget Sound Action Team—to collect and report information on the condition of the Puget Sound environment. Established in 1988, PSAMP is one of the nation's longest-running marine monitoring programs.

Roughly every two years, PSAMP compiles a report called *The Puget Sound Update*, a technical report on the findings from PSAMP and other research and monitoring efforts. A copy of the 2007 *Puget Sound Update* is available online at www.psat.wa.gov/update, or a hard copy can be obtained by calling 800.54.SOUND.

The Puget Sound Action Team coordinates the PSAMP program. Members of PSAMP include:

- Washington State departments of
 - Ecology
 - Fish and Wildlife
 - Natural Resources
 - Health
- Puget Sound Action Team
- King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northwest Fisheries Science Center
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- University of Washington's Applied Physics Laboratory
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

THE PUGET SOUND INITIATIVE

Our previous report, *State of the Sound 2004*, found that despite significant efforts and investments during the past two decades to preserve the Sound, the scale of the effort was not sufficient for the scale of the problems. Rapid population growth, land conversion and the accompanying increases in impervious surface degradation and loss of habitat; and a slew of toxic contaminants entering the system were challenging government and private-sector efforts to keep even with, or get ahead of, the problems.

Washington Governor Chris Gregoire responded to the situation and launched a Puget Sound Initiative in December 2005 aimed at protecting and restoring the Sound. This initiative included increased funding for critical actions (\$52 million in 2006) and new laws for oil transfers and septic system management.

The central element of the initiative was to create a high-level advisory body that would recommend additional actions needed to protect and restore the Sound by 2020. Called The Puget Sound Partnership, this blue-ribbon commission brought together 17 leading citizens, four state legislators and two members of the state's congressional delegation.

The Partnership delivered its final report to the governor in December 2006 with a suite of recommendations intended to scale up and improve our efforts to save Puget Sound.

FIGURE 2-03: (right) This map shows changes in population, population density and impervious surface area in the watersheds of Puget Sound from 1990-2001. To preserve undeveloped land, it is desirable to have growth occur in already developed areas. This map shows where growth is occurring in each watershed as compared to the increase in impervious surface and the overall population growth rate.

What do the numbers mean?

- If the orange bar is larger than either of the other bars, then new growth occurred primarily within the desired already-developed areas.
- If the gold bar is larger than either of the other bars, then new growth occurred primarily outside already-developed areas. *Source: Action Team.*

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information about the Partnership visit www.pugetsoundpartnership.org.



PHOTO: Sunset from Anacortes. | Shutterstock.com/Natalia Bratslavsky.

NATALIA BRATSLAVSKY

