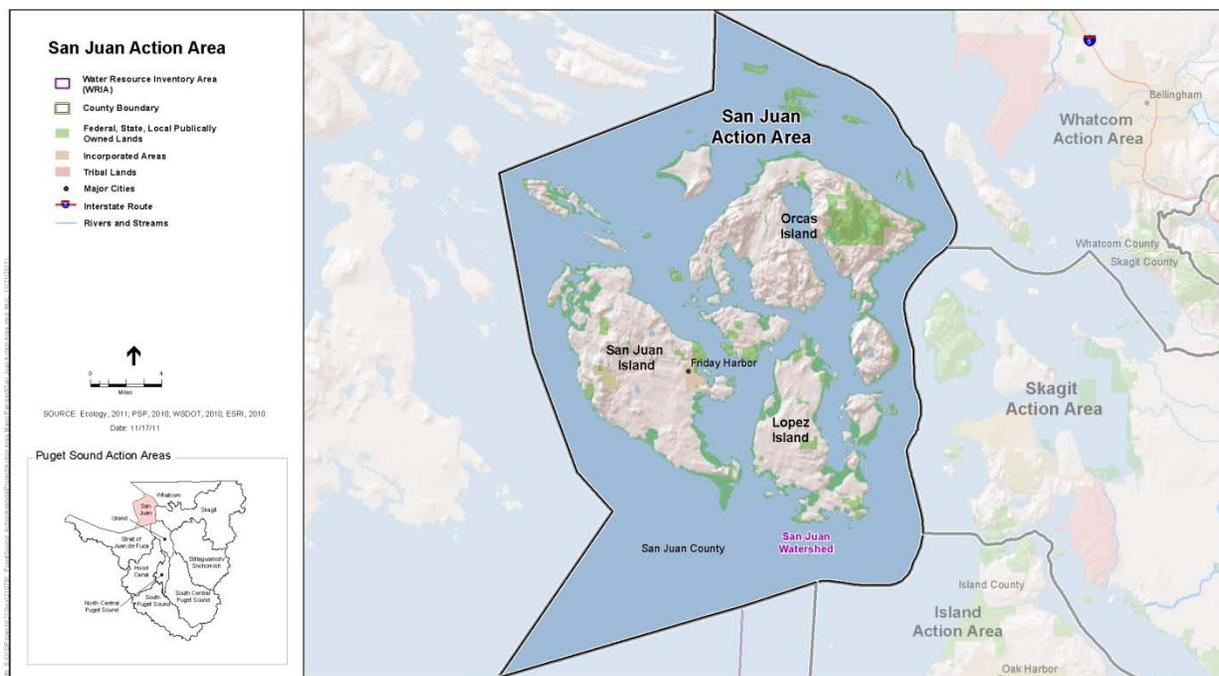


The Action Agenda in the San Juan Islands

Profile²⁶

Located at the nexus of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Georgia Strait, and Puget Sound, the 428 separate islands that make up San Juan County are considered by many to be the crown jewels of Puget Sound. San Juan County has the smallest land mass of any county in Washington State, but with 408 miles of marine shoreline, has more than any other county in the contiguous United States. Geologically, the San Juans are distinctly different from mainland Washington and Vancouver Island, and are dominated by bedrock and thinner glacial deposits relative to other parts of Puget Sound. Their unique location in the crossroads of the Salish Sea gives the San Juans a wide diversity of flora and fauna.

San Juan County is affected by the “rainshadow” of the Olympic Mountains, and receives 20 to 30 inches of annual rainfall, with significant variation of rainfall patterns among the island’s microclimates. There are no major rivers on the San Juan Islands, but several small creeks flow on a year-round basis. Additionally, the Fraser River in British Columbia influences the temperature and sedimentation in San Juan County waters. Only one percent of the land is paved, and 61 percent is forested. Lakes and freshwater wetlands cover an estimated four percent of the landscape.



²⁶ Puget Sound Partnership will double check facts and figures listed in profiles during the public review period.

The San Juans are an extremely popular summer destination, and the number of residents swells from 15,484 who live there year-round to approximately double that in the summer. Over 700,000 visitors camp, moor, or stay in area lodging. Most of the county is rural, with 75 percent of the population living outside the “urban” areas of Friday Harbor, Eastsound, and Lopez Village. Over the past decade, population growth in the islands has been high, with a growth rate of 13.1 percent from 2000 to 2009. There are 5,700 shoreline parcels in San Juan County, of which approximately 50 percent have already been developed. Some islands have no public access and few accommodate automobiles. Public access to the water is extremely limited on many islands.

The economy is driven by residential and commercial construction, tourism and government (including schools). Tourism is highly dependent on the clean marine and fresh water, spectacular views, and opportunities for boating, bird watching, whale watching and cycling. There is significant marine oriented commerce including marinas, fishing, boat building and repair. Representative marine education and research from organizations include the University of Washington Friday Harbor Labs, SeaDoc Society, and Seattle Pacific University marine labs. High quality shellfish farming occurs in San Juan County and there is a growing sustainable agricultural movement. Several tribes from the Point-No-Point and Point Elliott treaty areas exercise fishing rights in the San Juan Islands region.

Unique ecosystem characteristics and assets

Public involvement in the stewardship of the San Juan Islands is considered by area residents to be one of their foremost ecosystem assets. There are many government and non-governmental efforts devoted to protecting this important natural resource. The San Juan Preservation Trust is the oldest private land trust in Washington State. The San Juan County Land Bank protects natural areas and is the only county-based land bank in the State. In 2007, the San Juan County Council adopted the San Juan County Marine Stewardship Area Plan, the culmination of three years of effort by the San Juan Marine Resources Committee, with contributions from numerous scientists, technical advisors, resource managers, community leaders, business owners, and citizens. The Marine Stewardship Area Plan is intended to sustain the many services that the ecosystem provides for county citizens, fish and wildlife, and the economics of the County.

Example assets include sustainable tourism, commercial and recreational fisheries for clams, crab and spot prawns, and clean beaches and waters. There are currently no beaches in the San Juan Islands that are closed to swimming. However, public beaches are periodically closed to shellfish harvest due to a naturally-occurring marine biotoxin which can cause paralytic shellfish poisoning. Protected upland areas are located at Moran State Park, San Juan Historical National Park, Turtleback Mountain, and

Notable Accomplishments

Seven acres of coastal salt marsh and two acres of a tidal lagoon have been restored in San Juan County.

Eleven miles of surf smelt and sandlance habitat in the San Juans has been documented.

All feederbluffs, eelgrass, kelp, forage fish, and shoreline modifications in San Juan County have been documented.

Tidal inundation to Cascade Creek was restored with a new Buck Bay Bridge.

The Spring Street Rain Garden demonstration project was installed.

Lopez Hill. Yellow Island contains an intact prairie, a unique ecological feature on a small island that is approximately one acre in size.

The location of the San Juans makes them a way-station for all 22 migrating populations of Puget Sound Chinook salmon as both juveniles and adults. Additionally, Sockeye, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon, Kokanee, Steelhead, and Rainbow and Coastal cutthroat trout have been documented in the County's marine waters. The San Juans support outmigrating juvenile salmon including: Chinook, Coho, Chum and Pink, and stocks from the Frasier River, Puget Sound and east and west coast Vancouver Island and the Strait of Georgia. Although most of the streams in San Juan County are small and do not support salmon, a small number of Coho have recently been reported spawning in Cascade Creek and possibly other streams on Orcas Island, and a few creeks support introduced runs of Chum.

San Juan County provides excellent habitat for juvenile and adult salmon with over 186 acres of tidal wetlands, inter- and sub-tidal flats, eelgrass meadows along the shorelines and in the bays, and kelp beds. Tidal wetlands are highly valued due to their relative scarcity. At least 80 miles of potential forage fish spawning beaches are present. Eelgrass is found on 20 percent of all shorelines, and the San Juans contain one-third of all of the kelp in Puget Sound. Pacific surf smelt and sandlance have been documented on 11 miles of all shorelines. The geology has created habitat conditions for rockfish that are not replicated anywhere else in Puget Sound. Approximately 74 percent of the shallow dominant rocky reef habitat in Puget Sound, comprised of boulder fields, rocky ledges and outcroppings, is found in the San Juan Archipelago.

Local Action Agenda Process

The San Juan Implementation Committee, the local integrating organization (LIO) for the area, developed a Prioritization Framework to guide the update to the local Action Agenda. The framework was approved by the Accountability Oversight Committee and formed the basis of update work from January-October of 2011. The group used the 2008 San Juan Action Agenda as a starting point, identifying key gaps in the original profile. The Implementation Committee then held a workshop to link pressures on the ecosystem to ecosystem benefits in the San Juans. Local ecosystem benefits included most, but not all, Soundwide Recovery Targets. Linkages were used to rate pressures based on the scope, severity, and irreversibility of the impact on each ecosystem benefit. Ratings guided the selection of pressures with a "high" threat. Strategies and near-term actions were then refined from the 2008 profile that – at minimum – addressed the highest ranked pressures, considering both feasibility and potential impact. Development of these priority pressures and strategies involved regular meetings with the Accountability Oversight Committee, including presentations before the San Juan County Council. In October 2011, the Action Agenda Oversight Group co-hosted a public open house on the San Juan Inter-Island Ferry, seeking feedback on the priority near-term actions.

Key Threats/Pressures

The San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group identified the following three key pressures on the San Juan ecosystems:

- Major oil spills;

- Runoff from the built environment (including septic systems); and
- Shoreline development (including armoring).

Opportunities, Priorities and Near Term Actions

The San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group identified seven priority (Tier 1) strategies and ten near term actions to address three key pressures on the San Juan ecosystems. The priority strategies were honed from a more comprehensive list of strategies that were all considered important in addressing the local pressures. Furthermore, the San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group recognizes that in order to be most successful, many of the strategies will need to be implemented together, which is the approach that will be taken at the local level. The strategies are listed below (in no particular order), and will guide the local near term actions.

PRESSURE ON THE ECOSYSTEM	TIER 1 STRATEGY	TIER 1 NEAR TERM ACTION*
Major Oil Spills	Work with the Puget Sound Partnership on oil spill prevention and readiness programs within Puget Sound and with Canada.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Juan Marine Resources Committee will convene 20 agencies and non-governmental organizations responsible for oil spill prevention and readiness at the 2012 Marine Manager Workshop, including participation from the local, state, federal, and Canadian organizations. Workshop outcomes will include a list of agreed upon recommendations for oil spill prevention. Local jurisdictions will adopt highest priority recommendations within their authority by 2014.
	Maintain local oil spill readiness and response programs in alignment with a regional readiness and response program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Islands Oil Spill Association (IOSA) will maintain local oil spill readiness and response programs at its current level of funding and staff/volunteer capacity through 2014. Identify remaining local response needs at the 2012 Marine Managers Workshop and consider these, along with a funding and action plan, as part of the workshop recommendations.
Runoff from the Built Environment (including septic systems)	Create effective compliance mechanisms for stormwater.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Juan County Community Development and Planning Department (CDPD) and the Town of Friday Harbor will improve stormwater permit review process with pre-disturbance site review and follow-up site visits to 50% of properties permitted between 2012-2013 and 50% of properties permitted between 2013-2014.
	Implement best management practices to reduce pollution of source wastes by residential runoff and non-point sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Juan County Health and Community Services will fully implement the On-site Sewage System (OSS) Operation and Maintenance Program Plan, with a goal of 100% of systems in sensitive areas in compliance and current with inspections by 2014 and 60% of alternative systems to have inspections between 2010-2014. • San Juan County Public Works will convene Community Development and Planning Department (CDPD), Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS), and

PRESSURE ON THE ECOSYSTEM	TIER 1 STRATEGY	TIER 1 NEAR TERM ACTION*
		<p>the San Juan Islands Conservation District (CD) to identify and coordinate best management practices for stormwater, on-site septic systems, and animal wastes with community participation by 2013. CDPD, DHCS, CD, and the Town of Friday Harbor will publicize information by the second quarter of 2014 at the DHCS, CDPD, and Town permit counters and associated websites, with a goal to target 100% of applicants by the end of 2014. San Juan County will provide for identified best management practices in County Code by 2014.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Juan County Public Works Stormwater Utility will lead and work jointly with the, Stormwater Committee, the Water Resources Committee, the Marine Resources Committee, and the Town of Friday Harbor to implement an annual strategic monitoring plan by 2013 to measure levels of fecals, heavy metals, POPs, and PAHs in priority basins to test the effectiveness of best management practices. In the first year post-implementation, monitor 100% of priority basins, with monitoring actions ongoing after 2014.
Shoreline Development (including shoreline armoring)	<p>Provide information and work with landowners regarding the importance of retaining and restoring native vegetation, trees and ground cover and geologic processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Juan County Community Development and Planning Department (CDPD) and the Town of Friday Harbor will make ongoing technical assistance (best management practices) available on-site to 100% of permit applicants, with a goal of 75% of customers avoiding hard armoring or otherwise implementing soft armoring techniques by 2014. This work will leverage the effort underway via EPA grant funding and shoreline workshops coordinated by Friends of the San Juans, San Juan Islands Conservation District, and Washington Sea Grant
	<p>Improve on compliance and enforcement capacity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Juan Community Development and Planning Department (CDPD) and the Town of Friday Harbor will provide capacity for technical assistance related to compliance with environmental regulations by 2013.
	<p>Identify and implement shoreline protection tools including land preservation via acquisition and conservation easements, restoration, and protection of marine areas consistent with treaty rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Juan County Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery will target funding to highest Tier I salmon recovery projects between 2012-2014, as listed in the San Juan Salmon Recovery three-year work plan for WRIA 2. Projects include acquisition and conservation easements, protection and restoration actions. San Juan County Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery will identify priority habitats for acquisition by 2013 in updates to the Salmon Recovery strategy, and will lead acquisition of, or establishment of conversation easements for 25% of priority habitat acreage with willing sellers/owners by 2014.

* San Juan priority strategies were approved in general by the San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group. Specific near-term action language regarding entities responsible, goals, and timeline were

proposed by the local Implementation Committee. Ultimate approval will rest with the San Juan County Council and Tribes represented on the San Juan Accountability Oversight Committee with consideration of available funding, opportunity costs, and public comment.

Following is a list of “Tier 2” strategies and accompanying draft actions. The San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group deemed these strategies and actions important for local recovery of Puget Sound and are recommended for consideration immediately after Tier 1 strategies and actions have been implemented.

PRESSURE ON THE ECOSYSTEM	TIER 2 STRATEGY	TIER 2 ACTION
Major Oil Spills	Work with the Puget Sound Partnership on oil spill prevention and readiness programs within Puget Sound and with Canada. (Same as Tier 1 above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information on pollutant levels in beach sediments, as baseline data for potential oil spill impacts (freeze samples to avoid upfront payment for chemical analysis). • Emphasize risk-based analyses to improve marine safety. (Vessel traffic risk analysis) • Work with Islands Trust on Oil Spill readiness, prevention, and response priorities
	Maintain local oil spill readiness and response programs in alignment with a regional readiness and response program. (Same as Tier 1 above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Geographic Response Plan with most current data from salmon recovery assessments • Support Coast Guard Re-Authorization Act • Incorporate current readiness and response program into the vessel of opportunity program
Runoff from the Build Environment (including septic systems)	Restore native vegetation, trees, and ground cover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
	Educate landowners about pollutants around the home and farm and provide information on proper storage and care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
	Implement Low Impact Development for new development and retrofits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
	Provide information and work with the public regarding Low Impact Development (LID) so they can implement LID on their own properties, including farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
	Ensure coordination between planning and health departments on issuance of septic permits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
	Implement San Juan Marine Stewardship Area Monitoring Plan, including the Stormwater Monitoring Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD

PRESSURE ON THE ECOSYSTEM	TIER 2 STRATEGY	TIER 2 ACTION
Shoreline Development (including shoreline armoring)	Identify and implement shoreline protection tools including land preservation via acquisition and conservation easements, restoration, and protection of marine areas consistent with treaty rights. (Same as Tier 1 above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Green Shores for Homes program
	Provide convenient landowner access to technical assistance for maintaining views, shoreline access, and ecological function of the shoreline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
	Shoreline regulatory strategy (update CAO and SMP).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
	Implement San Juan Marine Stewardship Area Monitoring Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD

Link to Recovery Targets

By addressing, at minimum, three of the highest-priority pressures in the San Juans, the Action Agenda Oversight Group expects improvements or protective actions for several Soundwide Recovery Targets. For instance, prevention of major oil spills will prevent further degradation of all or nearly all of the targets related to marine or marine nearshore areas. Near-term actions around runoff from the built environment (including septic systems) are also designed to protect water quality and improve management of on-site sewage systems. Restorative actions and technical assistance to homeowners in the shoreline could result in positive improvements in the amount of shoreline armoring. Overall, the group anticipates benefits to the following targets:

- Eelgrass
- Estuaries
- Marine Sediment Quality
- Orcas
- Pacific Herring
- Shellfish Beds
- Swimming Beaches
- Toxics in Fish
- Wild Chinook Salmon
- Freshwater Water Quality
- Management of On-Site Sewage Systems
- Pacific Herring
- Shellfish Beds
- Insects in Small Streams
- Shoreline armoring

Local Implementation Structure

The Action Agenda Oversight Group first convened in July of 2010 and actively participated in the update of the San Juan Action Agenda. The Implementation Committee met monthly between October 2010 and November 2011, including a half-day workshop in May. All meetings were held in Friday Harbor. The Accountability Oversight Committee met four times between January and September of

2011 to discuss the recommendations of the Implementation Committee, with meetings alternating between Friday Harbor and Anacortes.

Participants in the process included the following:

- Accountability Oversight Committee
 - San Juan County Council
 - Lummi Nation
 - Swinomish Tribe
 - Tulalip Tribes
- Implementation Committee
 - Marine Resources Committee
 - Salmon Recovery Lead Entity
 - Director of Planning
 - Director of Public Works
 - Director of Environmental Health
 - Water Resources Committee (Community Representative)
 - Tulalip Tribes
 - Lummi Natural Resources Department
 - Swinomish Tribe
 - Conservation District
 - Friday Harbor Laboratories
 - San Juan Stewardship Network/ECO Net
 - Town of Friday Harbor

IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATION IN THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS

The San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group (AAOG) is the Local Integrating Organization (LIO) for the San Juan geography, and was officially recognized by the Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council in June of 2010.

The Accountability Oversight Committee serves as the executive body for the AAOG, and consists of County Council, tribal, and ex-officio Puget Sound Partnership representatives.

The Implementation Committee consists of staff and volunteers from organizations helping to implement the local Action Agenda. This group provides recommendations to the Accountability Oversight Committee.

References and Additional Resources

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