



## Tacoma Shoreline Master Program Workshop

### SHORELINE RESTORATION PLANNING

#### Why shoreline restoration planning now?

Shorelines are a major feature in the city of Tacoma, providing both a valuable setting for land use and recreation and performing important ecological functions. The importance of shorelines in performing ecological functions has only become apparent in the last 40 years. Since then, much effort has been dedicated to cleaning up and restoring Tacoma's shorelines. Over 84 projects are either in process or have been completed.

As part of the update of the City's Shoreline Master Program, the State's shoreline management guidelines require that local governments develop policies that promote restoration of impaired shoreline ecological functions. Programs must also pursue a meaningful strategy to achieve restoration goals by identifying projects and funding sources as part of a shoreline restoration plan. In this context, restoration can be broadly implemented through a combination of programmatic measures (such as surface water management or public education) and site-specific projects (such as riparian plantings or habitat creation).

As a foundation, the City conducted a Shoreline Inventory and Characterization (July 2007) which described how natural shoreline processes have been modified in Tacoma and identified restoration potential and opportunities within each shoreline reach. To date, approximately 70 additional sites or projects have been identified for further exploration. The City's Shoreline Restoration Plan will build on the inventory analysis with an update of policies and development of specific actions.

#### What is shoreline restoration?

For purposes of the Shoreline Master Program Update, shoreline "restoration" or "ecological restoration" is:

"...the reestablishment or upgrading of impaired ecological shoreline processes or functions. This may be accomplished through measures including, but not limited to, revegetation, removal of intrusive shoreline structures and removal or treatment of toxic materials. Restoration does not imply a requirement for returning the shoreline area to aboriginal or pre-European settlement conditions" (WAC 173-26-020(27)).

The goal is not to restore the shoreline to historically natural conditions, but rather to improve on existing degraded areas and impaired ecological functions according to the State's guidelines.

## The goals of the Shoreline Restoration Plan are to:

- Improve water quality;
- Re-establish and restore natural shoreline processes, restore degraded and lost habitat, and wildlife corridors;
- Improve connectivity of the shoreline environments to one another and to adjacent habitat corridors that support priority species and species of local significance;
- Promote stewardship in shoreline areas in general and the restoration plan in particular.

## What are your ideas for restoration goals, projects, sites, or programs?

We would like to hear your ideas on restoration plan goals and for projects or programs that would improve degraded shoreline areas.

## How should we prioritize these ideas?

Because there are and there will be many ideas, projects, and sites suggested for restoration, and not enough funding to do them all now, we need to develop ways to prioritize our efforts so they can get implemented over time. Several past shoreline plans and studies on Tacoma's shorelines included criteria for prioritizing restoration activities. Based on these past plans, here are some suggested criteria for prioritizing the many great projects. Please let us know what you think of these criteria.

### Projects previously identified as a priority:

If a project's priority was identified in previous plans/programs, that ranking will be incorporated into this Shoreline Protection and Restoration Plan. If a project was not previously ranked and as new projects are proposed, the following criteria can be applied to determine their level of priority. A project may be rated as a low, medium or high priority once it is reviewed according to these criteria.

### For new projects suggested during our planning process:

#### **A. Screening criteria:**

1. Site can be made available for restoration; sites do not have substantial structures or pavement.
2. Site has limited potential for contamination/recontamination.

#### **B. Prioritization criteria:**

1. The project is directly associated with a moderate or high restoration potential/opportunity, according to the Shoreline Inventory and Characterization.
2. The project is sustainable and there is a high likelihood of success given the status of ecological processes and functions and larger watershed controls (such as sea level rise associated with climate change, or

erosion associated with river/creek flows affected by land uses in the greater watershed).

3. The project would increase functional connectivity or link existing habitats.
4. The project is cost-effective. For example, enhancement of existing habitat is more cost-effective than creating new habitat (enhancement generally requires less engineering, less earth-moving, less cost).
5. Size of area to be protected or restored; greater than 2 acres is preferred.
6. Ownership and management does not present access challenges.
7. Adjacent land uses are compatible with the site to be protected or restored.

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