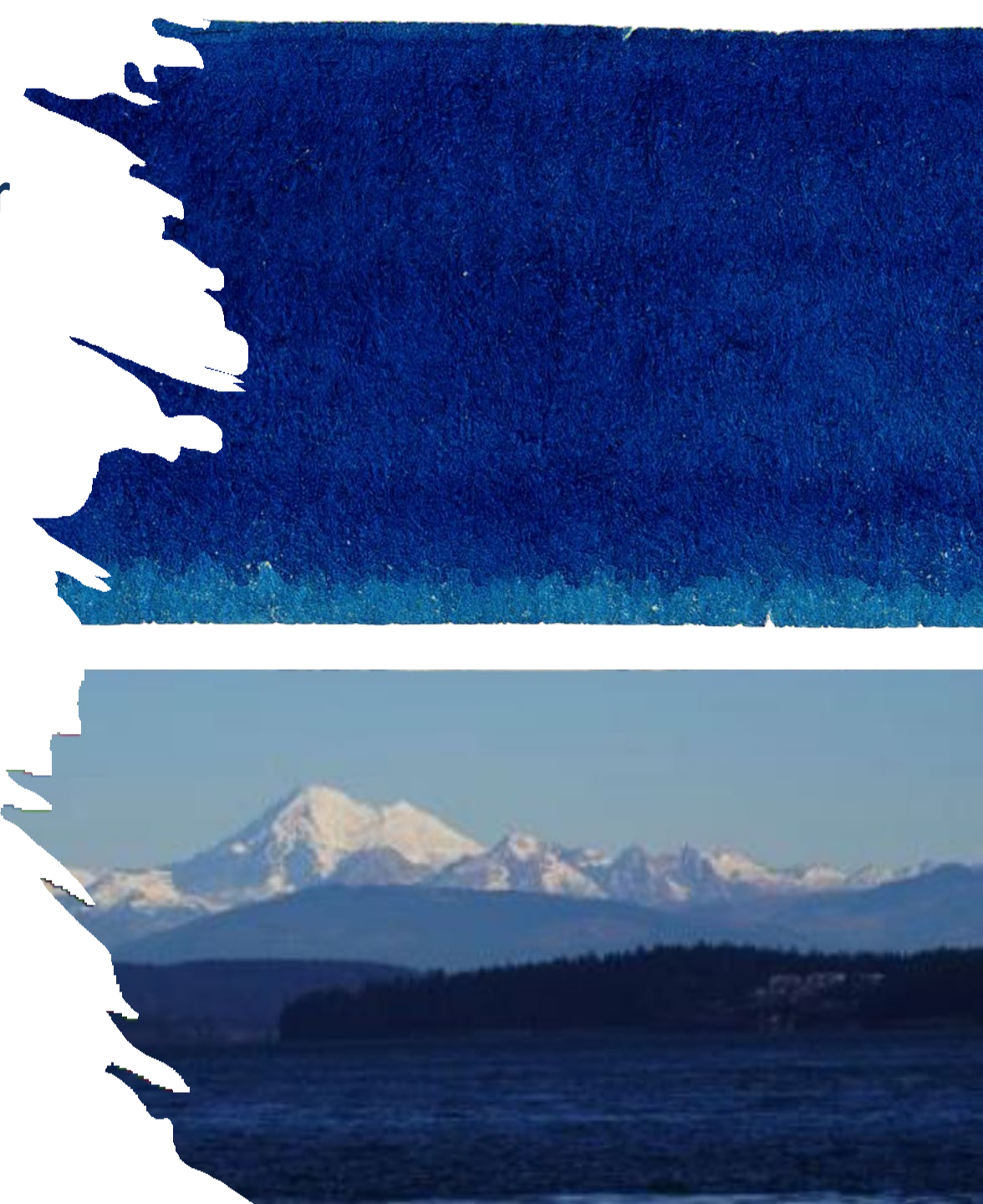


Puget Soundkeeper

2021-2023 Strategic Plan



**PUGET
SOUNDKEEPER®**



About Puget Soundkeeper

Founded in 1984 as the Puget Sound Alliance, Soundkeeper was the first grassroots community group to focus exclusively on protecting the marine environment of Puget Sound. The Waterkeeper model begins with a physical presence on the water. We are defenders, protectors, and advocates.

Puget Soundkeeper has stepped up to enforce the Clean Water Act against egregious polluters for more than thirty years. We have kept thousands of pounds of arsenic, mercury, and other toxic chemicals out of our waterways and our communities. We have helped to rewrite Washington state's stormwater regulations, making them among the most protective in the country. Our volunteers have removed tons of marine debris each year from beaches and waterways that are home to native salmon, orca, and an abundance of Northwest marine life.

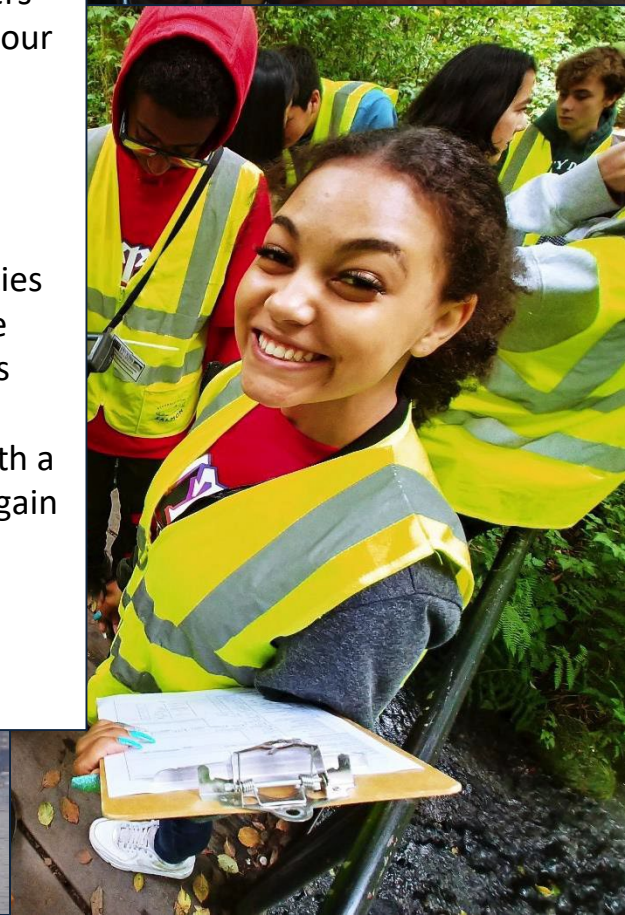
The challenges facing Puget Sound and its communities are enormous. Salmon and orca populations struggle to sustain themselves. Stormwater runoff and wastewater discharge dump toxic chemicals and nutrients into Puget Sound that poison our fish and choke the web of life that supports all species. These are problems that can be solved, and Puget Soundkeeper is committed to helping develop the solutions and build out the public support needed to improve the ability of our home waters to sustain life.



Our MISSION is to protect and enhance the waters of Puget Sound for the health and restoration of our aquatic ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Our VISION is for a Puget Sound teeming with diverse marine life and providing safe opportunities for swimming, fishing, recreation and sustainable economic activity. We seek a Sound that supports the lifeways and traditional cultural practices of indigenous peoples; provides all communities with a clean, healthy place to live and work; and once again is home to an abundance of salmon and orca.

We are all Waterkeepers.



These Values Ground our Work

We are all children of water. We treasure the waters that grace our home. As Waterkeepers, our advocacy for the water is based on our experience as part of that ecosystem.

Climate Resiliency. Climate change is warming and acidifying our waters, increasing heavy rain events, and changing instream flow. Our region's climate resilience can be increased by curbing pollution, limiting stormwater runoff, and improving wastewater infrastructure.

Respect for Each Other, Respect for Future Generations. Our deliberations begin with the question of what the moment calls us to do. Our decisions are based on consideration of future generations. We are committed to educating and lifting up the voices of the young people who will inherit these waters.

Justice for Water, Justice for Communities. Soundkeeper believes in the equitable and aggressive enforcement of laws that protect our ecosystem. When we take action under the Clean Water Act, we acknowledge the importance of these communities speaking out on their own terms and defining their own place as Waterkeepers.

Integrity: Community, Science and Law. As Waterkeepers, our work is grounded in community partnership, informed by science, and supported by the weight of the law. These principles form the moral standing from which we speak on behalf of Puget Sound.

How We Work

Our vision is for a Puget Sound that is protected by a strong framework of legislation, regulatory enforcement and pollution prevention practices in which government, businesses, local communities and individuals are vocal and proactive in their stewardship, and in which we hold each other accountable.

Soundkeeper creates change by starting with public awareness and engagement. Using community science and targeted outreach, Soundkeeper directly engages people in the ways of water. We inspire behavior changes that create stewards and advocates. You can find Soundkeeper volunteers and members making a direct, tangible difference on beach clean ups, volunteer boat patrols, legislative visits and more.

The actions of our members and volunteers are multiplied through the collective power of our voice and our commitment to Puget Sound. Together, we build a stronger, more effective constituency for the water. In bringing together these voices, we advocate for laws and regulations that support clean water, a benefit that is shared by all communities and the ecosystem we call home.

OUTREACH

- Public Awareness
- Education
- Community Science



BEHAVIOR CHANGE

- Personal Stewardship
- Volunteer Soundkeepers
- Grassroots Advocacy
- Monitoring and Enforcement



SYSTEMS CHANGE

- Legislation to Protect Clean Water
- Permits and Rulemaking to Prevent Pollution
- Culture of Compliance and Accountability



The Disproportionate Impacts of Pollution

As the health of Puget Sound has degraded under the burden of industrialization and population growth, the lifeways and traditional practices that have sustained indigenous communities for millenia are under threat.

At the same time, the communities that sit adjacent to our biggest polluters and that struggle with outdated infrastructure, including wastewater treatment systems, are most often those already challenged by racial and economic inequity.

We all experience the impacts of pollution, but no community or group of people should carry an unfair share of the burden of pollution by virtue of geographic location, race, social position or economic disadvantage.

As a historically white-led organization, Soundkeeper has often advocated for these communities, but not necessarily in partnership or in fully realized solidarity. We can do better to center their needs, to proactively create space at the table for new voices; to yield power; and to follow their lead in advocating for community health, well being and a just environment.

When we prioritize the disproportionate impacts of pollution and center the communities who most carry this burden, it alters the way power and change move through our organization and magnifies the impact we can have on clean water and ecosystem resiliency.



Building a Stronger Soundkeeper

Clean Water Defense is at the heart of Puget Soundkeeper's mission, and our track record here is strong. The Soundkeeper wheelhouse contains a powerful mix of monitoring, enforcement, rulemaking, litigation and legislative tools. Our work is strongest when we draw from a full range of these strategies to create long-term, systems change.

Soundkeeper's Stewardship program builds a powerful community-based presence on the water, from which we create solutions that begin at the source and end with clean, open waters for all.

There are many different ways people engage with and value water in their communities. Soundkeeper embraces these intersections and is committed to further exploring our common connection to water. Reducing pollution in Puget Sound will require the political strength of a larger, more inclusive and more vocal clean water constituency.

Clean Water Defense

GOAL: Stop environmentally damaging practices and substances at the source. Support the resilience and empowerment of impacted communities to reduce legacy pollutants.

Historic and continuing releases of **TOXICS** from the industrialization of our region threaten human health, harm vulnerable aquatic species, and stymie restoration and healing efforts. Many communities along the shores of Puget Sound still bear the legacy of decades of industrial toxic waste. The Duwamish River, in particular, is among the nation's most heavily polluted waterways, and poor practices continue to threaten the Sound and its tributaries.

STRATEGY: Provide a presence on the water and in our communities to monitor, observe and respond to Clean Water Act violations and other threats to Puget Sound.



Clean Water Defense

Municipal **STORMWATER** runoff into Puget Sound is the largest source of toxic pollution entering Puget Sound. Current stormwater systems are not sufficient to handle the increased rainfall and flooding we can anticipate with a changing climate. Addressing these systems is vital to our region's climate resiliency and the survival of iconic Northwest species, most notably our salmon and orca populations.

STRATEGY: Maximize municipal stormwater pollution control and reduction through advocacy focused on equity and justice, low-impact development (including GSI), structural stormwater controls, and solutions for Combined Sewer Overflows.

Industrial Stormwater poses its own unique, additional threats by virtue of the working landscapes of our maritime economy. Industrial sites create hot spots for discharges of high levels of heavy metals, solids, and other toxics that must be properly controlled in order for corporations to avoid externalizing the true cost of doing business to local communities.

STRATEGY: Reduce pollution flowing from industrial facilities and waterways. Bring local communities to the table and together, hold industrial dischargers accountable for their stormwater control and treatment.

Municipal **WASTEWATER** treatment plants are a significant human source of nitrogen in Puget Sound, which can lead to reduced levels of dissolved oxygen in the water, creating "dead zones" and contributing to the acidification of our marine waters.

STRATEGY: Reduce nitrogen discharged from Puget Sound wastewater treatment plants. Control toxics and pharmaceuticals from wastewater treatment plants to limit discharge into Puget Sound.

Stewardship

GOAL: Connect people to the streams, waterways and beaches in their neighborhoods and communities. Provide the information and tools people need to become stewards and advocates for change.

MARINE DEBRIS in the environment, whether visible or microscopic, impacts human health, harms marine ecosystems, and is a clear indicator of a neglected waterway. Plastics, in particular, are an area of growing concern. Beginning with a manufacturing process derived from fossil fuels, the life cycle of plastic causes environmental challenges at every stage, from manufacture to supply chain to waste management, contributing to climate change.

STRATEGY: Reduce the amount of plastic entering the marine environment. Remove marine debris from beaches and waterways, with particular attention to impaired waterways and disproportionately impacted communities.

Puget Sound has been a transportation artery for millennia. Trade, commerce and recreation place demands on our waterways that can be mitigated by personal and corporate **VESSEL STEWARDSHIP**, combined with permits and laws that protect clean water.

STRATEGY: Limit discharge and pollution incidents from commercial and recreational boats and marinas.

Stewardship

Every community should have access to **HEALTHY WATERSHEDS** for clean water for drinking, recreation and habitat. Many of Puget Sound's most impaired waterways are also home to communities impacted by economic and racial injustice. Supporting community-based stewardship of these waterways provides an opportunity to improve streamside habitat, increase climate resiliency, and build a powerful constituency for streams, creeks and rivers in desperate need of Waterkeepers.

STRATEGY: Provide STEM education, advocacy and leadership skills for young people to raise awareness of pollution-impaired waterways, increasing environmental equity across impacted communities and watersheds.

PRIORITIZING OUR WORK

Soundkeeper is strategic in the use of its resources, prioritizing programs that directly benefit water quality, especially where the outcomes most benefit impacted communities. We focus our programs on the places where:

- The burden of pollution is inequitable and contributes to other social injustices;
- Our leadership makes a difference, either moving a solution forward or in creating room at the table for new partners;
- Our voice changes the debate, or we can use our power to amplify the voices of communities who need to be heard;
- Soundkeeper involvement would provide an opportunity to tap into a range of program strategies and tools, from education and community science to regulatory or policy change to improve water quality;
- We have expertise to share; and
- We have relationships that will be strengthened.

We are all Waterkeepers

GOAL: Build a powerful, community-based voice for clean water.

Puget Soundkeeper has prioritized developing its own capacity to build, sustain and nurture relationships. Stronger internal communications and collaboration will foster a cultural shift toward a staff and board that is more inclusive and community-led.

STRATEGY: Connect people to systems change through political action, financial support and volunteer contributions.

STRATEGY: Develop community input into Soundkeeper's enforcement and policy actions that extends beyond the traditional boundaries of Puget Soundkeeper's membership base.

STRATEGY: Build Soundkeeper's staff and board leadership to develop and sustain a culture of equity and inclusion.





**PUGET
SOUNDKEEPER®**

Protecting and Preserving the Waters of Puget Sound

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