

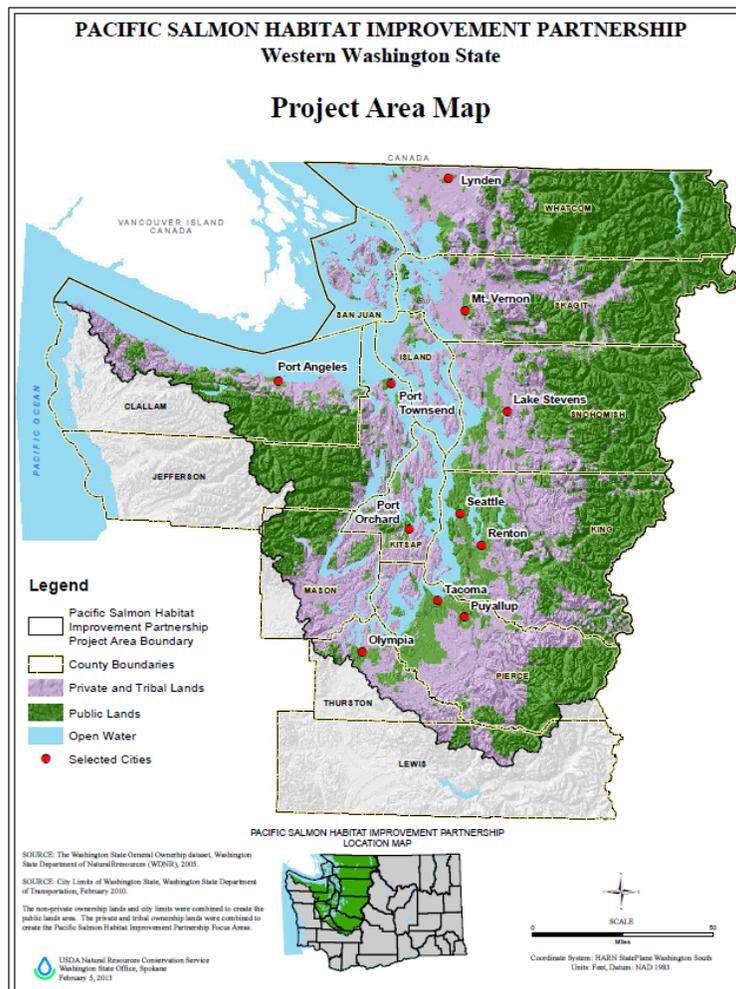
Pacific Salmon Habitat Improvement Partnership (PSHIP) Request for Projects

Introduction

The Pacific Salmon Habitat Improvement Partnership (PSHIP) provides an opportunity for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to work with other federal, state, and local governments, tribes, and non-governmental organizations, to assist willing land owners to apply conservation practices for the restoration and improvement of habitat and water quality for salmon in the Puget Sound. The available funding leverages public/private partnerships and additional financial commitments to promote innovative conservation solutions that benefit our valuable natural resources: water and wildlife.

The PSHIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers, non-industrial private forestland owners, and tribes to voluntarily implement conservation practices that address fish passage barriers and improve salmon habitat within the Puget Sound Basin. The Puget Sound Basin includes the 22 watersheds listed in Fig. 2 and as outlined in the colored section of Figure 1.

Fig. 1: PROJECT AREA MAP



NRCS is seeking partners and tribes to bring forward high priority project proposals that address fish passage barriers and focus on anadromous salmon habitat improvement projects within the PSHIP area. The intent is to leverage NRCS technical assistance and funding and to identify projects that will benefit from a focused effort. With the help of local partners and tribes, projects located on Working Agricultural Lands will be identified for planning and implementation of a suite of beneficial conservation practices through the NRCS [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#). Partner assistance with outreach and identification of willing landowners is critical. Once project proposals have been selected, the landowners will sign up for EQIP at a local NRCS field office. The eligible applications will be ranked and NRCS will select the highest ranked applications for conservation plan development and financial assistance for the implementation of conservation practices. NRCS will provide funding for habitat improvement activities to landowners, tribes, and tribal members through individual EQIP contracts.

Fig. 2 PUGET SOUND BASIN AREAS ELIGIBLE FOR THE PSHIP FY 2013

Hydrologic Unit Code	Watershed	Hydrologic Unit Code	Watershed
17100101	Hoh-Quillayute	17110011	Snohomish
17110001	Fraser	17110012	Lake Washington
17110002	Strait of Georgia	17110013	Duwamish
17110003	San Juan Islands	17110014	Puyallup
17110004	Nooksack	17110015	Nisqually
17110005	Upper Skagit	17110016	Deschutes
17110006	Sauk	17110017	Skokomish
17110007	Lower Skagit	17110018	Hood Canal
17110008	Stillaguamish	17110019	Puget Sound
17110009	Skykomish	17110020	Dungeness-Elwha
17110010	Snoqualmie	17110021	Crescent-Hoko

How PSHIP Works

The purpose of this notice is to solicit high priority project proposals from potential partners. Project proposals must encompass an area in one or more of the 8-digit HUC watersheds listed in Fig. 2. Project proponents are encouraged to submit projects that will take a systematic and comprehensive approach in addressing resource concerns caused by historic and current agricultural activity that are having a negative impact to habitat used by anadromous salmonid species. Proposals that identify one or more potential landowners who may be interested in participating are encouraged. More than one proposal may be submitted by a partner entity, and more than one proposal may be selected. **Project proposals are due by 4:30 pm March 1, 2013.**

Project proposals should describe and quantify assistance being offered to NRCS by the partner in the way of outreach to potential EQIP applicants, engineering services, permit assistance, cost-share to landowners, monitoring, and other technical and/or financial contributions.

Once the project proposals are selected, operators engaged in livestock production, cropland agricultural production, and/or private non-commercial forest landowners in the area covered by the project proposal may apply for technical and financial assistance through EQIP. This financial assistance reimburses the landowner a portion of the cost to implement habitat and water quality improvement activities.

The anticipated EQIP application period for landowners to sign up for PSHIP is March 11-April 5th, 2013.

Funded applicants would enter into individual landowner/operator contracts with NRCS and agree to implement conservation practices on their land that are consistent with the project purpose. With the landowner's written permission, Partners may assist NRCS staff with development of the Conservation Plan for operators applying for funding under the approved PSHIP proposal.

EQIP funding will not be provided to project proponents, partners, or tribes who submit priority partnership project proposals. Rather, this is an opportunity for NRCS to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to encourage participation in comprehensive salmon recovery efforts identified by partners and tribes. In some cases, a partner or tribe may submit a project proposal that identifies a project on agricultural or non-industrial timberland owned by the entity. These lands would be considered eligible for PSHIP funding only if they meet EQIP landowner and land eligibility criteria. In addition, the EQIP applicant may meet land eligibility criteria on working lands not owned by the applicant IF the participant can demonstrate that they have control of the land for the term/life of the contract. Partners are strongly encouraged to contact NRCS field offices prior to submittal of proposals containing potential EQIP applicants who are not the actual landowners. Eligibility varies on a case-by-case basis in these situations.

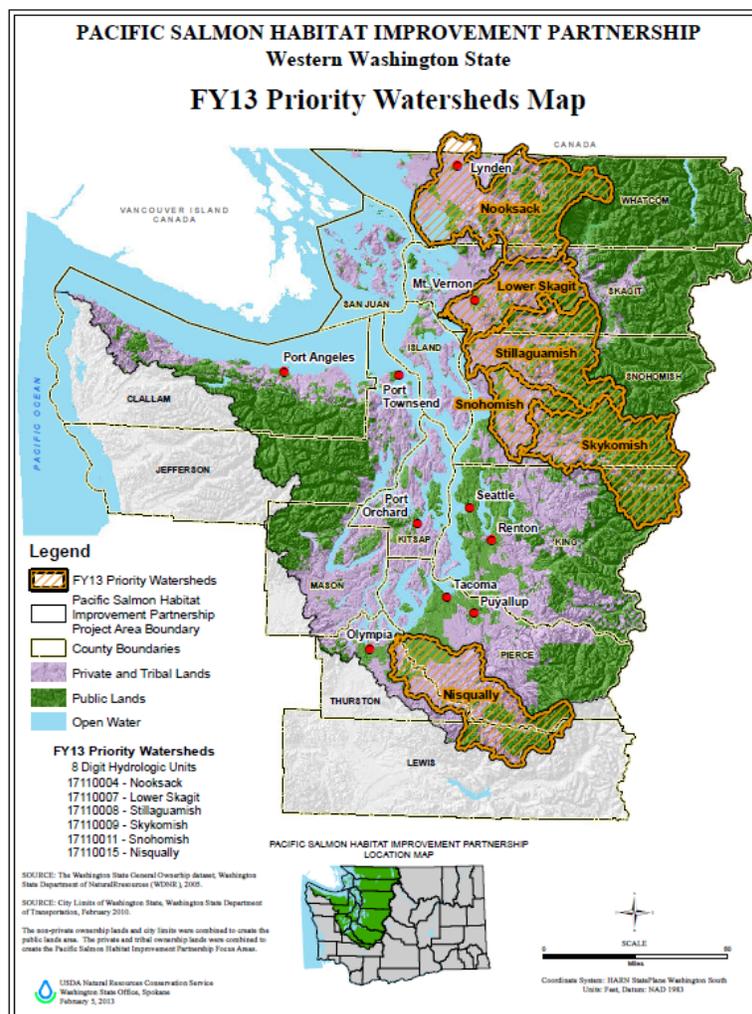
For EQIP, eligible land includes **privately** owned cropland, hayland, pastureland, non-industrial forestland, and other farm or ranch lands (farm headquarters, etc). Tribal agricultural lands meeting the above specified land use categories are also eligible for funding. See the NRCS [EQIP program website](#) listing procedures for agricultural operators to apply for the program. Programmatic requirements mandating aggregate contract limitations (maximum of \$300,000 per producer/operation) may apply. For more detail regarding eligibility and application requirements contact your local [NRCS Field Office](#).

Funding and Priority Watersheds

Washington NRCS has received 2 million dollars of FY13 EQIP funding designated for obligation to PSHIP contracts. Six Priority Watersheds have been designated (see Fig. 3). Resulting individual EQIP applications located in the Priority Watersheds will be awarded additional ranking points during the EQIP application evaluation process.

Fig. 3 DESIGNATED PRIORITY WATERSHEDS FOR THE PSHIP FY 2013

Hydrologic Unit Code	Watershed
17110004	Nooksack
17110007	Lower Skagit
17110008	Stillaguamish
17110009	Skykomish
17110011	Snohomish
17110015	Nisqually



PSHIP funding will be sub-divided into two equal funding pools: Fish Passage and Buffer/Habitat/Water Quality. One million dollars will initially be placed into each funding pool, with NRCS reserving the right to transfer funding between pools as needed to fund applications with the highest environmental benefit. Environmental benefit will be determined using ranking criteria which account for project location within a priority watershed, provide maximum habitat benefits, and are supported by partner technical and/or financial contributions.

Eligible Partners

Any of the following project proponents may submit project proposals for consideration:

- Indian tribes
- Units of federal government
- Units of state government
- Units of local government
- Agricultural, non-profit organizations, land trusts, or other non-governmental groups working on fish passage and anadromous salmonid habitat improvement projects that meet the [Adjusted Gross Income Requirements \(AGI\)](#)

Project Requirements

Project proposals must:

- 1) **Be submitted to NRCS by close of business (4:30 pm) on March 1, 2013.**
- 2) Be located in one or more of the 22 watersheds listed in Fig. 2.
- 3) Identify projects that will result in obligation of EQIP funds through individual landowner contracts. EQIP applications must be received by **April 5, 2013** with contract obligation by **May 31, 2013**.
- 4) Enhance or maintain existing riparian buffer habitat. For FY13 PSHIP, NRCS will require the use of NMFS Riparian Buffer Table (See Fig. 5). All projects receiving PSHIP funding will maintain or establish riparian buffers meeting the criteria as outlined in the table. Buffers will be installed on both sides of a channel where the landowner has control/ownership. Salmonid habitat functions supplied by the buffer, varying according to each site and upon the channel type they are installed. Functions vary from water quality filter, shade, large wood recruitment, channel structural complexity, and food source.
- 5) Address one or more of the following Core NRCS Practices in addition to the buffer requirements outlined above (complete listing in Fig. 4):
 - a. 391 Riparian Forest Buffer-As specified by NMFS Riparian Buffer Table
 - b. 396 Aquatic Organism Passage – Replace or remove existing fish passage barriers with structures that meet Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) /United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) fish passage criteria.

- c. 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
 - PS378 Stream Crossing: Replacement of inadequate existing in-stream crossings with engineered stream crossings (i.e. culverts or bridges) to facilitate movement of livestock and equipment across a water body, related to water quality and salmon habitat improvements.
 - Restore physical/geomorphic in-stream habitat elements such as Large Wood placement, meander re-establishment, spawning habitat improvement, etc.
- d. 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats – Water quality improvements associated with adoption of comprehensive best management practices on adjacent lands, reducing erosion and the resulting sediment, excess nutrient and pathogens. Supporting NRCS practices to achieve these water quality benefits to surface waters may include but are not limited to:
 - 360-Waste Facility Closure: Decommission existing waste storage ponds that do not meet current NRCS standards and present a water quality resource concern and/or construct new waste storage facilities (313-Waste Storage Facility)
 - Practices to establish temporary (340-Cover Crop) and permanent vegetation (342-Critical Area Planting, 327-Conservation Cove, 612-Tree & Shrub Establishment)
 -

Figure 4. Core NRCS Practices for FY13 PSHIP:

Practice Code	Practice Name
396	Aquatic Organism (Fish) Passage
391	Riparian Forest Buffer
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover
643	Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats

Fig. 5 NMFS Riparian Buffer Table

Channel Type	Functions	Composition	Buffer Width ("Option 3")	Buffer Length
1. Fishless, or constructed ditches	Water quality, shade, filter	Grasses, trees or shrubs where shade needed	As determined by Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG)	Entire planning unit.
2. Fish bearing, modified natural channel, entrenched or spring fed	Water quality, large wood debris (LWD) for cover, complexity and shade	Site potential vegetation. Trees where they will grow.	2/3 Site potential tree height; 50 ft. min – 180 max.	Entire planning unit
3. Fish bearing	Same as above, but structural LWD is essential.	Same as above.	¾ Site potential tree height.	Entire planning unit
4. Diked, permanently fixed	Habitat complexity, near shore refuge, a food source.	Site potential vegetation. Trees where they will grow.	From top of dike to Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM).**	Entire planning unit.
5. Fish bearing, intertidal/estuary	Same as #1, plus food source and habitat complexity.	Site potential vegetation (salt water) sedges, shrubs, etc.	35-75 feet varies according to adjacent land use	Entire planning unit.

**Note: This requirement does not meet NRCS Dike practice standard Operation & Maintenance; therefore, NRCS will not be able to provide cost share to install practices on engineered dikes/levees constructed for flood control with FY13 PSHIP funding.

A higher priority may be given to project proposals that:

- 1) Have a high number of producers actively farming or managing working agricultural or non-industrial private forest lands included in the proposed project area;
- 2) Provide an all-inclusive and systematic approach to addressing the habitat and water quality resource concern(s);
- 3) Leverage non-USDA financial and technical resources and coordinate with other tribal, private, local, state, or federal efforts;
- 4) Deliver high percentages of applied conservation practices to address identified fish passage concerns and water quality concerns complementary to anadromous salmon habitat improvement;
- 5) Complete the application of the conservation practices and activities on all of the covered program contracts or cost-share agreements in 3 years or less;
- 6) Provide for environmental monitoring and evaluation of conservation practices and activities; or
- 7) Assist the participants and/or NRCS in meeting local, state, and federal regulatory requirements.

Project Proposal Requirements

- 1) Project Title;
- 2) Project director/manager name, telephone number, mailing address, and email address;
- 3) Name and contact information for lead project proponent submitting proposal and other collaborating partners; and
- 4) Project description including a brief project summary, and:
 - a. Estimated project start and end dates;
 - b. Designated 8-digit HUC watershed, or contiguous multiple 8-digit HUCs sub-watersheds where the project is located, including the county(s);
 - c. General project objectives and resource concerns to be addressed as they relate to PSHIP priorities and objectives;
 - d. A description of how an all-inclusive and systematic approach will be taken to address the resource concern(s);
 - e. Estimated total cost of the project(s) and how these costs are proposed to be covered;
 - f. Whether the PSHIP project proposal will be used in conjunction with any other federal, state or local programs to meet PSHIP objectives. Include the name of the program and the associated federal, state or local entity and contact information. *(Note: Other USDA federal funds cannot be used as a match to the funds provided by NRCS.)*
 - g. A detailed description of the geographic area covered by the proposal, including:
 - i. Types of land uses to be treated; and
 - ii. Ownership of the land to be treated; and
 - iii. The location and size of the proposed project area, and
 - iv. The 8-digit HUC sub-watershed(s) the project will be within.
 - h. A detailed map showing the project area. Include on the map:
 - i. Outlined areas that need conservation treatments;
 - ii. Location where conservation treatments are needed; and
 - iii. Priority order for the areas to be treated.
 - i. A project timeline.
 - j. A listing and description of the approved PSHIP core conservation practices and partner activities to be implemented during the project timeframe and the general sequence of implementation of the project. Information about approved PSHIP practices and activities can be accessed at <http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov>. While other conservation practices listed in the [Electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#) are eligible for use in PSHIP, each individual project must meet the buffer requirements outlined in the NMFS Riparian Buffer Table (Fig. 5) and include at least one of the core conservation practices listed in Figure 4.
 - k. Technical and financial assistance that will be provided by the partner. Describe any activities that are innovative and include outcome-based performance measures, such as engineering designs, and fish monitoring, to be implemented by the partner, along with the schedule of such activities.
 - l. Indicate whether the project will address specific regulatory compliance and any other outcomes the partner expects to complete during the project period.
 - m. A listing of anticipated permits required to implement the projects; and
 - n. A listing of anadromous fish species located within or near the project site.

Pre-Submission Assistance

Two optional information sessions are planned to provide an opportunity for prospective partners and tribes to ask questions and interact directly with NRCS staff prior to proposal submission.

February 19, 2013	1:00 pm-3:30pm	Location: Mt. Vernon Service Center Downstairs Conference Room 2021 E. College Way Mt. Vernon, WA 98273
February 22, 2013	10:00am-12:30pm	Location: NRCS Area Office Willaby Conference Room 1835 Black Lake Blvd Olympia, WA 98512

In addition to the General Informational sessions listed above, individual 30-minute sessions are available outside the general session with pre-scheduled appointments on February 19th and 22nd. Contact Bob Jarrett at (360)704-7781 or bob.jarrett@wa.usda.gov to schedule. Appointments will be accommodated on a first come basis, with availability based on NRCS staff schedules.

How to Apply

Project proponents may submit project proposals for PSHIP via email or U.S. Postal Service; however, all proposals must be received before close of business **March 1, 2013 (4:30 pm Pacific)**.

Applicants are encouraged to submit project proposals electronically to sherre.copeland@wa.usda.gov. If submitting a paper project proposal, the project proposal may be mailed to:

Rick Noble
Western Washington Area Conservationist/PSHIP Team Leader
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Suite D
Olympia, WA 98512

Do not send submissions via registered or certified mail. Do not send the same project proposal both electronically and to the mailing address; use only one method to submit a project proposal. If submitting more than one project proposal, please submit each separately.

NRCS will review and evaluate project proposals based on the criteria set forth in the **Project Proposal Requirements** section above.

PSHIP project proposals submitted to the NRCS become the property of the agency for use in the administration of the program; may be filed or disposed of by the agency; and will not be returned to

the potential partner. NRCS may elicit representatives of other entities who have not submitted a project proposal to assist in the evaluation process. Once project proposals have been submitted for review and ranking, there will be no further opportunity for the potential partner to change or re-submit the project proposal. However, NRCS may request certain changes before finalizing the selection and approval of a project. Incomplete project proposals or those that do not meet the requirements set forth in this notice *will not* be considered, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. Partner project proposals may be withdrawn by written notice to Rick Noble, West Area Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, at any time prior to selection.

If the project proposal is submitted in hard copy, the project proponent must submit two copies of the proposal, typewritten or printed on 8-1/2" x 11" white paper. The entire project proposal, not including letters of support, cannot exceed 12 pages in length including a summary, responses to the information required by this request for project proposals, maps, and other supporting documents. In order to be considered, the project proposal must address, in sufficient detail, all of the criteria outlined in the **Project Proposal Requirements** section of this notice in order to be considered.

For further information contact:

Sherre Copeland
PSHIP Coordinator and Partnership Liaison

Natural Resources Conservation Service
(360)704-7758
sherre.copeland@wa.usda.gov

Rick Noble
PSHIP Team Leader and West Area
Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
(360)704-7782
rick.noble@wa.usda.gov

Project proponents whose proposals have been selected will receive an official letter of notification within 10 business days following the proposal submission due date. Upon notification of selection, the proponent should contact the PSHIP contact person, Rick Noble or Sherre Copeland. Project proponents should note that, depending upon available funding and agency priorities, NRCS may offer a reduced amount of program financial assistance from what was requested in the proposal and may require adjustments to the proposal as a condition of approval. Proponents of project proposals that are not selected will also be notified by mail.

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