

Vital Signs and Vibrant Lives: Ecosystem Restoration and Wellbeing in Puget Sound

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Ecosystem recovery is intricately linked to human wellbeing. Human wellbeing in this context is an interdisciplinary perspective on what allows humans to thrive in relation to the natural environment and entails values, physical and psychological health, governance, and social, cultural, and economic wellbeing. In the Puget Sound region, ecosystem health and recovery include both biophysical and human wellbeing goals. The “Puget Sound Vital Signs” measure progress toward these goals. To monitor Vital Sign indicators of human wellbeing, we conducted three mail surveys of the general population between 2018 and 2022. These surveys tell us about Puget Sound residents’ personal feelings and experiences with the environment. However, the survey may not adequately capture the perspectives and experiences of minoritized and overburdened populations. Through community-based participatory research approaches and additional optional surveys with Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander and Black and African American residents, we established new community partnerships while also gaining insight into how well the Vital Signs resonated with different communities. This raised essential questions about equity in environmental experiences, benefits, and barriers. To navigate these questions, the *Puget Sound Equity Guidebook* provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring that ecosystem monitoring is inclusive and addresses challenges impacting diverse communities. Our goal with this presentation is to help inspire more dialogue about the importance of considering human wellbeing as part of ecosystem restoration and how to embed an equity lens within monitoring and reporting.

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