

Comprehensive Plan Update & Sound Choices Checklist

Skagit County

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Purpose

- Understand Puget Sound Recovery Goals and how they can fit into Comprehensive Plan update
 - Use Sound Choices Checklist from 2022-2026 Puget Sound Action Agenda
 - Identify items in the Checklist that Skagit County already does well and are easy
 - Identify Checklist items would be difficult and the barriers.
 - Share ideas about how **goals** from the Sound Choices Checklist can be achieved in planning for rural communities
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Sound Choices Checklist – *Easy*

- Do land designations and zoning align with the current use of the land in a way that prevents development and urban net densities on current working forests and agricultural land?
 - *40 -acre minimum lot size*
 - *Conservation and Reserve Developments (CaRDs)*
 - *Conservation Easements*
 - *14,212 acres farmland protected*



Sound Choices Checklist – *Easy*

Does the plan include, encourage, and provide linkage to local restoration programs, projects and stewardship groups?

- *MRC*
- *VSP Voluntary Stewardship Program*
- *Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC)*
- *Noxious Weed Program*
- *Skagit Conservation District*
- *Skagit Watershed Council*
- *Farmland Legacy*



Sound Choices Checklist – *Easy*

Does the plan include appropriate habitat stewardship policies that support native vegetation and science-based restoration?

- *VSP the voluntary stewardship program*
- *These projects support native vegetation and science-based restoration.*
- *The State recently increased the funding for this program and including language to support this program in our Comprehensive Plan update would be an easy.*



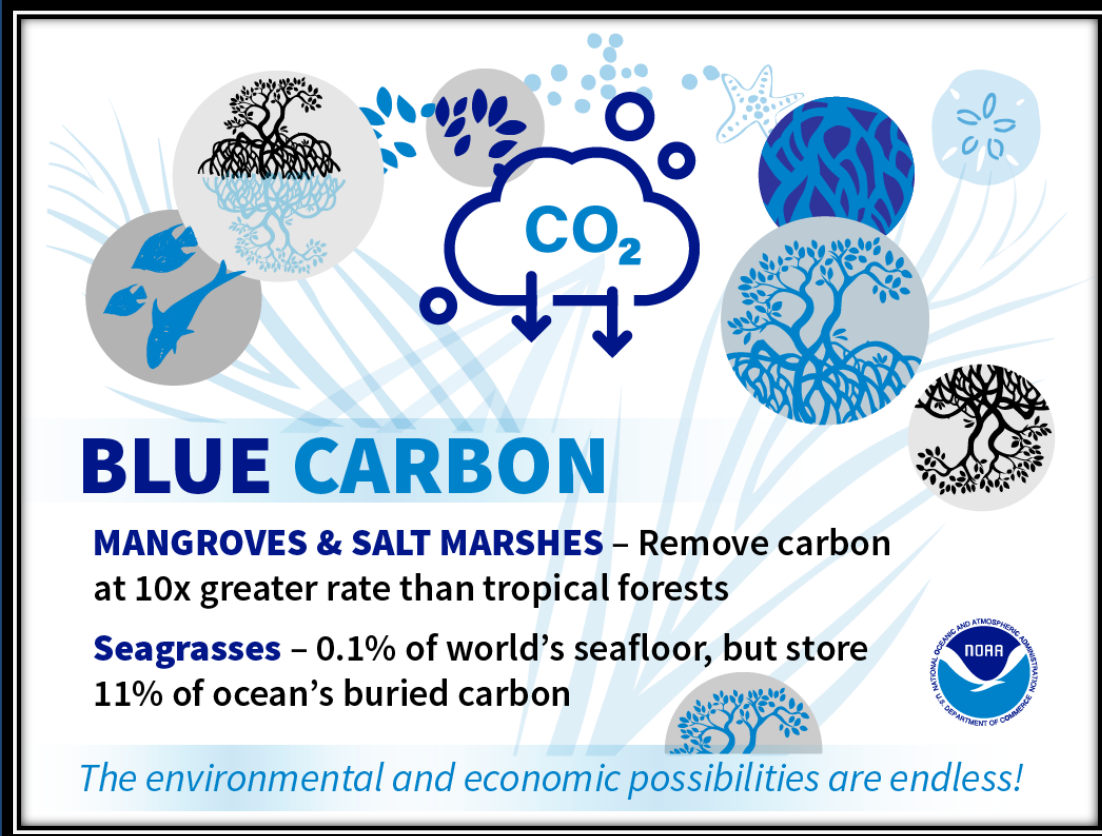
Sound Choices Checklist – *Easy*

Does the plan include policies to protect natural resources that sequester and store carbon, such as forests, farmlands, wetlands, estuaries?

- *Skagit County advisory boards*
- *Forest Advisory Board*
- *Agricultural Advisory Board*
- *Farmland Legacy Board*
- *Padilla Bay is the most diverse, least disturbed and most biologically productive of all major estuaries on Puget Sound*
- *Natural resources are a part of Skagit's economy and protecting them is important.*



Padilla Bay or Skagit Bay - Blue Carbon



The infographic features a central cloud with 'CO₂' and two downward arrows. Surrounding it are circular icons: a mangrove tree, a seagrass, a fish, a starfish, and a snowflake. Below the icons, the text reads: 'BLUE CARBON', 'MANGROVES & SALT MARSHES - Remove carbon at 10x greater rate than tropical forests', and 'Seagrasses - 0.1% of world's seafloor, but store 11% of ocean's buried carbon'. A NOAA logo is also present.

BLUE CARBON

MANGROVES & SALT MARSHES – Remove carbon at 10x greater rate than tropical forests

Seagrasses – 0.1% of world's seafloor, but store 11% of ocean's buried carbon

The environmental and economic possibilities are endless!



Estuary sediments can store carbon 10 times as quickly as sediments in forests and, if undisturbed, they can store carbon below ground for thousands of years.



Sound Choices Checklist – *Easy*

Sound Choices Checklist : Does the plan either include SMP goals and policies and or provide a reference to the local shoreline master program?

– The recent update of the Shoreline Master Program has been included in yearly update of the Comprehensive Plan in 2022.



Sound Choices Checklist – *Hard*

Sound Choices Checklist : Does the plan include policies that encourage or support a reduction in VMT (vehicle miles traveled)?

- *As a rural County, employment and housing are spread out by design.*
- *Population density does not support transit*
- *Difficult to reduce VMT and GHG (Green House Gasses)*
- *Population allocations are done at the time of Comprehensive Plan updates*
- *Regional planning*
- *Revise CCP for less growth in rural areas (Countywide Planning Policies-CCP)*



Electrification of Guemes Ferry



Sound Choices Checklist – *Hard*

Does the plan use watershed scale planning to protect and restore water quality through appropriate use of rural lands, minimizing impacts of land use management and development?

- *As a Phase II NPDES County, our program is changing to try and incorporate watershed scale planning to protect water quality.*
- *Funding and finding the appropriate land in the right place is difficult;*
- *Issues with regional coordination*
- *Ability to locate a property*
- *Right size, scale, in the right place*
- *Goal of regional, watershed level coordination*
- *However, difficult to achieve in practice*



Sound Choices Checklist – *Hard*

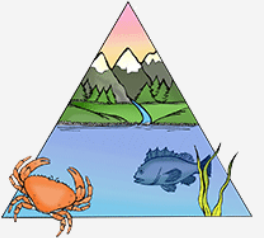
Does the CFP include funding for stormwater retrofits and culvert upgrades, prioritizing projects that protect the Sound?

- *Difficult working with multiple agencies: WDOE, WDFW, FEMA, USGS...*
- *May add cost and delay*
- *Staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge*



Sound Choices Checklist – *Hard*

Does the SMP or Comprehensive Plan support periodic (annually or other) tracking of armored shoreline?



Skagit MRC

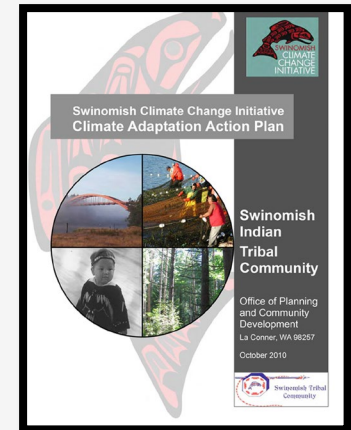
- *This is not done and is difficult because it would require staff and tracking software Skagit County does not have.*
- *The marine resources committee (MRC) does a better job of this.*
- *Any requirement to track would need to include funding for staff and software that would be required.*



Sound Choices Checklist – *Hard*

Does the Land Use Element integrate information from local watershed planning processes, salmon recovery goals, climate change plans, and relevant tribal plans, such as ecosystem recovery plans?

- *These plans are often moving targets*
- *Change and are updated on a regular basis*
- *No coordination to integrate them*
- *To coordinate would require staff dedicated to keeping track of all these changes and coordinating their integration.*



Sound Choices Checklist – Summary

- *Skagit County is a small County, therefore, anything that requires staff coordination and time will be difficult.*
- *Skagit County is rural, and therefore, the metrics and programs that may be achievable in an urban area may not be equivalent.*
- *An alternative way to achieve goals to reduce VMT and GHG would be regional planning to change population allocations: Smart(er) Growth Regionally.*

