



# Nature's Scorecard

**HOW WELL ARE  
PUGET SOUND CITIES  
AND COUNTIES  
PROTECTING OUR  
WATERS AND USING  
GREEN SOLUTIONS  
WHEN PLANNING  
FOR GROWTH?**

Nature's Scorecard is a tool to help each of us have a voice. See how new statewide requirements were implemented at the local level to protect people and salmon from pollution and flooding. Let your local leaders know that now is the time to advance smarter practices that make our communities more livable, walkable, and resilient.

**A PROJECT BY PUGET SOUNDKEEPER AND  
WASHINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL**

## SOLUTIONS TO POLLUTION

Polluted stormwater runoff is one of the top water pollution issues threatening the Northwest. **Stormwater sweeps across paved surfaces, collecting pollution:** motor oil, pesticides, pet and livestock waste, and trash. Then it travels through storm drains and pipes, **dumping this toxic soup straight into lakes, creeks, rivers, and Puget Sound.**

Stormwater pollution impacts our environment, economy, and health. Despite an expensive, growing network of drainage systems, flooding is still a problem and pollution closes swimming beaches and contaminates local fish and shellfish.

In the face of climate change and a rapidly growing population in the Pacific Northwest, we must seize the opportunity to take a smarter approach to development. Low-impact development (LID) provides an alternative to sending polluted stormwater runoff directly into waterways like Puget Sound. LID incorporates plants and soils into development, using strategies that collect and filter runoff and protect people from pollution and flooding.

Puget Soundkeeper and Washington Environmental Council are committed to a long-term vision where our communities are livable, walkable, safe, and resilient. **We're working together to protect our neighbors and our shared waters by supporting cities and counties managing growth with smart development and green infrastructure.**

## BETTER DEVELOPMENT CODES

**Under the Clean Water Act, cities and counties are required to manage their stormwater runoff to protect water quality,** using standards set out in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits issued by the Department of Ecology under the authority of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. After over a decade of legal action and advocacy on behalf of the public, our organizations succeeded in making LID a required part of NPDES permits in the state of Washington.

All large cities and counties in Washington with an NPDES permit were required to update their development codes and regulations to make LID principles and practices the "preferred and commonly used approach" by the end of 2016. This means writing LID into the municipal code that governs development projects.

Washington Environmental Council and Puget Soundkeeper have worked with cities and counties over the last year, reaching out to all 81 local governments with stormwater permits around Puget Sound to help them implement these changes. **This scorecard presents a snapshot of how cities and counties around the Sound are performing,** measured against the guidance provided to meet the permit requirement. We show how each municipality has performed, as well as how the region has done overall (see pie chart on opposite page). This report offers residents an opportunity to get involved locally and be a part of this important transition that will protect our communities and waterways for generations to come. See how your community did on five key code updates the Department of Ecology included in their Integration Toolkit.



**WE'RE DOING OUR SMALL PART TO MITIGATE THE CONCRETE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD: PROVIDING A CLEANER ALTERNATIVE FOR THE RAIN.**

ELIZABETH & GEORGE,  
HOMEOWNERS



**Low-impact development** uses natural drainage solutions in development, employing strategies that collect and filter runoff and protect people from pollution and flooding.



**OUR COMPANY BUILDS THE WAY WE DO BECAUSE WE FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING SOMETHING THAT'S LASTING, AND ACTUALLY DOES INVOKE THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY.**

BRIAN  
GREEN DEVELOPER

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## BIG PICTURE

We looked at whether cities and counties successfully updated development codes and what kind of updates they made.

### HALF OF CITIES AND COUNTIES MISS THE MARK



### VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**8** of the 81 cities and counties went above and beyond, showing true leadership and vision. They receive a green star - well done!

Kitsap County | Lacey | Oak Harbor | Olympia  
Port Orchard | Renton | Seattle | Tacoma

### FALLING BEHIND

**20** cities and counties failed to meet this permit requirement, filing a "notice of noncompliance" (known as a G20) with the Department of Ecology.

## CASE STUDIES

### ABOVE AND BEYOND

Kitsap County has been a leader on LID practices for some time. However, the County still took this permit requirement to heart, submitting 91 pages of amended code language and making significant progress in the way we plan, design, and build our communities - beyond other cities and counties efforts.

### UNDER PRESSURE

Mountlake Terrace spent six months working hard to update their code in order to obey the law. However, after pressure from the development community, Mountlake Terrace's city council refused to pass vital portions of their LID development code updates, leaving the status of their rules and the sustainability of their community in question. City Staff are working diligently to complete code and remedy the situation.

KITSAP  
COUNTY

MOUNTLAKE  
TERRACE

## Scorecard RUBRIC

Nature's Scorecard presents a snapshot of how cities and counties around Puget Sound are performing, measured against the guidance provided to meet the permit requirement. Below are the elements on which we graded their performance.

### SOFTENING OUR FOOTPRINT

As we increase the amount of hard, waterproof surfaces, we create more stormwater. We need to rethink our community footprint. This doesn't have to mean we lose comfort and enjoyment of our spaces, but we do need to use more landscaping, narrower walkways, and taller buildings.



### BUILDING WITH CARE

Protecting our lands' native plants and soils helps water move more slowly by allowing the rain to soak into the earth instead of rushing across the surface and collecting a heavy load of pollution. By building around native plants and caring for the underlying structure of a site, development will be more flood-resistant and support healthy communities in the long term.



### IMPROVING FILTRATION

Permeable pavement supports vehicles and yet allows rainwater to pass through the paved surface into the soil below and reduces how much stormwater we create. Permeable pavements can be used in road sidewalks, shoulders, parking lanes, and other parking areas that do not receive heavy traffic where traditional pavements are needed. Innovative materials are being developed right here in Washington - so we have the local technology to transform our landscape's surfaces.



### GROWING THE RIGHT TREES

Some trees, like cedars and firs, are better suited for our Pacific Northwest environment and do a much better job of helping clean and slow polluted stormwater runoff than other trees. Others, like holly, may not work with the soils, could crowd out the other plants, and might create seasonal maintenance challenges.



### MAINTAINING BUFFERS

Critical areas such as shorelines, wetlands, and other sensitive areas need strips of vegetation (called buffers) to protect their natural systems from the impacts of development and pollution. This includes low-impact development principles, such as retaining native plants which helps to slow and clean polluted stormwater runoff. LID principles and practices have multiple benefits and should be linked throughout the code to recognize these values.



*See the scorecard!*

# Nature's Scorecard

## MUNICIPALITY

SOFTENING OUR FOOTPRINT  
 BUILDING WITH CARE  
 IMPROVING FILTRATION  
 GROWING THE RIGHT TREES  
 MAINTAINING BUFFERS

MUNICIPALITY	SOFTENING OUR FOOTPRINT	BUILDING WITH CARE	IMPROVING FILTRATION	GROWING THE RIGHT TREES	MAINTAINING BUFFERS
Algona		✓			✓
Anacortes					✓
Arlington		✓		✓	✓
Auburn	✓				✓
Bainbridge Island	✓	✓	✓		✓
Bellevue	✓	✓			
Bellingham		✓	✓	✓	✓
Black Diamond	✓	✓			✓
Bonney Lake	✓	✓		✓	✓
Bothell	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bremerton	✓		✓	✓	✓
Brier	✓	✓		✓	✓
Buckley	✓	✓	✓		✓
Burien	✓	✓		✓	✓
Burlington	✓		✓		✓
Clyde Hill				✓	
Covington	✓	✓			✓
Des Moines					✓
Dupont	✓				✓
Duvall	✓				✓
Edgewood	✓		✓		
Edmonds	✓	✓			✓
Enumclaw	✓	✓		✓	✓
Everett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Federal Way	✓	✓		✓	✓
Ferndale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fife			✓	✓	✓
Fircrest	✓			✓	✓
Gig Harbor	✓			✓	✓
Granite Falls	✓				✓
Issaquah	✓	✓		✓	✓
Kenmore	✓	✓	✓		✓
Kent	✓		✓	✓	✓
King County	✓	✓		✓	✓
Kirkland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kitsap County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lacey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lake Forest Park	✓	✓		✓	✓
Lake Stevens	✓	✓		✓	✓
Lakewood	✓				
Lynnwood	✓			✓	✓

## MUNICIPALITY

SOFTENING OUR FOOTPRINT  
 BUILDING WITH CARE  
 IMPROVING FILTRATION  
 GROWING THE RIGHT TREES  
 MAINTAINING BUFFERS

MUNICIPALITY	SOFTENING OUR FOOTPRINT	BUILDING WITH CARE	IMPROVING FILTRATION	GROWING THE RIGHT TREES	MAINTAINING BUFFERS
Maple Valley	✓			✓	✓
Marysville	✓			✓	
Medina	✓	✓		✓	✓
Mercer Island	✓			✓	
Mill Creek	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Milton		✓	✓	✓	✓
Monroe	✓				✓
Mount Vernon		✓		✓	✓
Mountlake Terrace	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mukilteo	✓	✓	✓		
Newcastle	✓	✓	✓		✓
Normandy Park	✓	✓			
★ Oak Harbor	✓	✓		✓	✓
★ Olympia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Orting	✓				✓
Pacific				✓	✓
Pierce County		✓	✓	✓	✓
Port Angeles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
★ Port Orchard	✓	✓		✓	✓
Poulsbo		✓		✓	✓
Puyallup	✓	✓			✓
Redmond	✓			✓	✓
★ Renton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sammamish	✓	✓		✓	✓
SeaTac		✓	✓	✓	✓
★ Seattle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sedro Woolley				✓	✓
Shoreline	✓	✓		✓	✓
Skagit County		✓		✓	
Snohomish (City)	✓	✓		✓	
Snohomish County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Steilacoom	✓	✓			✓
Sumner	✓	✓		✓	✓
★ Tacoma		✓	✓	✓	✓
Thurston County	✓		✓	✓	✓
Tukwila		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tumwater	✓	✓	✓		✓
University Place	✓		✓		✓
Whatcom County	✓			✓	✓
Woodinville		✓		✓	✓

★ Green stars were given to cities and counties that embraced a healthy, more sustainable future and went above and beyond permit requirements in some areas. (Green stars do not necessarily align with those that received five checks, since the checklist is a snapshot of just five of hundreds of possible updates.)

This project was privately funded by individual donations to Puget Soundkeeper and Washington Environmental Council. No public funds were used. Evaluating how cities and counties incorporated LID is a Near-Term Action in the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda.

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