

Save Our Sound

Stormwater retrofits help control the greatest threat to our waters

A stormwater retrofit controls polluted runoff from existing development by slowing its flow or filtering the water. This creates healthier waters and communities. By implementing more green solutions—including stormwater retrofits—we can save Puget Sound.



Toxic stormwater pooling by a drain

Stormwater is the number one source of toxic pollution to Puget Sound. Rain sweeps up motor oil (PAHs), brake dust (copper), tire dust (6PPD-quinone), flame retardants (PBDEs) and more. Then it travels down our storm drains, dumping this toxic soup straight into creeks, rivers, and the Sound. Exposure to urban runoff can kill coho salmon in a few hours. But we also know the solution: *treating polluted stormwater by running it through a special soil mix—called bioretention—to filter out toxic pollutants.*



A bioretention structure filters out pollutants

For decades, some of the largest municipalities in Puget Sound have been legally required under the Clean Water Act to retrofit existing development in their jurisdictions to treat (filter) and control (slow the flow of) stormwater. *Phase I municipalities are required to install stormwater treatment (such as bioretention), flow control facilities, and low-impact development techniques that mimic the natural environment, to minimize pollution.* But until now, no one has publicly tracked or reported on progress in a comprehensive way.

How many stormwater retrofit projects have our largest municipalities implemented since 2007?



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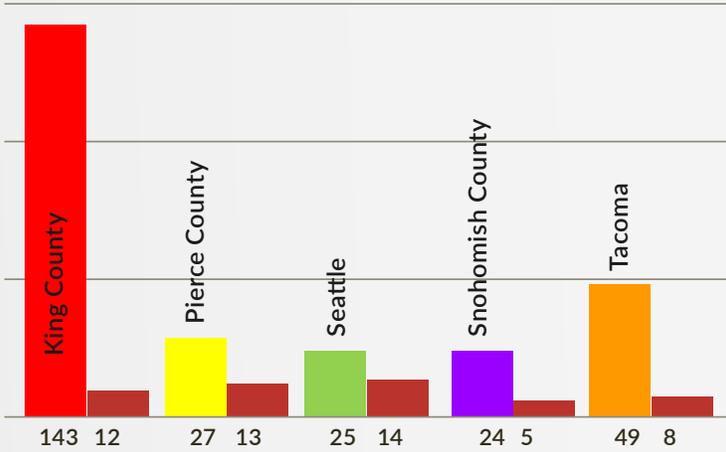
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Puget Soundkeeper and Washington Environmental Council teamed up to find out. Under the Clean Water Act, Washington's Department of Ecology issues permits requiring Puget Sound municipalities to control stormwater pollution. King County, Seattle, Snohomish County, Pierce County, and Tacoma are five **Phase I** permittees. Since 1995, Phase I's have been required to do stormwater retrofit projects, called Structural Stormwater Controls (SSCs). Everett, Kitsap County, Thurston County, Federal Way, Renton, Kent, and Bellevue are **Phase II** permittees. These Phase II's are as populous as Phase I's but do not have any stormwater retrofit requirements.

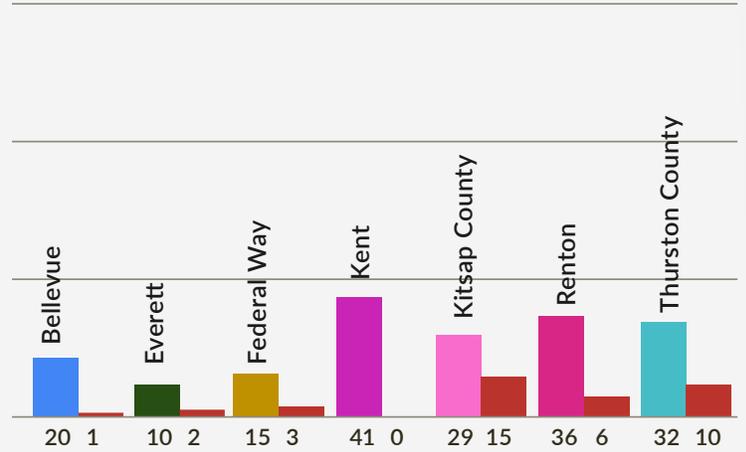
How many of the SSC projects have toxic reduction functions that can save salmon?

These graphs show the 451 SSC projects we identified compared with the number of toxic reduction SSCs that can filter out pollutants like 6PPD-quinone and save salmon. Our most vulnerable salmon populations should be prioritized!

Phase I Projects



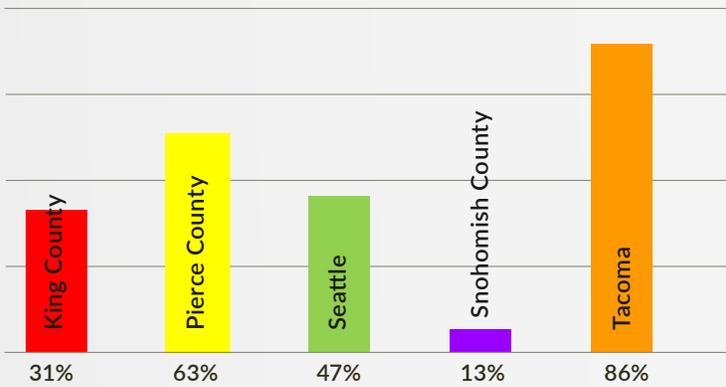
Phase II Projects



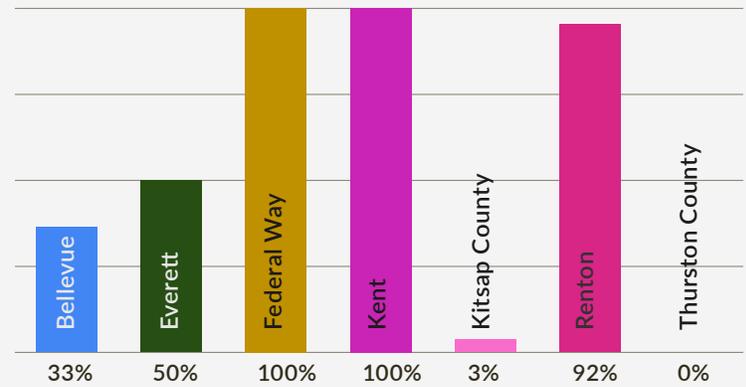
Which municipalities are investing more in vulnerable communities?

These graphs show the percentage of non-repeat annual maintenance SSC projects in areas with high environmental health disparities, according to a map by the Washington Department of Health. Our most vulnerable communities should be prioritized!

Phase I Projects



Phase II Projects



Other major issues the Department of Ecology should address in its next permit cycle

- Some Phase II's are doing more projects than Phase I's—despite having no requirements to do any. **We know both Phase I's and Phase II's can do more.**
- Some permittees are reporting projects with little or no stormwater nexus to comply with Clean Water Act requirements. **SSC Clean Water Act projects should stop stormwater pollution.**
- Reporting requirements lack context needed to determine if water quality is improving. **We want to know that these investments are making a difference.**

Take action today!



Stormwater retrofits can protect local water quality, salmon, orcas, and people; reduce pollution and flooding in denser communities; and make our neighborhoods greener and climate resilient. Follow this QR code to take action today!



Find out more about the stormwater projects in YOUR community at naturesscorecard.com and view our 2022 Storymap and Report to the Department of Ecology. Then, let your elected officials know that you want clean water and healthy communities.