



Skagit County
Natural Resources Division
2021–2026 Long-Range Plan

Introduction

Plan Purpose

This long-range plan is intended to communicate the foundational direction and purpose of the Natural Resources Division (NRD). NRD is a division in the Skagit County Public Works Department. NRD developed the mission and value statements, goals, and strategies outlined in this plan to guide strategic, sustainable, and responsible decision-making and resource allocation as part of its annual planning activities.

This document provides a framework for NRD staff to annually plan, within the division’s budget cycle, for actions to advance its goals and strategies. An important function of the annual action planning process included in this long-range plan is to provide NRD with a framework to reflect on the prior year’s activities and plan for staffing and budget needs in the near term. This will be done using an annual action plan where the specific activities that will be completed are identified by NRD; these activities will advance NRD’s strategies and goals and align with its mission and values.

**NRD Long-Range Plan
 Primary Audience**

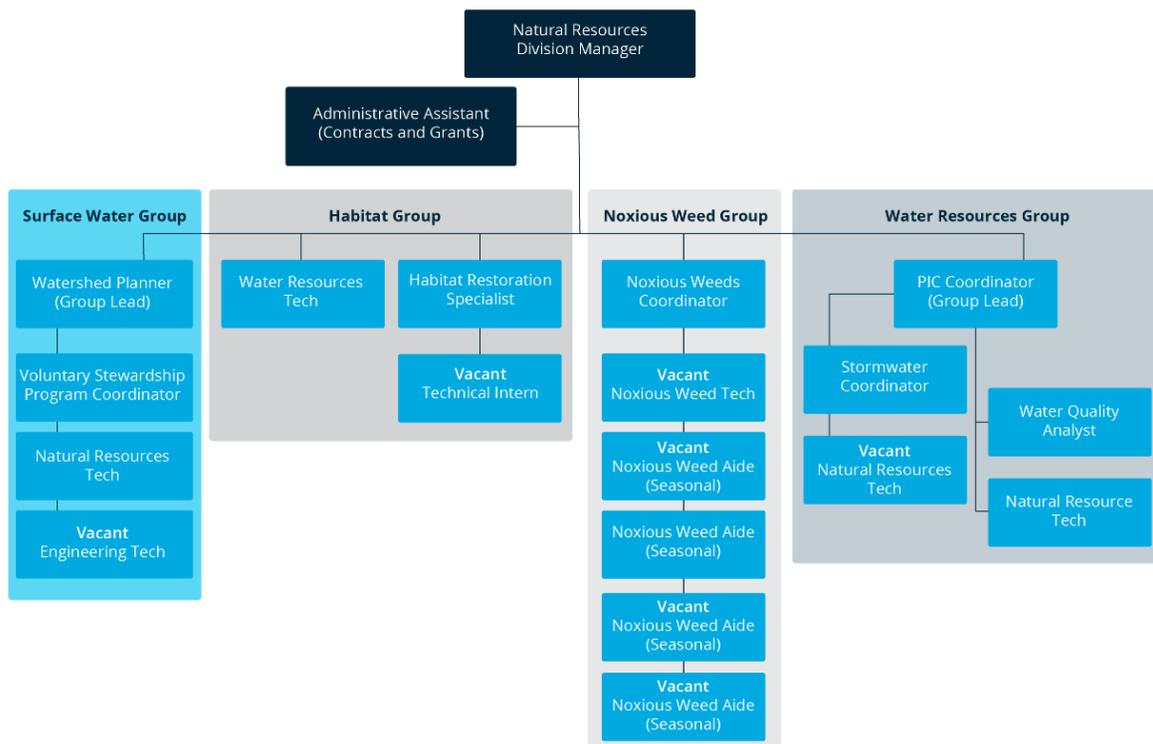
- NRD
- Skagit County Commissioners
- Skagit County department and division partners

About NRD

Division Organization

NRD is one of six divisions in the Skagit County Public Works Department. NRD is comprised of four groups: Surface Water, Habitat, Noxious Weeds, and Water Resources. The division organization chart as of fall 2021 is show below.

NRD Organization Chart, 2021 (subject to change)



Partnerships

NRD groups manage or support more than ten countywide programs that help to provide clean water, facilitate effective drainage, reduce flood damage, and restore habitat. NRD groups closely work with the following Skagit County departments and divisions:

- Engineering Division, Public Works Department
- Operations Division, Public Works Department
- Solid Waste Division, Public Works Department
- Planning and Development Services Department
- Environmental Health Department

In addition to working closely with these Skagit County departments and divisions, NRD partners with dike and drainage districts in the county, local tribes, state and federal agencies, the Skagit Conservation District, and local nonprofit agencies to leverage local funding sources.

Operational Funding

A critical NRD function is ensuring that NRD's programs are funded and managed consistently with the requirements of the funding source. Nearly all NRD's operating budget comes from either special assessments levied on Skagit County residents or from grants procured by NRD staff. The amount of funding from special assessments is relatively consistent year over year; however, grant funds are competitive and vary based on staff resources to pursue them and whether they are awarded. Requirements and restrictions on funding use depend on the source but are generally dictated by either the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) or grant requirements. NRD is committed to ensuring funds are used consistently with underlying requirements and progress reporting is done in a transparent manner.

Plan Organization

This long-range plan presents NRD's mission and value statements, goals, and strategies. The following graphic defines those terms and illustrates how those foundational elements comprise a long-range plan. As displayed in the graphic, the long-range plan is the foundational framework that provides direction and purpose for the development of shorter-term actions. The tactics that are contained in the annual action plan will be discussed further in the Using the Plan section.

Elements of a Long-Range Plan



Mission and Values

NRD's mission and values provide purpose and direction for all NRD activities. The citizens of Skagit County invest in the stewardship of the county's natural environment through special assessments and grants. NRD's success relies on its ability to manage those investments responsibly and effectively and to support and grow its programs and partnerships. NRD developed mission and values statements through a collaborative process involving NRD staff and leadership and key county partners. The statements reflect why NRD exists and how NRD staff endeavor to conduct their work.



NRD Mission

Skagit County's mission statement, featured in the gray text box on this page, clearly captures the county's role as it serves its communities while managing our natural resources.

NRD's mission statement, featured in the blue text box on this page, acknowledges the county's mission statement and underscores the unique role NRD serves in the community. NRD is focused on environmental stewardship but from the perspective of creating value for and serving county residents.

Skagit County Mission (2017)

Skagit County government serves its residents by providing high-quality, efficient services to protect and strengthen its communities and environment.

Skagit County Natural Resources Division Mission Statement

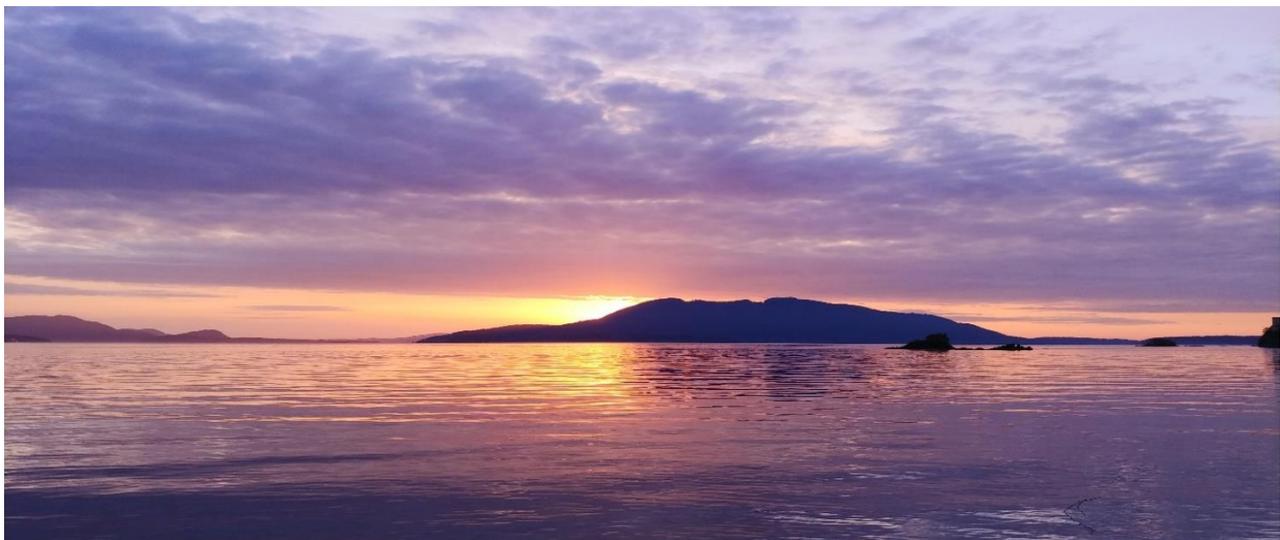
To provide responsible stewardship of Skagit County's natural resources and environment while providing for safety, protection, enhancement, and use by all Skagit County residents.



NRD Values

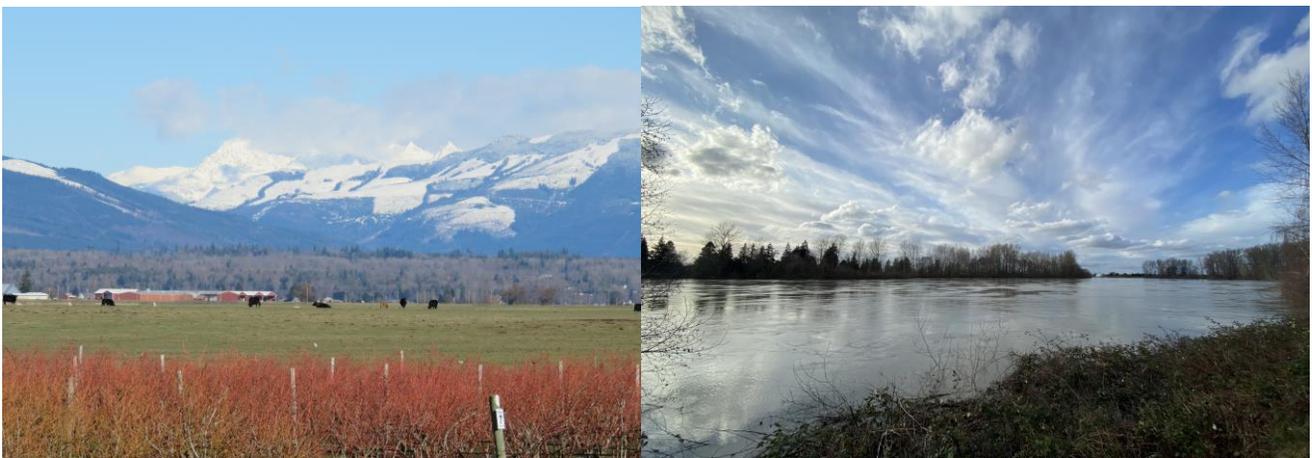
NRD's value statements affirm its support of Skagit County's values, as detailed in the Skagit County 2017 Strategic Commitments. NRD's value statements complement the county's values and provide specifics about how NRD adopts those values. Both the county's and NRD's value statements will guide NRD as it advances its mission, goals, and strategies.

Skagit County Strategic Commitments (2017 Strategic Plan)		Complimentary NRD Value Statement
Provide solutions to problems and questions, not just responses	+	Respond to problems and public questions related to the natural environment promptly.
Continually measure, evaluate, and improve services and delivery	+	Adaptively manage NRD programs and services for continual improvement and to maximize public benefit.
Prioritize funding and support of valued services with high return on investment	+	Prioritize projects and activities that provide the greatest possible positive impact on natural environment and human health.
Embrace innovation and technology for service delivery	+	Apply the best available science and strive for innovation with program implementation, outreach, and engagement.
Ensure responsible stewardship of public assets and financial resources	+	Steward the public's natural resource assets consistently with the requirements of NRD funding sources and in a manner that ensures positive outcomes.
Provide transparent and fiscally responsible governance that inspires public confidence	+	Conduct regular reporting on programmatic progress to show how funds are used to provide transparency and build public trust.
Collaborate with local municipalities, agencies, and nonprofit organizations to achieve common goals	+	Collaborate with Skagit County leadership, our external partners, and residents to drive program success.
Hire, develop, and retain a qualified, motivated, innovative workforce dedicated to providing high-level customer service	+	Encourage an engaging and welcoming workplace that fosters creativity and collaboration.
Strategically and determinedly pursue our goals to ensure that we actually achieve them	+	Integrate the long-range plan into our day-to-day actions to provide direction for accomplishing our goals.



Goals and Strategies

To further its unique and important role in the community, NRD has established four goal categories that will guide its priorities through 2026. Each of these goal categories is accompanied by a goal statement and a set of strategies designed to support and achieve NRD's mission. The NRD goal categories are shown in the graphic below. The goal statements and supporting strategies are detailed on the following pages.





Division Functions (DF)

Goal statement

Ensure NRD is functioning at the highest level of excellence, efficiency, integrity, and accountability.

Strategies

DF-1 Integrate the long-range plan into NRD’s day-to-day work to promote transparency and collaboration.

DF-2 Continue to improve NRD’s internal and external coordination.

DF-3 Encourage and support professional growth to retain NRD staff and grow institutional knowledge.



Fiscal Management (FM)

Goal statement

Ensure NRD’s financial resource planning, directing, and management are conducted responsibly and transparently to build and maintain confidence and to ensure funding stability and sustainability.

Strategies

FM-1 Pursue and maintain stable sources of assessment and grant funds.

FM-2 Ensure funds and grants are being managed and reported to the funding agency, and the expenditures are consistent with the underlying RCWs, Skagit County Code, and/or grant agreements.

FM-3 Establish and nurture relationships with funding sources.

FM-4 Conduct annual reporting about funding sources and uses.

FM-5 Ensure resources are available to effectively support fund procurement and management.





Program Functions (PF)

Goal statement

Maintain programmatic alignment and relevancy with the changing natural resource needs in Skagit County to maximize public and environmental benefits.

Strategies

PF-1 Proactively engage elected officials to ensure continued support and knowledge of NRD programs.

PF-2 Identify current and anticipated future programmatic needs to ensure ongoing alignment with NRD's mission, relevant regulations and directives, and emerging issues in the county.

PF-3 Plan for ongoing and future funding needs.

PF-4 Maintain existing working partnerships important for programmatic success and proactively explore potential new partnerships.



Results Washington Presentation to the Governor's Office





Outreach and Engagement (OE)

Goal statement

Maintain intentional, consistent, proactive, and responsive communications, information sharing, and collaboration.

Strategies

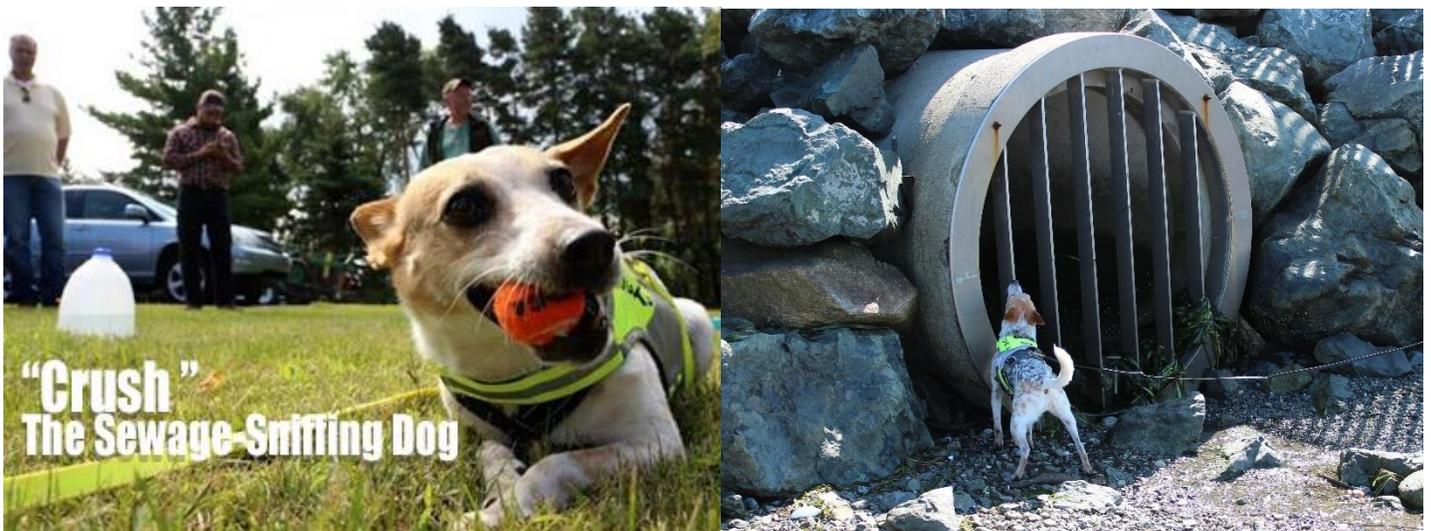
OE-1 Develop clear protocols for timely responses to public information requests and questions within four hours of receipt.

OE-2 Ensure that information and resources related to NRD's programs and functions are organized, accessible, and current.

OE-3 Ensure NRD resources are available to advance outreach and engagement goals.

OE-4 Develop integrated messaging that establishes context and connection with NRD's diverse programs and functions.

OE-5 Strengthen and grow important stakeholder group relationships.



Using the Plan

This long-range plan guides NRD’s priorities and actions through 2026. Successful implementation of this long-range-plan will require NRD staff to intentionally integrate mission, values, and goals into its day-to-day activities. Actions to ensure a successful integration of long-range-plan elements include ensuring all NRD staff have access to and understand the long-range-plan, providing NRD staff with accessible long-range-plan summary material for their desk, and referencing how county commissioner updates or requests relate to the long-range-plan.

NRD Engagement

The process to create this long-range-plan began in early 2021 and concluded in the fall of 2021. NRD’s manager, staff, and Public Works Department leadership helped to shape the long-range-plan. Going forward, NRD staff will engage with this plan throughout the year. NRD’s manager will drive this involvement, but a commitment from NRD staff will ensure the goals are advanced.

Annual Action Plan

Another important mechanism to integrate the long-range-plan is to prepare an annual action plan. The NRD manager works continuously with the Public Works Department lead to develop annual priorities. The annual action plan is a document that allows the NRD team to directly participate in this annual planning. In the annual action plan, NRD will identify funding requests and staff needs as they relate to the long-range-plan to inform the development of its budget.

The annual action plan will identify tactics, or specific actions that will advance each goal and supporting strategies. Every tactic will provide details on what will be undertaken to advance and what success to mark the completion of the tactic.

2026–2031 NRD long-range-plan
 The NRD’s mission and values, as well as its goals and strategies, should be revisited in 2025. The updated plan should be approved for the 2026–2031 period.

Plan Integration and Update Process

Each year, the budget will be informed by the action plan and will include details about the staff lead, timing, and resource needs. The graphic below shows how the action plan, long-range-plan, and the budget relate.

Illustration of Long-Range Plan Integration with the Annual Action Plan and Budget

