



DNR's participation in the Puget Sound kelp recovery effort

Major concerns exist about bull kelp declines in Puget Sound. Indeed, a 2019 study conducted by DNR found that bull kelp beds in South Puget Sound have dramatically decreased in areal extent from 2013 to 2018 (Berry et al., 2019). In 2018 the NW Straits Commission and NOAA convened a process to develop a "[Kelp Conservation and Management Plan](#)". DNR was an active participant throughout the development of the Management Plan and plans to participate in the regional recovery implementation effort.

DNR has identified the following activities as near-term opportunities that DNR can pursue to help protect and recover kelp throughout the Puget Sound.

1. Assess the current and historic populations of kelp in the Puget Sound
2. Help to coordinate research and monitoring activities regionally
3. Assess human impacts to kelp
4. Conduct research to assess the ability for kelp to ameliorate impacts related to ocean acidification
5. Work with partners to implement policies and standards that are protective of kelp
6. Confirm that DNR Stewardship Measures are designed to prevent negative impacts to kelp
7. Assess kelp harvest pressure and its impacts to kelp populations on state owned aquatic lands
8. Develop communication documents which articulate the importance of kelp
9. Describe the ecological value of kelp habitat
10. Establish a kelp Vital Sign within the Puget Sound Action Agenda



Bull kelp, *Nereocystis*, can form underwater forests which serve as vital marine habitat for Puget Sound.

Photo credit: Aaron Barna

Why does this matter to DNR?

DNR manages 2.6 million acres of state owned aquatic lands for the benefit of current and future citizens of Washington State. One of its statutorily defined goals is to ensure environmental protection for generations to come. As part of this responsibility, kelp – large brown seaweeds - are an important consideration for DNR management.

Kelp beds are highly productive nearshore habitats that support commercial and sport fish, invertebrates, marine mammals and marine birds. Many factors, both natural and anthropogenic, affect the extent and composition of kelp beds. Recent declines in kelp beds may be attributable to warmer water temperatures and poor water clarity.

For more information

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