

# ROSS

## CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGIONAL OPEN SPACE STRATEGY



The REGIONAL OPEN SPACE STRATEGY | ROSS  
is a collaborative effort to integrate and elevate the many  
activities underway to conserve and enhance the ecological,  
economic, recreational and aesthetic vitality of the Central Puget

### WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

Open Space is an embracing term for a diverse spectrum of lands across a rural and urban continuum on large and small scales. Open Space includes:

- wilderness lands
- resource lands for agricultural and timber production
- national, state, county and city parks
- water bodies and wetlands
- local and regional recreational trail systems
- urban green spaces like parkways, rain gardens, tree canopy, and green roofs

Open Space provides a vast number of critical services + benefits on which the region depends:

**Ecosystem services**, such as air and water quality, flood control, air quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and disaster mitigation

**Economic vitality** from our timber, agricultural and fisheries productivity, recreational tourism and the ability to attract anchor businesses thanks to our quality of life and stunning landscape

**Human health and access**, playing a role in reducing obesity and stress, and providing accessible recreational benefits for all.

Together these lands create a unique regional identity and sense of place, celebrate our cultural and geological history and provide vital educational resources for future generations to come.

### WHY A REGIONAL OPEN SPACE STRATEGY?

While numerous ongoing open space and environmental protection projects exist, they are often siloed and their effectiveness can be greatly enhanced by making connections, optimizing benefits, and directing resources to the most critical priorities. Ecological systems must be considered at the watershed scale, and protecting threatened rural and resource lands, public health, and community development require inter-jurisdictional solutions. Decisions, actions and investments to improve open space networks must be coordinated at the regional level.

### REGIONAL COLLABORATION

There is vital momentum for this work, notably the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Vision 2040, which calls for the development of a Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS). The ROSS has support from The Bullitt Foundation, The Russell Family Foundation, National Park Service, leadership at the University of Washington and an esteemed regionally-representative Executive Committee. Work is underway in direct partnership with PSRC and other organizations working on major initiatives that can be leveraged to support open space planning in the region. Together, this coalition of partners is working to position green infrastructure alongside other foundational investments such as transportation or education as a necessary dedication of public and private resources to shape future development and ensure community well-being in the Central Puget Sound.

### STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The ROSS project will present an integrated strategy that aligns current ecological management efforts, identifies key actions that cannot be achieved by individual jurisdictions, exhibits the benefits and tradeoffs associated with green infrastructure investments, and links ecosystem recovery to broader community objectives to attract support and investment in the region's open space system. A Governance + Finance Task Force is being formed to recommend new organization and multi-benefit conservation funding structures, develop a recommended strategy for collective impact, formulate an action plan, and initiate steps to execute the formation of a new regional governance structure and/or non-governmental alliance that can advance on proposals developed through the ROSS.

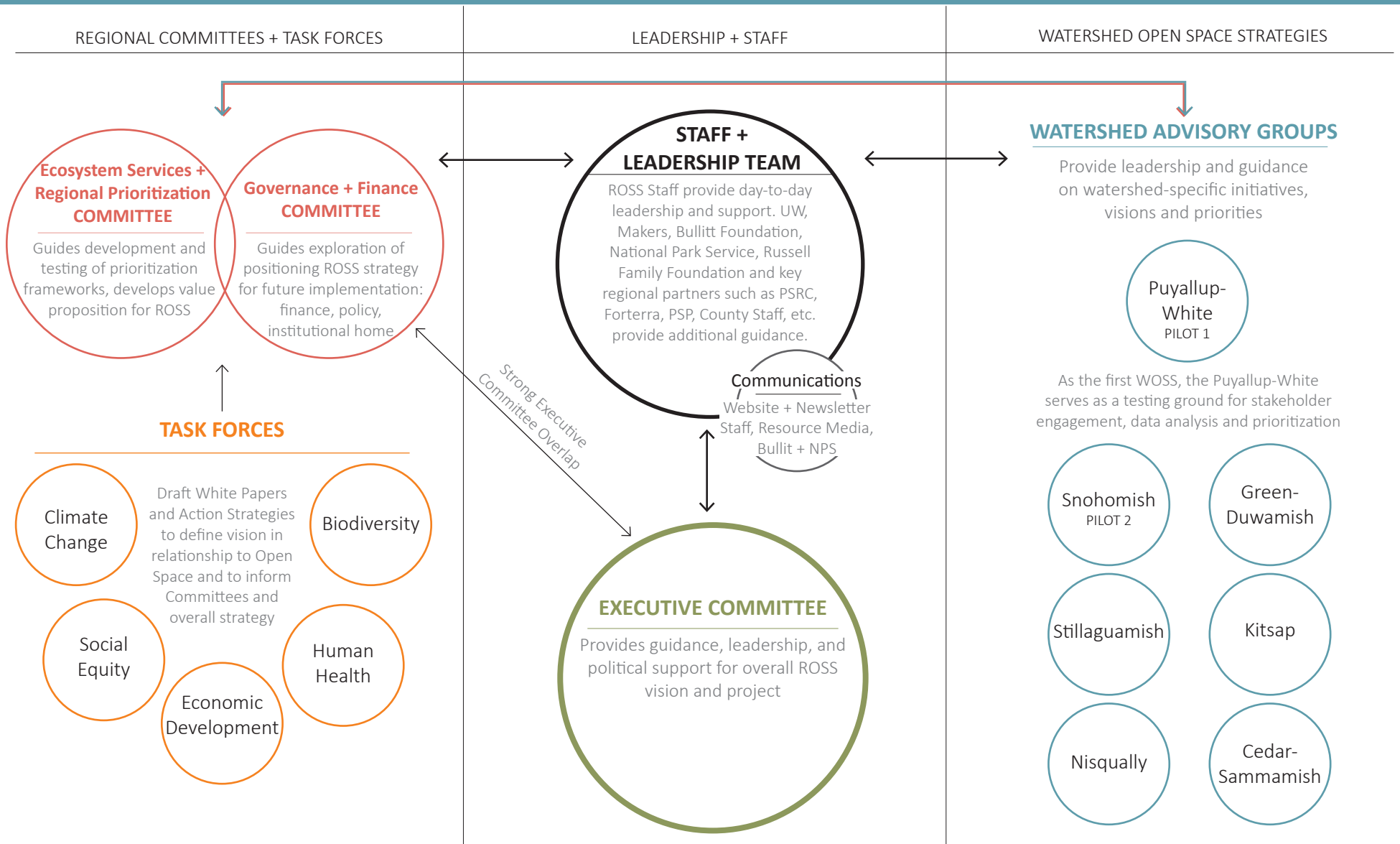
The overall strategy is further informed by a committee of regional experts developing an ecosystem services analysis to assess regional green infrastructure planning and five Task Forces focused on the regional challenges of climate adaptation + mitigation, social equity + justice, biodiversity management, human health and economic development as well as the role open space plays in planning for a resilient future.

### PILOT WATERSHED STRATEGIES

Two Watershed Open Space Strategies (WOSS) are being piloted in the Puyallup-White (WRIA 10) and the Snohomish (WRIA 7) to provide these regional committees with locally developed proposals that can be considered for support and investment at the regional scale as a means to respond to key regional challenges and priorities.

*The integrated Regional Open Space Strategy will be delivered to the Executive Committee and regional decision-makers in 2015, providing a roadmap for regional implementation.*





SHARED HISTORY, SHARED FUTURE

The ROSS is in direct partnership with the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and other organizations working on major initiatives that can be leveraged to support open space planning in the region: market-based conservation strategies embodied in Forterra's Cascade Agenda; multi-jurisdictional approaches to watershed planning led by the Washington State Department of Ecology and Puget Sound Partnership (PSP); model actions for cooperative success by the Mountains to Sound Greenway; large-scale community development initiatives like PSRC's Growing Transit Communities; as well as county health districts' efforts to use land use planning as a means to confront health disparities and social equity. At the moment these efforts are largely independently led or technically specific in scope. The ROSS seeks to integrate and elevate this outstanding work.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR LEADERSHIP PARTNERS:

