



HILARY S. FRANZ  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

SB 5619 | HB 1661

## GF-S \$726,000

Funding will allow DNR to complete the analysis needed to develop success measures and coordinate actions to conserve critical marine forests and meadows to achieve a goal of 10,000 acres of kelp forest and eelgrass meadows conserved and restored by 2040.

*"Kelp and eelgrass are critical to iconic species like salmon and orcas, and hold irreplaceable cultural value for many Tribal Nations. We must protect them and maintain the vibrant ecosystems they support."*

Access the [Interactive Eelgrass Monitoring Database](#)

Access the [Interactive Kelp Monitoring DNR Webpage](#)

### CONTACT

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# Kelp Forest and Eelgrass Meadow Health and Conservation

**The Kelp Forest and Eelgrass Meadow Health and Conservation initiative responds to recent severe losses, and proactively identifies actions to improve future resilience of these critical nearshore habitats.**

- Conserving and restoring at least 10,000 acres of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows by 2040.

**Kelp forests and eelgrass meadows** are diverse and productive nearshore ecosystems, **providing critical habitat** for a wide array of marine life, including threatened and endangered species such as salmon, rockfish, and abalone. These marine forests and meadows play an **important role in climate mitigation and adaptation** by sequestering carbon and relieving ocean acidification. In addition to these ecological benefits, kelp and eelgrass have **important cultural value to Northwest Tribal Nations**, playing a prominent role in traditional fishing, hunting, and food preparation and storage.

As the stewards of these vital nearshore habitats, the Department of Natural Resources has been tracking long-term trends of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows, and has identified areas of concerning losses for both habitats. In particular, bull kelp in South and Central Puget Sound regions declined by more than 90% in the last 150 years, according to recent analyses. Eelgrass meadows in the San Juan Islands have seen severe declines as well, in just the last 20 years. Changes in the abundance or distribution of these habitats likely reflect changes in environmental conditions, and will require collective action across partnering agencies, Tribes, organizations and communities to support future ecosystem health.

## Establishing the Kelp Forest and Eelgrass Meadow Health and Conservation Plan

DNR proposes to lead a collaborative planning process to proactively assess and prioritize areas for coordinated conservation and restoration activities of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows throughout the Puget Sound and along the Washington Coastline. This process would fulfill the next critical steps highlighted in existing regional plans for kelp forests and eelgrass meadows ([Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan](#) and the [Puget Sound Eelgrass Recovery Strategy](#)).





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### **Fulfilling the Commitment:**

- Build on existing research to map and prioritize areas in decline, and areas where restoration may be possible and would most benefit nearshore ecosystem function;
- Identify potential stressors impacting the health and vitality of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows in order to improve effectiveness of conservation and restoration efforts;
- Collaborate with Tribal Nations and other regional partners on identifying coordinated actions and success measures; and
- Continue to track the abundance and distribution of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows to evaluate the success measures and to inform adaptive management of the plan and actions.