



National Wildlife Federation
PACIFIC REGIONAL CENTER — SEATTLE OFFICE
Inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

PROTECTING PUGET SOUND FLOODPLAINS

KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF HARM'S WAY



Floodplains are crucial

to the environmental health and public safety of Puget Sound.

Floodplains:

- Protect communities from destructive flooding.
- Provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife.
- Cleanse stormwater.

Rampant development

in floodplains has harmed Puget Sound and its residents.

Local, state and federal policies that allow and even subsidize dangerous development in floodplains only serve to:

- Put people in harm's way.
- Destroy critical habitat.
- Cost taxpayers millions.

Floodplain development is costly.

- Thirteen major flood disasters in our state since 1990 have caused an estimated \$1 billion in damages.
- At least 42 people have been killed by flooding. Thousands of homes and businesses have been damaged or destroyed.
- More than 700 homes in Puget Sound have been flooded multiple times and rebuilt at taxpayer expense.

We must stop subsidizing inappropriate development in flood hazard areas.

SAFEGUARDING FISH AND WILDLIFE

Floodplain development harms fish and wildlife.

- Puget Sound salmon and orca have been pushed to the brink of extinction.
- Puget Sound Chinook salmon have declined 30% due to floodplain development.
- Valuable habitat for salmon, orca, turtles, waterfowl, and other species is imperiled due to floodplain development.

Restoring floodplain habitat will support Endangered Species recovery.

RESTORING PUGET SOUND

Floodplain development reduces water quality.

- Stormwater carries 75% of the toxic chemicals entering Puget Sound.
- Developing in floodplains reduces the ability of the land to slow and store flood waters. This means that:
 - Floods are more frequent and severe.
 - Riparian plants that naturally filter pollutants are damaged.
 - More pollutants enter waters and degrade stream health.

Restoring floodplain functions will improve water quality and help to restore Puget Sound.

Better floodplain policies are needed to restore floodplain functions, reduce destructive flooding and prepare for increasingly severe storms due to climate change.



GLOBAL WARMING & FLOODING

Climate change is projected to bring more rain, increasingly severe storms, and even more floods.

University of Washington’s Climate Impacts Group projects that winter flood frequencies will increase in much of Puget Sound.

Unless floodplain management is improved, our current flooding problems are likely to get worse.

WORKING TO REDUCE FLOOD RISK

Our goal at NWF is to increase protection and restoration of floodplain areas.

Protecting floodplains will enhance habitat, improve water quality in Puget Sound, get people out of harm’s way, reduce the costs of flood damage, and accommodate increased stormwater resulting from climate change.

We can protect floodplains and achieve our goal by:

- **Stopping subsidized development in floodplains.**
We are working with a broad coalition to make sure FEMA modifies their National Flood Insurance Program as required — in full and on time.
- **Encouraging appropriate development.**
Counties can guide development away from high-risk areas by incorporating flood risk into land use planning. Employing Low Impact Development (LID) enhances the land’s natural ability to absorb, cleanse and manage stormwater.

FEMA & FLOODPLAINS

In 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service found that the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) flood insurance program **violates the Endangered Species Act.**

FEMA’s policies encourage and subsidize destruction of floodplain habitat critical for Puget Sound salmon— which are prey for the orca.

NWF and others are working to make sure FEMA abides by its legal responsibilities to change its policies and prevent further environmental destruction.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

In your yard: Reduce stormwater runoff by increasing permeable surfaces and developing a rain garden, which allows water to infiltrate the ground instead of running off into local watersheds.

Donate: Support this important work by donating to the Pacific Regional Center of National Wildlife Federation.

“This issue is not just about salmon habitat. It's also about getting people out of harm's way, reducing taxpayer expenses due to flood damage, and preparing for increased stormwater due to climate change. **Preventing development in floodplains benefits everybody.**”

- Dan Siemann, Senior Environmental Policy Specialist,
National Wildlife Federation, Pacific Regional Center



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