



RLA & SRLP project Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Rural Lands Analysis?

The Rural Lands Analysis (RLA) is a Kitsap County project focused on evaluating the existing rural land use patterns, policies, and regulatory frameworks in areas outside of the Urban Growth Areas of Kitsap County. This evaluation will help to provide a clear analytical foundation for future planning decisions in rural Kitsap County. The RLA will work with and adapt an analytical tool called a Land Capacity Analysis (LCA), which planning jurisdictions (i.e., Kitsap County) use to quantify housing units, population, and employment growth that can be accommodated within urban areas under existing development regulations. In addition to these components, the project will include analysis and prioritization of rural character, resource lands, rural lands (including working lands), habitat protection, and conservation. The same type of analysis does not typically happen for rural areas.

We must plan for growth within our boundaries, and an LCA, which is conducted only in the urban areas, only gives us half the story. That is why DCD is conducting the RLA to fully understand how we are growing and how we can adequately plan for that growth while protecting rural and resource lands.

The RLA will evaluate rural land use patterns, growth potential, and preservation priorities to provide a data-driven foundation for future planning decisions in unincorporated areas.

What is Salmon Recovery in Local Planning?

Salmon are an essential part of this region's history, economy, and culture. The Salmon Recovery in Local Planning project will identify and catalogue conservation and restoration strategies from local salmon recovery plans that intersect with land use planning and policy implementation in Kitsap County. This analysis will translate into a technical memo which will describe a prioritized set of conservation and restoration strategies that have the potential to be integrated into the County's land-using planning practices and confer multi-level benefits for salmon and rural resource lands.

How is the SRLP connected to the RLA?

The SRLP project will use existing salmon conservation plans and data to identify priority ecosystems within the County for salmon populations and then identify strategies that can realize the greatest benefit for salmon population health. These important ecosystems for salmon will overlap with rural areas in the County where working lands, such as forestlands and agriculture lands, are located. The SRLP project findings will be integrated into the RLA to help us understand what strategies can be implemented, what tools can be leveraged, what incentives can be employed to maximize a tri-fold conservation benefit; actions that can protect salmon habitat as well as forestlands and agricultural lands. The SRLP work will be essential to understanding how we can protect the cultural, economic, and ecological core of Kitsap County, while balancing these with the needs for development.



What are "Working Lands"?

Working Lands are rural lands that are being actively managed in agriculture, forestry, or mineral extraction uses, regardless of whether they meet the statutory criteria for resource lands of long-term commercial significance. These lands contribute to the local economy through the production, processing, or marketing of natural resource and agricultural products. They may also contribute to rural character, wildlife habitat, and open space. Working Lands do not have the protections of formally designated "Resource Lands", and are in the residential zones, which prioritize residences. As such, they are candidates for and constantly under pressure of conversion to residential use.

Why are Working Lands Important?

Washington State's RCW 36.70A.011 states that "a county should foster land use patterns and develop a local vision of rural character that will: Help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles; encourage the economic prosperity of rural residents; foster opportunities for small-scale, rural-based employment and self-employment; permit the operation of rural-based agricultural, commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses that are consistent with existing and planned land use patterns; be compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat; foster the private stewardship of the land and preservation of open space; and enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life." Kitsap County's Working Lands do not have the legal noticing of formally designated Resource Lands, that means there are no protections from conversion to non-Working Lands uses. Kitsap County DCD has heard from the public that rural life in the County is characterized by forests, farms, and fish - three pillars that are key to its economic, ecological, and cultural well-being. Kitsap County DCD endeavors to preserve the rural character of unincorporated Kitsap County and conserving the County's working lands is part and parcel to that.

How will the July RLA survey information be incorporated into the RLA?

Building on the community engagement and conversations that occurred during the Year of the Rural in 2025, Kitsap County is conducting a Rural Lands Analysis to better understand the opportunities, challenges, and priorities that will shape the future of rural Kitsap County.

The analysis will evaluate current rural land use patterns, development pressures, working lands, natural resource protection, salmon recovery, and the elements that contribute to rural character. Community input will help identify priorities, evaluate potential future land use scenarios, and guide recommendations for policies, programs, and actions that support a sustainable rural future.

Survey feedback will help the County better understand community values, landowner needs, and the opportunities and challenges associated with protecting rural and resource lands while managing growth and supporting vibrant rural communities.

How will I know that my voice is being heard?

Community input like survey responses, working group discussions, open house comments, key-informant interviews, and others, will be analyzed, with the results summarized and shared with the public through our project website, Kitsap County DCD's social media posts, and through summary reports shared at our other public engagements. These engagements will include farmers market attendance and at least two workshops to be held in the fall of 2026 and the winter of 2027.

What are the Working Groups?

The project working groups are advisory bodies comprised of subject matter experts in forestry, salmon population health, agriculture, and real estate and development. These experts represent a cross-section of disciplines, professional experiences, and public and private entities. There are three subject-specific working groups and one technical policy advisory group that is made up of representatives from the subject-specific working groups plus the field of real estate and development. The three subject-specific groups are: Salmon Recovery, Agriculture Advisory Council, and Forestry Working Group. The Technical Policy Advisory Group is the blended group of representatives of the three subject specific groups. More information on these groups can be found on the project [website](#).

How will the project's recommendations be presented and/or communicated?

The final deliverable of this project will consist of:

- Project webpage
- GIS tool to share findings and information
- A Salmon Recovery Report
- A Rural Lands Analysis

The online tools (webpage, GIS tool, and interactive web-map) will all be publicly available online. The Salmon Recovery Report and Rural Lands Analysis will also be available on the project website.

Additionally, the final deliverable will be presented to the Kitsap County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners as part of a project briefing that will be open to the public, at the end of June or in early July.

Will this project result in regulatory changes?

This project will not directly result in regulatory changes. The findings of the report may be incorporated into future policy analysis and development.

Is this a wise use of county staff time and resources?

Throughout 2025, during the Year of the Rural, Kitsap County DCD consistently heard from the public that the rural areas of the County were not receiving the necessary attention and consideration to ensure that County planning and policies were developed to preserve rural character and help it thrive. Residents expressed concerns that the urban areas of Kitsap received more of the County's focus and that the rural areas, such as our farmlands and forestlands, deserved equal consideration. The RLA project was developed in direct response to community input and designed to answer the question "What can we do to protect our rural and resource lands - that make this a wonderful place to work, play, and live - like farms, forests, and fish, while meeting the needs of a growing population?" The RLA final report will help to inform future Comprehensive Planning efforts that will affect Kitsap County's rural areas.