



Floodplains by Design

• REDUCING RISK, RESTORING RIVERS •

Newsletter

February 2022



Washington State Conservation Commission, Foster Creek cover crop of peas. Credit: Alison Halpern

IFM Advances and Issues NFIP Comment Letter Update

On January 27th, American Rivers and BEF submitted comments to FEMA for revising the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) floodplain management standards for land use management and use regulations which have not been updated in 45 years! Comments also identified opportunities to reduce the program's impact on threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

The NFIP sets into motion a number of incentives, requirements and structures that have big implications on land-use, permitting, flood infrastructure and development. This was a unique opportunity for Washington partners to provide specific comments to FEMA National to improve the NFIP itself in support of regionally significant issues.

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Comments were co-developed with private, local, state, and federal partners from across the state representing farm, fish, flood, development, and transportation interests. We greatly appreciate all of the engagement around this issue, and we would love to hear from you on if you thought this process was beneficial or if you would like to share your own comments!

Additional comment letters can be found [here](#).

Selected NFIP Comment Letters submitted to FEMA:

[Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission NFIP Comment Letter](#)

[Farm Bureau NFIP Comment Letter](#)

[WSDOT, Puget Sound Partnership and WDFW NFIP Comment Letter](#)

FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING UPDATE

There has been a lot of information published about the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (aka the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). The following resources aim to provide increased clarity on available funding for water related projects.

- [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Guidebook and Database:](#) This guidebook published by the White House on February 2, 2022, is a roadmap to the funding available under the law, as well as an explanatory document that shows direct federal spending at the program level.
- [What's in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for Water:](#) This webinar series from River Network includes video and PDF presentations by EarthJustice, NRDC and American Rivers. This website also includes links to a variety of other resources from the water community and federal government.
- [Natural Resource, Water, Tribal, and Resiliency Opportunities in the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act:](#) Honorable Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and members of Van Ness Feldman's Government Advocacy and Public Policy team provide a detailed overview of new

funding opportunities and discuss what they could mean for communities and businesses focused on our nation's natural resources, water infrastructure, tribal investments, and resiliency planning.

Many federal programs are in the process of developing their spending plans for new funding. We will continue to keep you updated as new information emerges.

FBD GRANT PROGRAM UPDATE

- 23 Pre-applications were received
- Presentations occurred Feb 14-18th
- Final apps due April 29th

C&C ACTION GROUP UPDATE

Lunch & Learn Series: Project and program management challenges

Starting March 3rd

The Culture & Capacity Action Group is pleased to announce a new, monthly Lunch & Learn Series on March 3rd from 12pm - 1pm. The first topic we'll cover is:

Unexpected Challenges and How to Overcome Them.

Come hear three Floodplains by Design practitioners share stories about unexpected challenges they've encountered implementing projects, and how they worked their way through it. You will then be invited in a small group to share an unexpected challenge you faced and how you navigated it and hear from your colleagues.

The new Culture and Capacity Lunch & Learn Series will focus for the next six months on project and program management challenges, tools to make management more efficient, and processes to help build trust within the integrated floodplain management framework. Each month starting in March, we will host a 1-hour informal virtual meeting over lunch, featuring speakers from various FbD projects across the state as well as outside experts.

To learn more, sign up, or share ideas for upcoming topics, please register **HERE** or contact Allan Warren (awarren@b-e-f.org), or Carol Macilroy (cmacilroy@gmail.com).

The C&C AG met on Jan. 24th, [here is the recording and slide deck.](#)

By the Numbers

UPPER YAKIMA RIVER FLOODPLAIN AND HABITAT ACQUISITION PROJECT



386

floodplain acres secured



73

acres will continue to support agricultural uses



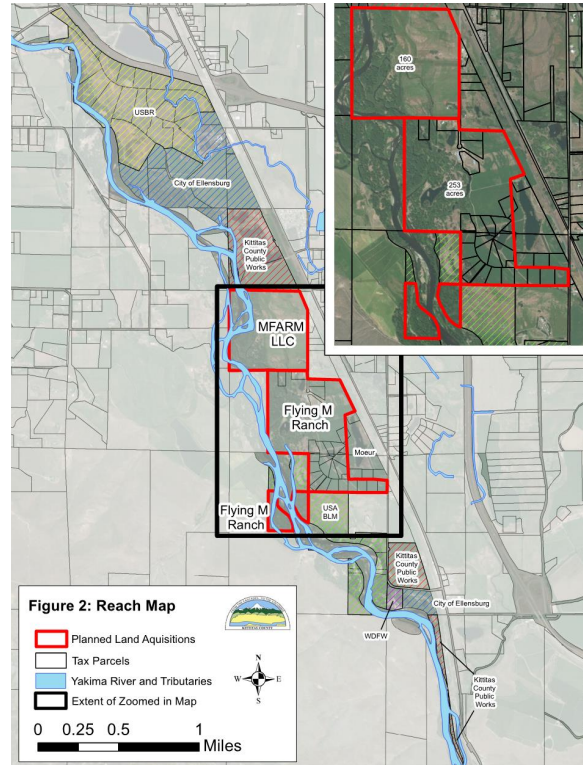
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critical agricultural business (Twin City Foods) supported by this effort



34+

homes not constructed within an area of high flood risk



1,445.45

AF-year of senior water rights secured for the purposes of benefiting instream flow, removing at risk irrigation infrastructure from the active floodplain, and mitigating for impacts to agricultural users and instream flows during drought years.

Are you interested in sharing information about your project in a future newsletter?

Contact Hannah at hbuehler@b-e-f.org



A Conversation with the Newest Member of the FbD Backbone Team Allan Warren

What excites you most about being a part of the FbD network?

The thing that I've been most excited about has just been getting to learn about all of the work going on across the state and being able to meet the local people doing the on-the-ground work. I've had great relationships and done a lot of really good work in the Puyallup over the years, and I'm looking forward to taking that experience and expanding it to all these other folks that are doing really good work across the state and the region. I'm excited to learn about the local dynamics and about their local integrated management complexities. Each watershed has its own complex issues, dynamics, politics, relationships and challenges. It's just a really awesome learning opportunity for me to dive in and learn about what's going on around the state. Then the challenge is to figure out how I can be of support to all these folks while leveraging some of my skills and experience in order to help folks around the state get more good work done.

What past professional and life experiences will inform your work on FbD?

I think for me it starts from a place of love. I grew up fly fishing for salmon in Alaska and that's a big part of my identity. On top of that I spent most of my twenties traveling around the world whitewater kayaking and running rivers from the Nile to New Zealand. During those years I watched the various impacts occurring on rivers. The section of river that I kayaked on the Nile was a world heritage site and one of the most beautiful places I've ever been, and now it's gone after being buried by a dam. That's where my journey down this path with rivers really began in terms of my career. Then over the course of my 6 years with the Pierce Conservation District, I really had the opportunity to dive deeply into the issues around how floodplain management intersects with agriculture and the challenges of watching development rapidly eat away at what remaining farmland we have left. On top of that, working to understand the farmer perspective of just trying to make it from one growing season and one harvest season to the next, and figuring out how you balance that kind of year to year perspective with the long-range planning that we have in terms of recovery goals or floodplain management. Being able to lean on

those past experiences generates a lot of empathy with all sides. It's important to understand the goals and aspirations of each of the stakeholders and think through, within that empathy, what the solutions are where we can keep all of those perspectives in mind and make sure the outcome is not to the detriment of any one group. Ultimately, I have a big passion for rivers and the people that interact with them and a long history of exploring those different systems.

What else do you want the FbD community to know about you?

I come to this work through a place of service. My role, as I see it, is to support all of the people around the state that are doing the work on-the-ground. Be that through supporting the Culture and Capacity group or whether that's working on policy or funding issues and striving to bring more funds to this work, which is often the biggest bottleneck for all of us, or by simply helping solve challenges that we all face in integrated floodplain management. In this work we run into a lot of both literal and metaphorical barriers and getting through those challenges is in my mind one of the key things that I can bring to support the network. Ultimately, hearing from folks about what challenges they're facing to getting this work done and just finding how can I help- that's really my main focus.



Allan with his wife Jillian, son Remington, and daughter Azalea hiking on the Root Glacier in Wrangell St. Elias National Park. Credit Allan Warren

Overview of the Sustainable Farms and Fields Program

INTERVIEW BETWEEN HANNAH BUEHLER AND ALISON HALPERN

Please tell us a little bit about you.

My name is Alison Halpern, and I am the scientific policy adviser for the State Conservation Commission in Washington. We are a small state agency that coordinates and supports all 45 conservation districts, and we also believe in using voluntary incentives to empower landowners to be good environmental stewards and to practice sustainable farming.

What is the Sustainable Farms and Fields Program?

Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) is a new grant program that's being administered through the Conservation Commission. This program was created during the 2020 legislative session with strong bipartisan support and a lot of interest among stakeholders from both the agricultural community and also climate advocacy and environmental groups. This is a program that was created to incentivize farmers,

ranchers, and shellfish growers to increase the number of climate-smart practices that they are using to increase carbon sequestration or to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on farmland.

What's nice about this program is that it has a whole suite of options of how we can help producers reduce their carbon footprint and implement climate-smart practices. Conservation districts and other public entities provide technical assistance. Every situation is different, but the new practices might be providing very simple materials like cover crop seed to help producers with their goals. The program can also support cost-sharing to allow producers to purchase some of the equipment that they might need as they transition over to these climate-smart practices or want to use equipment and machinery that have lower carbon footprints and lower CO₂ emissions.

SFF also allows groups like conservation districts to purchase equipment to loan out for free for producers to see if it's a good fit for them or it might be a specialized



Washington State Conservation Commission. Credit: Alison Halpern

piece of machinery that they don't need to own and can share with other producers. It also has the potential to contract producers for long-term carbon storage, so it really has a whole suite of tools to incentivize and support Washington's agricultural community to really help them not only mitigate climate change on their own land, but to also play their part in a bigger solution for the climate.

What is the status of the pilot and what do you hope to learn/demonstrate?

It was interesting timing because the bill passed last year with broad support. We were all excited about it and then COVID-19 arrived. So, once the pandemic hit, we were advised for new programs, especially grant programs, not to put in a budget request package through the Office of Financial Management in the Governor's office. So that means that in this current biennium, we don't have appropriations to roll out the grant program.

The silver lining is that it gives us a little bit of time to figure out how we can make this program as successful as possible before we get those appropriations. We did submit a supplemental request for this upcoming fiscal year 2023 which will start July 1st, 2022. So if we do get \$2 million out of the operating budget this legislative session, it would allow us to roll out the program on July 1st of this year.

We're also working on a concerted effort to see if we can get federal funding through USDA to use SFF as a nice demonstration pilot for future federal programs. Currently, we are in the preparation stage and waiting for what's to come.

How is this different from "business as usual"?

The bill was first introduced in 2019 and I have to give a shout-out to Carbon Washington, they were the architect behind this bill. It didn't pass in 2019, because it was



Pierce CD cover crop. Credit: Alison Halpern

new and there wasn't a real understanding of how it was supposed to work. There also wasn't a lot of stakeholder engagement early on. So the legislature tasked the Conservation Commission and the Washington State Department of Agriculture to convene some stakeholder group meetings and develop some recommendations on what a good program could look like for a bill in 2020. What really struck me was how many individual farmers and farming associations came to Olympia to testify on the bill. There was a lot of curiosity, there was a lot of interest, but there were also a lot of questions about how this could work.

I worked with Carbon Washington to develop an online survey so that if folks couldn't make it to the stakeholder meetings, they would still have the opportunity to weigh in. What was really pleasantly surprising and extremely encouraging was that we sent out the survey in early Nov. of 2019 and within 10 days we had heard from 135 respondents. We got so much detailed information, suggestions, and eagerness for a program like this.

It was a fascinating survey because we learned that the majority of farmers were already implementing these climate-smart practices, but they wanted to do more. We also learned that the barriers were often the cost of transitioning to these new practices; as well as people not knowing which practices were best on their farm. We received a bunch of great feedback from farmers saying they wanted this program to be fair, to have it demonstrate equity and inclusion, and to make sure that underserved farming communities are included.

We also heard that people wanted to see all sizes of farms being able to benefit from this program. I think one thing that makes it unique is that by providing free technical assistance and cost-shares, this allows farmers who operate small farms, medium-sized farms or large farms to implement climate-smart practices that will save them money in the long run, allow everyone to benefit from this whole suite of co-benefits like cleaner water, cleaner air, drought resiliency, flooding resiliency and improved habitat.

When farmers use these practices they are going to be improving their soil health and that saves them money as far as having to purchase things like synthetic fertilizers. It also allows them to increase their yield. So it's benefiting them in myriad ways while mitigating climate change, and that's pretty exciting! SFF is a program that will help all farmers, on farms of all sizes, without them having to enter into a carbon market. They

benefit directly from the practices, which is great for smaller farms who might not be as competitive in the carbon market or they're getting the help to implement the practices and they see short-term results, but they also see long-term economic benefits.

I think SFF is unique in how flexible the program is, how scalable it is, and how inclusive it is to farms of all sizes and farmers of all types. There are ways we can get more bang for the buck for a modest amount of funding, but the sky's the limit if through the federal government we can bring in more funding. So it allows us to really help farmers again with their bottom line, but also mitigating climate change and providing those environmental co-benefits that benefits everyone.

How does this support integrated floodplain management?

What's exciting about Sustainable Farms and Floodplains by Design — and this whole new paradigm shift of how we look at floodplains — is that there so many climate-smart practices that can be implemented in floodplain areas to help farmers be more sustainable, help them be more viable and help them be better stewards than they already are.

For example, as we develop our prioritization metrics, it is in the SFF statute that we give higher ranking to proposed projects that also create or improve riparian habitat. We know that trees are great at sequestering carbon, and we know that farmers often have the opportunity in riparian areas to grow habitat for fish. SFF is another incentive program that could help with those efforts to improve and increase these riparian habitats, which is great for salmon. They create clean water, sequester carbon, and helps with flooding mitigation. There are some real and exciting opportunities to implement these practices in floodplain areas.

Anything I didn't ask you'd want to share?

An important lesson of this process is that when you bring everyone to the table and take the time to listen, you can develop really wonderful, positive programs that benefit everybody. SFF is a great example to show that when you get legislators and policymakers, environmental stewards, agricultural groups and individual farmers together to address a problem, you can come up with really good solutions that can act as pieces of the puzzle in combating climate change.

Wapato, floodplain habitat on the Lower Columbia, and other priorities for the Chinook Indian Nation that continues to seek federal recognition

A CONVERSATION WITH SAM ROBINSON, VICE CHAIRMAN, CHINOOK INDIAN NATION

Floodplain restoration and conservation is critical for sustaining culturally important foods.

LISTEN: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aln_klugwtY



Sam Robinson, credit: <https://chinookstory.org/samuel-robinson/>



Flood Reflections at the Steigerwald Reconnection Project

BY CHRIS COLLINS, LOWER COLUMBIA ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

The atmospheric river that drenched the Pacific Northwest in November 2021 caused major rain events and flooding throughout the region.

For the Steigerwald Reconnection Project, it marked the first major flood event since Gibbons Creek and the Columbia River had been reconnected to the site. This drone photo shows the flooding at the Steigerwald site. The inundation shown is caused primarily by Gibbons Creek, the small tributary of the Columbia which passes beneath State Route 14 in the foreground. The waters of the Columbia River did not backwater the site during this event, therefore it was Gibbons Creek and other small drainages that inundated the roughly 300 acres

shown. The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, who is spearheading restoration efforts at the site, saw in their design phase hydrologic and hydraulic modeling that Gibbons Creek would be a powerful force inundating much of the site throughout the winter months and providing extensive habitat benefits to native plants, fish, and wildlife. The Estuary Partnership's effectiveness monitoring program will quantify the inundation caused by flood events such as this, along with estimating the benefits to native plant and fish communities.

Want to see more of Steigerwald? [Take a tour.](#)



Flooding at Steigerwald in November 2021. Credit: Chris Collins

Permitting Efficiencies Webinar Series

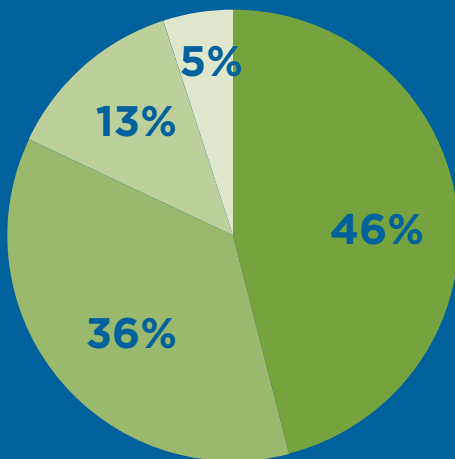
CONVENINGS AROUND PERMITTING ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECTS IN FLOODWAYS

Floodplains by Design hosted the first two webinars in a three-part series in December 2021 on *Increasing Efficiencies in Permitting Ecological Restoration in Flood Hazard Areas*.

269

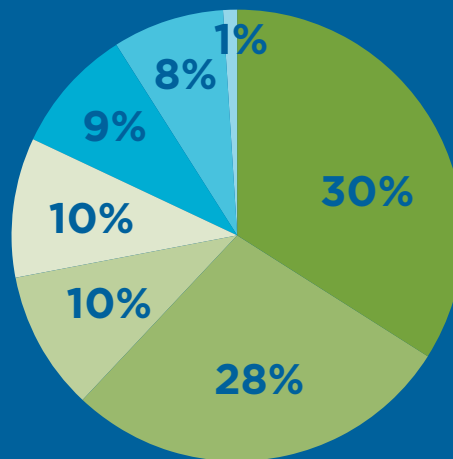
participants attended the first two webinars

Familiarity with FEMA's floodway analysis



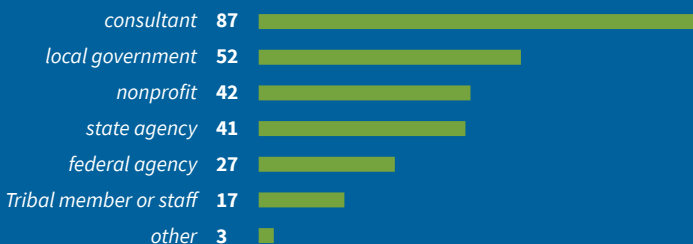
13% of participants self-reported as experts on the topic
 46% reported a moderate level of familiarity
 36% of participants were slightly familiar
 5% of participants were novices to the topic

Participants also work in a diverse range of geographies



30% working in Western Washington
 28% operating across the West
 10% across Washington
 10% in Oregon
 9% in Central Washington
 8% from the Midwest and Eastern US
 1% from Eastern Washington

Attendees were diverse in the role they play in ecological restoration in the floodway



Attendees reported that they were hoping to gain understanding of:

- CLOMR/LOMR rules
- Permitting process efficiencies
- FEMA regulations
- No rise analysis, and
- Other technical support

Webinars: Increasing Efficiencies in Permitting Ecological Restoration Projects in Flood Hazard Areas

You can watch the first webinar [here](#) and part two of the series [here](#).

Selected comments from the slides 12.2 Webinar

At the first webinar, participants heard perspectives from project managers at WSDOT, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, and Natural Systems Design with experience dealing with the permitting process in the field. Attendees also heard from FEMA staff on the purpose of FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA), the history of the rescindment and the implications for projects, and information on when a no-rise analysis, CLOMR or LOMR are required. With the rescindment there was a shift from projects needing to demonstrate that they could come as close as possible to a no-rise, to what is now a 0.00 no-rise requirement. FEMA staff were on hand to answer questions and encouraged people to reach out early and often.

Webinar attendees highlighted a desire for more support, resources and training: in these areas:

- Up to date information on Washington state and federal laws and policies, knowledge of when they do and do not apply to a project.
- Joint training with local jurisdictions.
- Information on funding sources to update regulations at the local level.
- A road map to locally revise floodplain models and maps so that we can do the restoration that is needed.
- Permitting associated with restoration to Stage 0 (i.e. valley bottom reconnection, floodplain reunification, multi-thread wetland corridor restoration).

Ideas generated included:

- Setting up a cost-share program for CLOMR/LOMR process, benefit could be shared of investments out of the restoration community. While a no-cost LOMR can be submitted to FEMA, the burden of the engineering is still on the applicant/ community- there may be opportunities for capacity investments here. The review fees are waived per regulation.
- Increased engagement with local floodplain managers.

- Recognize that river variability and shifting baseline conditions are the new norm that requires an adaptive approach to regulation and enforcement.
- No cost CLOMR/LOMR is still a substantial task for local communities, that's something that could be streamlined for real impact.
- Want to know about FEMA's capacity to review Door 1, 2, 3 options from local communities.
- Incorporate habitat restoration and nature-based solutions into an adaptable regulatory regime.

12.15 Webinar

The second webinar looked at permitting pathways and mapping and modeling approaches for local problem solving, with presentations from King County, Natural Systems Design, Natural Waters, the Columbia Gorge Commission and FEMA. Attendees also heard from American Rivers about the opportunity for comment on federal rulemaking changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Washington State emerging salmon strategy that highlights needs to increase permitting efficiencies for habitat restoration projects.

Webinar attendees highlighted the following areas as places they would like more support, resources and training:

- More training for local staff and floodplain administrators on:
 - » ESA compliance
 - » Zero rise analysis compliance
 - » Technical support from FEMA
- Provide training to local regulators on when to require LOMRs

The third webinar in the series will be scheduled in spring 2022. Please reach out to Kas Guillozet (kguillozet@b-e-f.org) if you are interested in engaging or learning more.

Webinars, Trainings & Events

Centering Indigenous Perspectives in Floodplain Management

UW students will be presenting their research on Centering Indigenous Perspectives in Floodplain Management Friday, February 25th at 10:30-11:00 am. They presented to the Ops team previously so it would be a good way to close the loop. Here is the [Zoom link](#) for the presentation and the password is “capstones”.

[Learn More](#)

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Webinar Series

FEMA is hosting a series of webinars on their Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding programs including an [HMGP 101 Program Overview](#), [Nature-Based Solutions](#), and [Benefit-Cost Analysis 101](#). Additional detail can be found in the second attachment.

When Communities Lead – Environmental Justice through Participatory Flood Risk Management

“When Communities Lead – Environmental Justice through Participatory Flood Risk Management.” webinar is coming up on March 3, 2022, from 11a-12:15p PT. Flood resilience practitioners will learn the importance of centering and resourcing economically-disadvantaged and historically marginalized communities in flood resilience work. Panelists will demonstrate how community-driven infrastructure monitoring, risk assessment, and planning can contribute to more equitable and environmentally-just outcomes.

[Click Here to Register](#)

Job Openings

Western Water Policy Specialist

The Western Water Policy Specialist supports The Nature Conservancy's conservation goals through collaborating and coordinating with TNC's government relations and conservation teams within the western Divisions, State Business Units and Strategic Programs, in particular the Colorado River Program.

[Learn More](#)

Associate Planner- Long Range and Sustainability Position (Planner 2)

Pierce Conservation District is hiring an Associate Planner- Long Range and Sustainability Position (Planner 2). The position will be working directly with me to move several priority projects forward, with a focus on **Agricultural Drainage**.

[Learn More](#)

Senior Planners (Planner 3)

Pierce County Planning and Public Works is hiring several Senior Planner (Planner 3) positions, including a **Water Quality Senior Planner, ARPA Grant Senior Planner (Limited Duration)** and a **Floodplain Senior Planner!**

[Learn More](#)

Family Forest Fish Passage Program Manager

The Department of Natural Resources is hiring for a Family Forest Fish Passage Program Manager position. The Fish Passage program helps small forest landowners remove and/or restore fish passage barriers on their private forestland roads.

[Learn More](#)

Fisheries Biologist

ESA Consulting is looking for a Fisheries Biologist to join their team in the Oregon or Washington area.

[Learn More](#)

Clean Transportation Specialists

Washington State Department of Ecology is hiring several specialist positions, including **Clean Transportation Grants Specialist**, **Clean Transportation Grants and Cultural Resources Specialist** and a **Senior Clean Transportation Grants Specialist**.

RESOURCES AND RELEVANT LINKS

- [Atmospheric Rivers Spur Debates on Flood Management in Washington State](#)
- [Puget Sound National Estuary Program Synthesis of Integrated Floodplain Management in Selected Puget Sound River Deltas](#)
- [Infrastructure Law Guidebook](#)
- [Blog post about climate and hidden hydrology at Sumas Lake](#)
- [State of the Sound Report Released](#)
- [There's a seed shortage in Washington state. What does that mean for our beloved forests?](#)
- [Negotiating a Future: Indigenous Leadership through the Ages](#)
- [Headwaters Economics new Rural Capacity Map](#)
- [Recent paper on inequitable patterns of US flood risk in the Anthropocene](#)
- [Seattle Times OpEd on HB 1099](#)