

2024 Investment Plan

Climate Resilient Riparian Systems Grant Program

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¹ www.ecology.wa.gov/contact

Introduction

Purpose

The Climate Resiliency and Riparian Systems Lead (CR2SL) 2024 Investment Plan (Investment Plan) provides the outline and priorities for investments identified by the CR2SL coalition and approved by the advisory Core Team to solicit proposals for the program. The Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Ecology funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office to develop a grant program and facilitate subawards of these funds toward improving the climate resiliency of riparian systems in Puget Sound. This Investment Plan is intended to share information about the investment priorities, including descriptions for each priority, anticipated outcomes, a projected timeline, and the anticipated amount of funding allocated for each solicitation. The purpose of this document is to record and share the investment plan for the Climate Resilient Riparian Systems Lead program.

Process overview

The CR2SL team will follow a stepwise process in 2024 to invest EPA CR2SL funds. An overview of the process can be found below:

- Gather input from Local Integrating Organizations and local forums through locally-led workshops, online meetings, and feedback forms;
- Invite Tribal consultation and host Tribal listening sessions;
- Present findings and process to other funding program and groups working on riparian issues;
- Share workshop findings with advisory Core Team;
- Use the workshop findings and Core Team input to identify investment priorities;
- Share the investment priorities with Tribes and request input;
- Publish the 2024 Investment Plan;
- Solicitation opens on November 5, 2024;
- Volunteers for the evaluation team rank applications and select proposals for funding;
- Grants are negotiated.

The Core Team

The advisory Core Team is comprised of members of the Puget Sound recovery community with technical, regulatory, and policy expertise in riparian areas and riparian protection and/or restoration. The Core Team was recruited and is facilitated by CR2SL staff. In the spring and summer of 2024, the Core Team identified investment priorities for riparian restoration and/or protection in Puget Sound. Their careful review of information based on riparian workshops, Tribal listening sessions, and local engagements led to recommendations on the investment priorities for the CR2SL program. The CR2SL engagement findings from the riparian workshops

and Local Integrating Organizations meetings are available in the [Summary Report of Input from Puget Sound Riparian Professionals](#)².

Next Steps

The Investment Priorities listed in this Investment Plan will form the foundation of the competitive grant solicitations, beginning in the fall of 2024. Information on the solicitation will be shared on the [CR2SL website](#)³. Resources about riparian restoration will be provided on the [CR2SL Technical Resources website](#)⁴. The solicitation releases will be coordinated across riparian restoration opportunities to ensure that CR2SL funding is leveraging other available funding opportunities. The advisory Core Team will convene as needed to suggest adaptive updates to these Investment Priorities in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of future program investments. Technical assistance will be available to applicants to assist with submitting applications and provided to funding recipients to assist with project management tasks and ensure quality assurance. See the [CR2SL Funding Guidelines](#)⁵ for more information on eligibility and funding requirements.

² <http://ecyapfaff/Biblio2/documents/2406013.pdf>

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/payments-contracts-grants/grants-loans/find-a-grant-or-loan/climate-resilient-riparian>

⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/water-shorelines/puget-sound/helping-puget-sound/riparian-restoration/grant-application-resources>

⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/XXXXXX.html>

Investment Priorities

Investing in Riparian Restoration and Protection in Puget Sound

The CR2SL 2024 Investment Plan contains seven investment priorities. Six of the Investment Priorities in this Investment Plan (A through F below) will be included in the 2024 Fall request for grant proposals. Approximately \$9 million of the funds will be included in the first solicitation. As funding allows, another solicitation will be released in Spring of 2025 to include the seventh investment priority (G below) and additional updates.

More information about the 2024 Fall solicitation will encourage applicants to propose collaborative and programmatic projects that include activities from more than one and up to all of the priorities.

The final solicitation is anticipated to be launched in Fall of 2025 to distribute the remaining grant award funding. CR2SL may assign and distribute any returned funds as needed, to high performing recipients with projects demonstrating capacity and potential for increased positive impact. More information about the solicitations will be available on [Ecology's grant funding website](#)⁶.

The following six CR2SL investment priorities are not listed in prioritized order:

- A. [Reach-Scale Planning and Outreach](#)
- B. [Native Plant Materials](#)
- C. [Landowner Incentives](#)
- D. [Riparian Restoration Implementation](#)
- E. [Maintenance, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management](#)
- F. [Permanent Protection of Riparian Habitat](#)

An additional priority focused on smaller programs for shorter timelines to build out riparian management programs. Details will be released with the Spring 2025 solicitation.

- G. [Small Awards to Catalyze Riparian Management and/or Support Innovation](#)

⁶ <https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/payments-contracts-grants/grants-loans/find-a-grant-or-loan/climate-resilient-riparian>

Integrating Cross-Cutting Considerations

Three cross-cutting considerations are integrated throughout the CR2SL program: climate change resilience and adaptation, Tribal engagement, and environmental justice. The CR2SL team has developed specific guidance and a programmatic strategy on each of these topics, described and referenced below. Each of the seven priorities in the 2024 Investment Plan provides a unique opportunity to integrate at least one cross-cutting priority, if not all of them, during the implementation phase of the work. Specific processes, requirements, and technical assistance opportunities for integrating the cross-cutting considerations into proposals will be provided, along with the strategies and funding guidelines for the program.

Proposal evaluators will consider how the proposed work addresses Tribal engagement, climate resilience and adaptation, and environmental justice in specific sections of the application. Priority will be given to proposals that intentionally incorporate and address these considerations within their application over similarly ranked proposals that do not address these issues.

- **Tribal Engagement:** Consider how the work enhances Tribal engagement opportunities throughout the beginning, middle, and end of the grant program and throughout implementation of the award. CR2SL developed a [Tribal Engagement Plan](#)⁷, which highlights our respect of the role of sovereign nations in riparian restoration and protection efforts.
- **Climate change adaptation:** Consider how the work supports taking action in riparian areas to prepare for and adjust to current and projected impacts of climate change. [CR2SL Climate Change Strategy](#)⁸.
- **Environmental justice:** Consider the impacts of environmental justice, environmental health, and disproportional impacts and opportunities for influence and participation. The CR2SL application includes guidance and references to existing tools and resources for applicants to assess the potential impacts of proposed projects, including the [Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map](#)⁹ and for geographically-specific information, see the [CR2SL Environmental Justice Strategy](#)¹⁰.

⁷ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2406019.html>

⁸ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2406018.html>

⁹ <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/wtnibl/WTNIBL/>

¹⁰ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2406014.html>

CR2SL 2024 Investment Priorities

Priority A: Reach-Scale Planning and Outreach

Description:

Activities under this priority focus on local collaboration and social engagement efforts to support a holistic and efficient reach-scale restoration of riparian function. This includes costs associated with regional coordination and planning, data collection for restoration prioritization, landowner engagement, landowner recruitment to improve riparian management, and coordinated landowner engagement tracking across partner organizations.

Goal:

Collaborative reach or watershed scale planning leads to increased rates of riparian restoration, quality and quantity of riparian areas are increased, and long-term ecosystem function is supported and climate resiliency is improved.

Outcomes:

- A pipeline of landowners willing to implement riparian restoration and protection activities in priority reaches and watersheds throughout the region;
- Key partners and landowners on a collaborative reach scale planning effort in the watershed and the holistic priorities and implementation needs;
- More efficient, prioritized approach to engaging and tracking landowner engagements are complete;

Outputs:

- Increased number of landowners reached;
- Increased number of landowners added to project pipeline;
- Collaborative reach-scale management plan;
- Identification and prioritization of restoration and protection activities;
- Social marketing campaigns developed;
- Database management tools developed;

Example Activities:

- Regional coordination and planning that will lead to on the ground riparian restoration, especially Watershed Protection Plan development or similar plans that enable partners to come together around local implementation strategies;
- Data collection that provides additional context for local prioritization of restoration and protection efforts (ex: water typing, thermal imagery, etc.);
- Outreach staff capacity to engage landowners/operators/public in riparian restoration;
- Locally focused community based social marketing research studies and implementation of resulting outreach plans;

- Fair compensation for participation in regional coordination events and/or outreach events by individuals from Tribes, underrepresented or vulnerable communities, or Community Based Organizations;
- Creation of riparian focused educational and marketing materials supported by a community-based study/plan;
- Translation of existing or created riparian focused educational and marketing materials;
- Creation/customization of tools and software to improve coordinated outreach, communications, tracking, etc.;
- Creation/implementation of restoration and social science monitoring or tracking tools;
- Performing targeted public outreach and education about invasive weeds in riparian zones;

Priority B: Native Plant Materials: Plant propagation, procurement, holding facilities, and small nursery support

Description:

Activities under this priority will increase the accessibility, diversity and quality of site-appropriate and pest and pathogen free plant materials and facilities to produce native plants for riparian restoration and enrichment and tend these plants until out planting. This includes support for increased access to diverse, site appropriate, climate resilient plant materials, and capacity and implementation funds for new and existing plant holding facilities or small nurseries to augment production, implementation of best management practices for pest and pathogen testing, management and early detection rapid response (EDRR), irrigation efficiency upgrades, materials use, scaling activities, and training.

Goal:

The improvements in supplying native plant materials to the supply chain leads to increased restoration and long-term protection, increased quality and quantity of riparian areas, supported long-term ecosystem function, and improved climate resiliency.

Outcomes:

- Local and regional needs for diverse, high quality, and site-appropriate plant supplies are supported by a robust network of nurseries with efficient management systems to ensure the timely delivery of plants and meet the demand for increasing rates of riparian restoration.
- Collaborative approaches to solve current systemic challenges in growing native plants on a regional level.
- The system for providing plant supplies is improved.
- Native plant supply increases to match the rate of riparian restoration.

Outputs:

- Cutting block programs are established.

- Increase holding facility capacity and implement BMPs.
- Upgrade facilities.

Example Activities:

- Establish cutting blocks;
- Purchase start-up materials;
- Enhance plant holding facility capacity;
- Upgrade facilities to meet best management practices in water use and pest and pathogen prevention, detection and management;
- Staff capacity for native plant production, seed collection, and native plant propagation (and land prioritization and land access)
- Regional collaboration on holding facilities and plant material solutions;
- Engage cultural experts and community members in plant propagation and cultivation;
- Funding to develop and communicate planting;
- Funding to develop and communicate planting and maintenance practices to increase plant survival.

Priority C: Landowner Incentives

Description:

Note: Additional Landowner Incentives category activities will be eligible and the requirements described in future amendments to these guidelines as well as additional funding rounds. See [Chapter 1.4 of the Funding Guidelines](#)¹¹ for more information on future eligible proposal activities.

Activities under this category focus on incentivizing riparian restoration for landowners. This includes costs associated with harvestable agroforestry plantings and installation of other agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) that improve agricultural operations while providing riparian protection (e.g. livestock fencing, watering troughs, additional BMPs can be proposed for consideration). Applicants are invited to propose new incentives, which may be standalone or stacked with existing incentive programs or easements to leverage the potential and increase landowner participation (these will be considered on a case-by-case basis for eligibility).

Goal:

Improvements to landowner incentives and availability lead to increased restoration and long-term protection, increased quality and quantity of riparian areas, supported long-term ecosystem function, and improved climate resiliency. Payments and incentives also lead to increased protection and maintenance of existing riparian habitat.

¹¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2406020.html>

Outcomes:

- Improved communication and understanding amongst landowners about incentive program options;
- Improved trust and collaboration between landowners and incentive program providers;
- Increased interest, demand for and participation in riparian incentive programs in priority Puget Sound watersheds;
- Demonstrated pilot models of innovative incentive programs that can shift practices and provide a sustainable roadmap for the future;
- New and improved incentive opportunities offered to riparian landowners in priority Puget Sound watersheds;
- Improved landowner communication materials and technical assistance provided to landowners about incentive program options;

Outputs:

- Increased number of riparian acres in priority Puget Sound watersheds enrolled in incentivized riparian restoration programs;
- New or improved incentive programs increase participation in restoration projects and riparian plantings;
- New or improved programs increase the participation in restoration projects and riparian plantings;
- Payments and incentives that align with market rental rates, commodity pricing, and other ecosystem values are provided;

Example Activities:

- Development of user-friendly communications tool(s) or materials to inform landowners of incentive program options;
- Staff time to provide program specific technical assistance to participating landowners;
- Purchase and installation of native trees and shrubs for agroforestry (including harvestable native fruit and nut trees, etc.);
- Purchase and installation of livestock exclusion fencing and livestock watering troughs to protect eligible riparian areas.

Activities to consider for future proposals:

- New incentive program design, development and deployment (*note that incentive design, development and planning activities are eligible for the November 2024 Solicitation under the Reach-Scale Planning and Outreach category, where a collaborative, regionally focused and targeted incentive program is being proposed*);

- Incentive payments based on western WA market rates or commodity pricing; (model and amount TBD);
- Ecosystem service payments to landowners for implementation of riparian restoration and protection (model and amount TBD);
- Purchase and installation of non-native harvestable trees and shrubs (e.g. fruit and nut trees, blueberries, etc.) (model and amount TBD);
- Maintenance support stipends provided to landowners performing maintenance (invasive weed control) themselves (model and amount TBD).

Priority D: Riparian Restoration Implementation

Description:

Activities under this priority focus on improving and restoring functional riparian systems along rivers and streams both at new sites and at existing reach-scale priority restoration sites. This includes costs associated with project planning, project management, plant procurement, site preparation, natural bank stabilization, planting, plant establishment, and site maintenance for the initial 1-5 years after planting occurs.

Goal:

Leveraged funding and increased plantings in riparian areas and stream enhancement leads to increased restoration and long-term protection, increased quality and quantity of riparian areas, supported long-term ecosystem function, and improved climate resiliency. Reach and watershed scale approaches also lead to increased long-term maintenance of existing riparian habitat.

Outcomes:

- Process-based riparian forest establishment is supported and natural regeneration is encouraged;
- Increased climate resiliency in priority reaches and watersheds;
- Functional riparian systems in priority reaches and watersheds throughout the region are restored, preserved, and sustainably managed;

Outputs:

- Plantings in riparian areas in priority reaches and watersheds, by acres;
- Plantings in streambanks in priority reaches and watersheds, by miles;
- Increase average riparian widths in priority reaches and watersheds, by feet;
- Increase the amount of leveraged funds for riparian restoration;

Example Activities:

- Project planning and management including developing of riparian planting plans, developing maintenance plans, coordinating with native plant nurseries, supporting work

for landowner agreements, developing restoration designs, and completing cultural resource assessments;

- Purchase of native plants to be used for riparian restoration;
- Crew capacity for initial and ongoing riparian restoration and general programmatic capacity;
- Site preparation including invasive weed control, junk removal, demolition and removal of small structures within the riparian zone;
- Installing low-tech instream restoration activities, including Beaver Dam Analogs, small-scale woody debris structures, and similar instream restoration activities;
- Installation of functional riparian buffers using required widths and features;
- Irrigation and weed control treatments to improve plant survival such as mulch rings and spray rings;
- Maintenance and monitoring for the length of the grant;
- Small equipment purchases to support restoration activities (see eligible expenses for definition);

Priority E: Maintenance, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management

Description:

Activities under this priority focus on providing long-term riparian project support needs, learning from project successes and failures, and applying adaptive management. This includes costs associated with maintenance of existing riparian projects in priority watersheds that are outside of their original funding window and need targeted support for improved functionality, long term monitoring data collection efforts, and adaptively managing projects where site changes have led to impaired riparian function. Some of the possible activities could include invasive weed control, thinning, underplanting, monitoring, and adaptive management planning.

Goal:

Provide long-term riparian maintenance and monitoring support to increase quality and quantity of riparian areas, support long-term ecosystem function, and improve climate resiliency.

Outcomes:

- Improved long-term riparian function and climate resilience on existing sites;
- Increased number of crew hours performing maintenance on existing riparian sites;
- Increased number of maintenance hours provided to riparian landowners that participate in an existing incentive program with limited maintenance support;
- Increased number of riparian project monitoring data points collected and available;

- Decreased presence of invasive weed infestations on existing riparian sites;
- Increased survival rates of native trees and shrubs on existing riparian projects;

Outputs:

- Increased number of riparian acres in priority Puget Sound watersheds moving from “good” to “excellent” habitat quality;
- Improved community perception of less weedy riparian restoration actions;
- Improved understanding and sharing of riparian best practices for climate resilience;
- Riparian best practices for climate resilience are improved;

Example Activities:

- Building site or reach-scale maintenance and monitoring plans;
- Crew capacity to perform maintenance work on existing riparian sites;
- Invasive weed control on existing riparian sites, or continuation of reach-scale invasive weed control programs;
- Restoration thinning on existing riparian sites where excessive stem density is limiting the riparian system process;
- Purchase and installation of plants for underplanting for site enrichment to increase biodiversity, climate resiliency, beaver-adapted enrichment planting, and presence of culturally significant plants;
- Beaver coexistence management activities;
- Supplemental planning or research to support adaptive management at riparian sites that are not achieving the desired ecosystem results due to unforeseen changes in the system or site conditions, and there is potential for improvements;
- Funding to perform instream restoration effectiveness, monitoring and research activities on riparian restoration projects that have long-term outcomes available at this time. This may include data collection, data management, and reporting on long-term findings that support informing riparian best practices and climate resiliency, perhaps involving landowners and demonstration projects.

Priority F: Permanent Protection of Riparian Habitat

Description:

Activities under this priority focus on permanently protecting riparian zones in priority watersheds where reach-scale plans for restoration and protection are in place. This includes funding for conservation easements and acquisitions, or other proposed activities that stabilize or secure the conservation and cultural values of existing riparian areas. Riparian areas may be currently degraded, natural or established restoration sites, but must be in a priority area and demonstrated to support long-term riparian function and resiliency to climate change.

Goal:

Permanent protection leads to increased rates of riparian restoration and long-term protection, quality and quantity riparian areas, long-term ecosystem function is supported, and climate resiliency is improved. Additionally, increases in permanent protection leads to protected and maintained existing high quality riparian habitats.

Outcomes:

- Innovative riparian restoration easement programs support landowner engagement and recruitment efforts;
- Replicable riparian restoration easement programs support landowner engagement and recruitment efforts;
- Long-term maintenance needs support landowner engagement and recruitment efforts;

Outputs:

- Increased miles of streambank protected by land or easement acquisition;
- Acres of restored land maintained;
- Replicable riparian easement programs developed;
- Support a region wide effort to prevent degradation of ecosystem function;

Example Activities:

- Land acquisition and associated costs;
- Property Conservation easements and associated costs;

Priority G: Small Awards to Catalyze Riparian Management and/or Support Innovation**Description:**

Activities under this priority focus on smaller proposals that can be accomplished in a 3-year timeframe. The funding available for this priority will be released along with the Spring 2025 solicitation. This priority focuses on two different objectives. First, to support riparian management programs that are new attempts at completing reliable riparian restoration and/or protection techniques. This focus may include aspects of the other priorities without the requirement for a larger holistic and programmatic approach to riparian management. The intent is to catalyze riparian management in newer areas by providing funding that may propel small programs to larger scale efforts in the future. The second objective is to create momentum in riparian management at a larger scale. Proposals that aim to scale restoration outcomes in a newer way, or by researching aspects of the other priorities with the flexibility to be innovative.

Goal:

- Support riparian management programs that are new attempts at completing reliable riparian restoration and/or protection techniques;

- Create momentum in riparian management at a larger scale. Aim to scale restoration outcomes in a newer way, or by researching aspects of the other priorities with the flexibility to be innovative.

Example Activities:

- Creation of pilot programs to scale funding;
- Expansion of existing funding models to a broader area;
- Early development of collaboratives or systems to scale capacity;
- Implementation of other small priority projects that will generate momentum and/or create model sites;

Collaborative Opportunities for the Future

The C2RSL shares the common vision to support and accelerate necessary investments in climate resilient infrastructure, environmental justice, and nature-based solutions to carry the region forward towards a future with more and healthier riparian areas in Puget Sound. Other programs are currently working on legislation, state RCWs, and guidance to assist Washington residents in protecting and restoring these areas. The CR2SL program will work alongside the other programs that are working to improve the riparian restoration opportunities and riparian protection efforts. The CR2SL is committed to harmonizing with and supporting the overarching riparian efforts in Puget Sound and will adaptively manage the program to best meet needs across the region.