

## CLEAR CREEK STRATEGY PLAN Frequently Asked Questions

The Clear Creek floodplain area is more than 1,000 acres and located within unincorporated Pierce County. An aerial showing the Clear Creek area is available [here](#).

Pierce County and Floodplains for the Future—along with its farming, floodplain management, and habitat committees—have been working on numerous initiatives to improve conditions in the Clear Creek area, including the following:

- The [Farming in the Floodplain Project](#) has completed studies on farmland impacts, drainage, sediment, and flood risks, and has begun work on various projects to address agricultural drainage needs.
- Agricultural lands conservation is underway in the Clear Creek area and the broader Puyallup watershed. This work is led by the Strategic Conservation Partnership, a collaborative group of organizations in Pierce County that hold conservation easements.
- Some frequently flooded properties have been purchased. Purchases of property from willing landowners will continue.
- The fish habitat group is studying conditions and ecosystem functions and developing a plan to guide future restoration activities in the Clear Creek area.

Pierce County continues to work to engage the Clear Creek community to develop a [Strategy Plan](#)—a long-range vision and framework to improve conditions related to flooding and drainage, agriculture and land use, social challenges (such as homelessness, illegal activities, and impacts to local character), and fish habitat and ecosystem functions. For this effort, Pierce County is supporting a facilitated process in which community members, tribes, and other interested parties can reach a common understanding of the problems and values in the area, in order to determine possible approaches for moving forward.

The following are some of the questions asked by community members about the Strategy Plan in the Clear Creek watershed.

### ***What is the Strategy Plan?***

The Strategy Plan is not intended to define any specific solutions. Rather, it will be a flexible, comprehensive document intended to set the broader framework for projects and studies. It will define a pathway built on past successes to develop community-generated projects, studies, and processes. The plan will guide decision-making, be a tool for education and communication, and provide a long-range perspective for the Clear Creek/Riverside area.

### ***How will the Strategy Plan be developed?***

Pierce County staff completed initial interviews in summer 2018 and met with residents, tribal members, farmers and other business owners, service providers, and elected officials through fall 2018/winter 2018-2019. The intention of these discussions was to explore issues in Clear Creek from the perspective of the people who experience them. Pierce County facilitated a series of workshops in early 2019. These workshops provided a summary of community-provided priority challenges, key issues, and shared values and allowed the group to prioritize ideas and concerns to develop a shared community vision for the Strategy Plan.

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### ***How do the Clear Creek Strategy Plan and the Clear Creek Floodplain Reconnection Project complement each other?***

The Clear Creek Floodplain Reconnection Project was identified in the 2013 *Pierce County Rivers Flood Hazard Management Plan* to help alleviate flooding in the basin. The primary goals of that project are to relieve flooding issues of the lower Puyallup area of Riverside and the Clear Creek floodplain, restore natural river and stream processes, and improve habitat for species identified by the Endangered Species Act. This project is expected to take at least 10 years to complete. The first phase is focused on property acquisitions from willing sellers in the area.

The Clear Creek Strategy Plan is intended to be a more comprehensive framework that would encompass and build upon the Clear Creek Floodplain Reconnection Project and the other projects and studies that are ongoing in the Clear Creek area.

### ***What is the timeline for the Strategy Plan?***



Timelines for community-developed specific projects, studies, and processes would be determined during Strategy Plan development. If a large-scale project is chosen, timelines would depend on Pierce County applying for grants from state and federal agencies.

### ***What is the intent of the outreach meetings and workshops?***

Pierce County is committed to keeping people who live in and near the project area informed and involved, including reconnecting with the community when decisions are made. The outreach meetings are a great way for community members to share their experiences and help shape the next steps for the strategy. The workshops are intended for community members, tribes, and other interested parties to work together to reach a common understanding of the problems and values in the area, in order to determine possible approaches for moving forward.

### ***Has Pierce County already decided on the projects that will come from the Strategy Plan?***

No, a solution has not been pre-determined. Pierce County is committed to facilitating the development of the Strategy Plan by working collaboratively with the community.

Pierce County had previously presented a ring levee concept; however, it has not been

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determined that a ring levee is the solution moving forward. There are many important issues in Clear Creek—in addition to flooding, drainage, and habitat improvements—that could also benefit from integrated, community-driven solutions. These include agriculture and land use as well as social challenges including homelessness, illegal activities, and impacts to local character. Other separate efforts are underway that could affect Clear Creek strategies and will also need to be considered in this process, such as the Clear Creek Floodplain Reconnection Project, Farming in the Floodplain Project, the Canyon Road extension, and the BNSF third rail.

### ***What is the Floodplains for the Future program? How do the Clear Creek Strategy Plan and the Clear Creek Floodplain Reconnection Project fit with the Floodplains for the Future effort?***

Funded in part by Floodplains by Design, Floodplains for the Future is a cross-sector and interorganizational partnership that has formed to recover floodplain functions and protect the health and safety of communities around them. Floodplains for the Future works to balance farm, fish, and flood storage values, to provide a safe place to voice varied opinions and needs, and to advance integrated floodplain management solutions in the Puyallup, White, and Carbon rivers.

The Strategy Plan fits with the Floodplains for the Future’s efforts, in that it will provide the framework for continuing to facilitate community-developed approaches in the Clear Creek Basin to address conditions related to flooding and drainage, agriculture and land use, social challenges (such as homelessness, illegal activities, and impacts to local character), and fish habitat and ecosystem functions. The Floodplain Reconnection Project is one of the several projects within the Puyallup watershed that was identified in Floodplains for the Future’s long-term plan.

### ***What is the timeline for Pierce County’s work on farmland-related planning?***

Ensuring agricultural viability in the Riverside/Clear Creek area is a priority for Pierce County. Working with farmers and agricultural groups, Pierce County wants to maximize the land purchased for agriculture use. This partnership will take time, as many variables and issues are addressed, but these values will be incorporated into the current process. The [Farming in the Floodplain Project](#) is a working group of Floodplains for the Future, a partnership of public, non-profit, and private stakeholders working to balance farm, fish, and flood control values in the Puyallup, White, and Carbon rivers. This group is also focused on increasing the understanding of agricultural viability and analyzing the impact of proposed changes to flood and hydrology systems on farmlands (and farm businesses and farmers) in the Clear Creek area and in the greater Puyallup watershed.

### ***When will the Strategy Plan be updated?***

The Strategy Plan will be published in 2020. It is intended to be a living document that can be updated as changes are needed, up until the time that the projects identified by the lead stakeholders are completed.