

2026 WRIA 8 Monitoring and Assessment Priorities

Each year, the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) solicits proposals for the King County Flood Control District's Cooperative Watershed Management (CWM) grant program and other funding opportunities focused on monitoring priorities. WRIA 8 recommends funding for projects that align with the watershed's Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan ([WRIA 8 2017 Plan Update](#)), advance understanding of critical issues in salmon recovery, and inform science-based management actions.

Monitoring & Assessment Funding Principles

WRIA 8 welcomes proposals that align with our funding principles and address a high priority monitoring and assessment need. All proposals should:

1. Address a high priority monitoring and assessment need, data gap, or emerging concern with clearly defined goals and objectives.
2. Demonstrate careful planning and strong likelihood of success through reliable scientific methods, appropriate sequencing relative to other monitoring work, and a data management plan to facilitate future uses and application of findings.
3. Inform or advance WRIA 8 recovery strategies and best management practices to recover Chinook salmon in WRIA 8. Proposals should demonstrate Chinook recovery benefits, but WRIA 8 is also interested in proposals that inform or advance multi-species benefits and best management practices to recover other salmon species and support overall watershed health.
4. Leverage multi-agency collaboration, cooperative partnerships, in-kind resources, or other support to advance salmon recovery. We encourage new partnerships and expertise informing salmon recovery in WRIA 8.
5. Communicate findings with WRIA 8 partners and interested parties to promote use of best available science in salmon recovery strategies; encourage awareness and environmental stewardship; and guide integration of salmon recovery priorities into local and regional planning, regulations, and permitting.

2026 Priority Monitoring & Assessment Needs

The [WRIA 8 2017 Plan Update](#) includes a prioritized list of research and data needs to advance Chinook recovery and support implementation of the 2017 Plan. Studies in the watershed have filled some data gaps while other uncertainties have emerged. This funding is available to support priority research and monitoring needs outlined in the 2017 Plan and presented below as categories and topics of interest. This list is not all-inclusive of monitoring and assessment needs within WRIA 8. We will also consider proposals that address critical uncertainties or issues of emerging concern that are not explicitly included in the topics below. Please reach out to Mary Ramirez (mramirez@kingcounty.gov) to discuss project ideas.

Salmon Population Status, Habitat Use, and Survival

Evaluate Chinook populations over time and in priority systems, including assessments of survival bottlenecks. Monitoring needs include:

- Spawner surveys on Chinook bearing systems, prioritizing the Cedar River.
- Expand or improve the network of PIT tagging and tag detection antennas to improve annual estimates of freshwater survival and help identify locations of high juvenile mortality during outmigration.
- Enhance monitoring of juvenile passage (e.g. using acoustic tagging technology) in and around the Ballard Locks and smolt passage flumes. Assess potential delayed juvenile mortality following outmigration of the Ballard Locks.
- Investigate the discrepancy between adult Chinook counts at the Ballard Locks and spawner counts to improve monitoring practices and our understanding of adult freshwater survival.
- Develop a life cycle model for WRIA 8 Chinook to evaluate which stages and habitats are most limiting and weigh the effects of restoration and management actions on recovery.

Impacts and Mitigation of Poor Water Quality and Disease on Salmon Health and Survival

Evaluate impacts from and interactions between high temperatures, low dissolved oxygen, disease, and contaminants. Evaluation should inform potential mitigation of the impacts identified. Monitoring needs include:

- Build off ongoing work of the Lake Washington Ship Canal Roundtable (link: [Phase 2.1 Report](#)) to identify and evaluate solutions that reduce impacts of high temperatures and low dissolved oxygen conditions on salmon in the Lake Washington Ship Canal.
- Evaluate salmon behavioral response to warm temperatures in the Ship Canal and response to potential solutions to mediate temperature impacts.
- Evaluate opportunities in the Sammamish River to reduce or eliminate thermal barriers, create cool water refugia, and enhance or protect existing groundwater resources.
- Evaluate the thermal influence and migration impacts of invasive aquatic vegetation in the Sammamish River to inform management strategies.

- Assess parasite-related disease magnitude and extent in WRIA 8 Chinook populations.

Impacts and Mitigation of Predation Risk

Develop, evaluate, and monitor mitigation strategies to reduce impacts of predators on juvenile salmon in priority areas, including south Lake Washington, south Lake Sammamish, and the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Monitoring needs include:

- Evaluate the magnitude of impact native and non-native piscivores have on juvenile Chinook survival. Improve understanding of how predators are distributed and where impacts are greatest, particularly where limited information is available, for example the lower Cedar River, lower Issaquah Creek, and Sammamish River.
- Evaluate effectiveness of fish removal efforts at reducing predation rates and increasing juvenile survival.
- Investigate the role of lake nearshore habitat conditions on predator assemblages or predation efficiency to inform management strategies, such as removal of invasive aquatic vegetation, shoreline habitat restoration, and predator suppression.
- Evaluate strategies to reduce artificial light at night (ALAN) impacts on salmon behavior, health, and predation risk. This could include alternative lighting technologies or approaches to encourage public behavior change.
- Evaluate strategies to reduce impacts of pinniped predation on adult and juvenile salmon at the Ballard Locks focusing on actions recommended at the 2023 Technical Workshop on Pinniped Predation on Salmon at the Ballard Locks (link: [Recommendations Report](#)).

Project Effectiveness and Monitoring to Support WRIA 8 Habitat Goals

Evaluate whether restoration projects or approaches achieve their intended outcomes for salmon and their habitats, especially when a novel approach is used or when outcomes are uncertain or not well understood. Monitoring needs include:

- Conduct an opportunity analysis to support the WRIA 8 goal to increase natural lake edge habitats south of Interstate 90 (I-90) in Lake Washington and throughout Lake Sammamish to support juvenile Chinook rearing and migration.
- Test the effects of different restoration techniques on water temperature and dissolved oxygen to identify effective practices and advance efforts to mitigate poor water quality.
- Evaluate use of constructed large wood features by juvenile Chinook salmon and other juvenile salmonids. Do certain types of large wood structures provide better salmonid rearing habitat than others?
- Evaluate the influence of Cedar River main-channel and off-channel habitat types on invertebrate prey availability and juvenile Chinook growth potential to inform salmon habitat restoration planning and design.

Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Technical reviewers will review, score, and rank proposals based on the following criteria.

Scoring Criteria	Max Points: 100
<p>Project Goals and Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project objectives are justified and align with at least one of WRIA 8’s high priority needs or a newly identified need. • Research questions are clearly stated and compelling. • The proposal builds upon past or ongoing research to address critical information needs. 	20
<p>Project Approach and Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The approach is clear and feasible. • The approach demonstrates strong scientific merit and is likely to achieve project objectives. • The proposal describes a data management plan to facilitate future uses and applications of findings. 	20
<p>Research Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application to Chinook recovery strategies is clearly stated. • The anticipated outcomes are likely to be useful and influence Chinook recovery efforts. • The proposal may also identify anticipated outcomes likely to be useful to other salmonid recovery efforts. 	25
<p>Project Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team is well qualified and has demonstrated success in similar work. • Roles and responsibilities within the project team are outlined and the proposal is collaborative. 	10
<p>Communication Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal includes a clear plan for sharing results with targeted technical and non-technical audiences. • Communication formats are identified that are likely to build awareness and understanding. • The strongest proposals will describe a thoughtful plan to interpret results and promote salmon recovery within identified WRIA 8 communities. 	15
<p>Scope of Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SOW is clear and complete. • The schedule is feasible for the approach described. • Expected deliverables are of high quality and address the project objectives and research questions. 	10