

Port of Olympia Sustainability Action Plan and Strategy



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Building a “Green” Port

Sustainability is not a passing trend for the Port of Olympia. It is a necessity, a way to add value to our stated mission of “Creating economic opportunities and building community for all of Thurston County through *responsible resource use*.” Sustainability planning looks different for every entity, but studies show that the most sustainable operations are also the most profitable in the long term¹. Becoming a sustainable port requires dedicated planning and long-term thinking and this action plan is our blueprint to get there. Global environmental and social challenges continue to grow, so it is vital that the Port of Olympia focuses as much on our social and environmental impact as we do on our business lines, integrating the two for maximum efficiency.

Our Path Toward Sustainability

Thinking toward the future, the Port is taking steps to sustainability by acknowledging and measuring our carbon footprint and promoting a more sustainable circular economy. This action plan and strategy address how we are:

- Monitoring and reducing our environmental impact, waste, and consumption
- Implementing more sustainable business practices, and
- Working toward our long-term sustainability vision and goals

A circular economy keeps materials and products in circulation for as long as possible, involves industrial processes and economic activities that are restorative or regenerative by design, and reduces material use. A circular economy is less resource intensive and recaptures “waste” as a resource to manufacture new materials and products.



¹ <https://instituteofsustainabilitystudies.com/insights/news-analysis/study-finds-sustainable-business-to-be-a-more-profitable-business/>

Our Sustainability Action Plan and Strategy

Below are the high-level items that define our sustainability motivations and environmental concerns, which have informed the Port's long-term sustainability strategy and vision.

Sustainability Motivations – Why does the Port Care about being sustainable?

1. Compliance with local, state and federal environmental regulations
2. Cost savings and efficient use of tax dollars
3. Community building – creating positive relationships
4. Continuity – long term resilience and adaptability

Top environmental and Regulatory Concerns

1. Air quality, especially impacts from cargo ships, terminal equipment, planes and cars
2. Water quality
3. Marine ecosystem health, especially impacts from noise, invasive species and pollution
4. Public access to open spaces

The Port's Sustainability Plan – Strategies for Success

1. Reduce environmental impacts through “green” infrastructure
2. Electrifying operations
3. Improving air and water quality
4. Protecting and increasing biodiversity, especially at the airport and in Budd Inlet

Long Term Vision for the Port

1. Electric fleet of vehicles; electric planes at the airport
2. Solar panels and other sources of renewable energy infrastructure on Port property
3. A healthy Budd Inlet providing for sustainable cargo shipments, providing good jobs
4. Clean air and water through protection of both

Tools to Get us There

The Port is not acting in a vacuum; rather, we need to take advantage of current and future services, resources and partnerships to be successful.

1. Federal Resources
 - a. US DOT Port Infrastructure Development Program
 - b. NOAA National Coastal Resilience Fund
 - c. US DOT PROTECT Grant
 - d. US EPA Pollution Prevention Grant and Clean Port Program
2. State and Public Resources
 - a. Washington State Recreation and Conservation grants
 - b. Washington DOT Port Electrification Program
 - c. Water Quality grants through the Washington Department of Ecology
 - d. Department of Ecology Remedial Action Grants
3. Partnerships
 - a. Watershed Resource Inventory Area 13
 - b. The Squaxin Island and Nisqually Indian tribes
 - c. Thurston Regional Planning Commission
 - d. Olympia Sea Level Rise Collaborative

Our Top Three Sustainability Goals

The following are the top three sustainability goals for the Port of Olympia. These offer more specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based details to our overall strategy.

1. Sea Level Rise (SLR) Response
 - a. Timeframe. The Port's Sea Level Rise Response Plan, shared by the City of Olympia and LOTT, outlines short, medium and long-term goals to address rising sea levels. The short-term goals are mostly complete. Mid-term goals take us through 2035, and long-term goals are expected by 2050, the term of the Plan.
 - b. Trackable Metrics. The Port and its collaborative partners will track:
 - i. Flooding frequency
 - ii. Rate of sea level rise
 - iii. Erosion rates, especially along East Bay
 - iv. Water quality
 - c. Supporting Activities
 - i. Using LiDAR to monitor erosion along East Bay

- ii. Installing backflow devices to prevent water from backing up onto streets
 - iii. Establishing sea level rise adaptation measures for the Peninsula through the master planning process
 - iv. Encouraging tenants to implement their own SLR and climate change responses
 - d. Desire Outcomes. The Port hopes that through the above activities and its participation with regional partners, the Olympia downtown will be resilient enough to survive the rising sea levels.
 - e. Economic Benefits. Retreating from downtown Olympia is not an option. Not only is the financial cost not feasible, but neither is the loss of habitat and the cultural significance of the area. Preserving and protecting the area will allow business to continue thriving, both in downtown proper and on the Port's property.
- 2. Decarbonization/Renewable Energy
 - a. Timeframe. The Port created a Fleet Decarbonization Analysis in 2025 to understand the current vehicle fleet and provide an approach to reducing greenhouse gasses. This is important because, per the Port's most recent greenhouse gas inventory, vehicles are one of the biggest sources of pollution. This Plan has three phases: Introduction, Normalization and Adoption. It is expected that Adoption will be completed ten years from initiation.
 - b. Trackable Metrics.
 - i. Carbon emissions
 - ii. Cost of carbon reduction
 - iii. Percentage of renewable energy from solar, wind and other sources
 - iv. Energy efficiency improvement over a baseline period
 - v. Energy savings; percentage of reduction in energy consumption
 - vi. Capital expenses for carbon reduction – investments
 - c. Supporting Activities
 - i. Regular greenhouse gas inventories
 - ii. Invest in electric vehicles/switch to renewable energy
 - iii. Reduce energy use through improvements to efficiency
 - iv. Prioritize and support public transport in the County
 - v. Improving energy efficiency of Port buildings
 - vi. Infrastructure improvements by the Port like LED lighting and rain gardens

- vii. Tenant Incentivization
 - “Green Leases” that embed sustainable and energy efficient clauses by aligning a landlord and a tenant’s interests
 - Collaborative target setting, working together to reduce emissions, which creates a sense of team
 - Incorporating tenant protections if the tenant does invest in decarbonization efforts
 - viii. Seek environmental certifications, such as Green Marine, to go above and beyond the minimum standards
 - d. Desired Outcomes. The obvious outcomes for the Port are a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, an increase in green infrastructure and reduced energy usage with a concurrent increase in economic support and output.
 - e. Economic Benefits. By supporting decarbonization and all the aspects, the Port will not only support “green” jobs but will also ensure a clean and healthy environment where local businesses can thrive. This could include lower energy costs.
 - 3. Supporting Regional Initiatives
 - a. Timeframe. This would be an ongoing effort, something the Port supports for the foreseeable future. Initiatives could be short-lived, like a community meeting to discuss our efforts, or long-term, like the activities listed in the Sea Level Rise Response Plan.
 - b. Trackable Metrics.
 - i. Define objectives and key performance indicators, such as job creation, capital investment, changes in green space and reductions in pollution levels
 - ii. Establish baselines and milestones
 - iii. Track progress of the objectives through timelines, budgets, and accomplishments
 - c. Supporting Activities
 - i. Cooperate in regional economic activities, such as the Thurston County Chamber.
 - ii. Promote cultural exchange with local community groups and tribes.
 - iii. Participating in local activities that promote sustainability
 - iv. Offer financial incentives, via grants, to local sustainability organizations

- v. Foster good political will with local and national leaders
- d. **Desired Outcomes.** The best outcome for the Port would be the involvement in and strengthening of local partnerships in environmental and climate sustainability. This will enable the multiple parties to work more efficiently and provide a synergistic impact that each entity may not realize offer on its own.
- e. **Economic Benefits.** By supporting regional initiatives, the Port can aid others while at the same time, incorporate their successes into Port operations. This, in turn, will improve the economic climate of the entire region.

Putting it all Together

This sustainability plan marks a critical step forward, transitioning your port toward a more resilient, environmentally responsible, and prosperous future. The successful implementation of these initiatives is not an end in itself but the foundation for an ongoing journey of progress. Realizing a truly sustainable port ecosystem requires collective action, involving not only our organization but also our partners, stakeholders, and the community. By prioritizing decarbonization, investing in green infrastructure, and enhancing operational efficiencies, we are not only mitigating our environmental impact but also ensuring our long-term economic competitiveness and resilience against future climate challenges. Moving forward, we remain dedicated to a process of continuous innovation, collaboration, and transparent reporting to ensure the Port continues to thrive as a vital economic engine while acting as a responsible steward of our environment and a positive force for our community.

