Task 4.3: How “No Net Loss” Will be Achieved Through the Concrete SMP

While “not net loss of shoreline ecological functions” is a laudable goal, it is challenging to measure the level of progress and achievement resulting from implementation of an improved Shoreline Master Program. In the case of the Town of Concrete the Master Program will further the goal of “no net loss” by providing:

- A comprehensive “ground truthed” inventory and analysis of shoreline resources establishing a baseline of existing conditions
- Map resources including designation boundaries which represent a substantial improvement over the existing Skagit County Shoreline Designation Map
- Policies and regulations that reflect existing shoreline conditions and anticipated future land uses based on adopted comprehensive plan and zoning designations
- Dimensional requirements which establish shoreline/riparian buffer requirements consistent with the Towns Critical Area Regulations
- Potential restoration sites which identify opportunities for a net improvement in shoreline ecological functions

Shoreline Inventory – The Shoreline Inventory and Characterization (December 2011) represents the first attempt at a comprehensive inventory of and analysis of the town’s shoreline resources. All shoreline areas were visually inspected and riparian functions were assessed and documented within each of five planning segments. The data gathered during the inventory represents the baseline condition from which “no net loss” is measured and is utilized as the basis for subsequent elements in the development of the SMP including shoreline environment designations and regulatory provisions.

Map Resources – The Town worked closely with Skagit County GIS to develop maps that clearly identify the area of SMA jurisdiction and establish shoreline environment designations which reflect the conditions identified under the inventory and are consistent with WAC 173-26-211. The official shoreline designation map represents a substantial improvement over the existing Skagit County Shoreline Designation Map. The small scale and obscure shoreline environment designations depicted on the County map have been source of frustration for both the Town and County.

Policies and Regulations – Policies and regulations developed in conjunction with the SMP reflect existing shoreline/riparian conditions identified through the inventory and are consistent with adopted comprehensive plan and zoning designations. Regulatory provisions are based on reasonably anticipated categories of shoreline use and development. Additionally, the SMP addresses specifically the existing hydropower development associated with the Lower Baker Hydroelectric facility operated by Puget Sound Energy.

Dimensional Requirements – In order to assure that riparian functions are adequately protected, shoreline/riparian setback/buffer requirements are based on the buffer standards of the Town’s adopted Critical Area Regulations (CARs). The CARs are adopted directly by reference and included in the SMP as Attachment B. While the SMP
reflects the riparian buffer standards of the CARs, variance provisions are included to reduce buffer widths under specified conditions provided that no net loss of shoreline/riparian functions is demonstrated.

Restoration Plan – A restoration plan was developed that provides guidance for restoration opportunities identified along the lower Baker River in the vicinity of the confluence with the Skagit River. The restoration plan incorporated the results of site visits and consultation with riparian ecologist, stakeholder groups and property owners. The plan identifies potential funding sources and provides timelines and benchmarks for accomplishing phased restoration activities. Restoration activities are anticipated to offset limited development impacts over time and help assure “no net loss”. The Restoration Plan is included as an appendix to the SMP.

The elements described above will not assure that “no net loss” is achieved, however, when considered in conjunction with the concerted efforts of an involved citizenry and local, state and federal regulatory programs, it may be possible to maintain shoreline ecological functions at the or, over the long term, above the baseline established in the inventory.