



Community-Driven Climate Resilience Projects Along the Lower Columbia River

1/15/25 EESI Congressional Briefing



PACIFIC
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Sea Grant
WASHINGTON



Lower Columbia
Estuary
Partnership



- Project context
- Methods
- Outcomes
- Lessons learned for effective coastal resilience work



Project goals

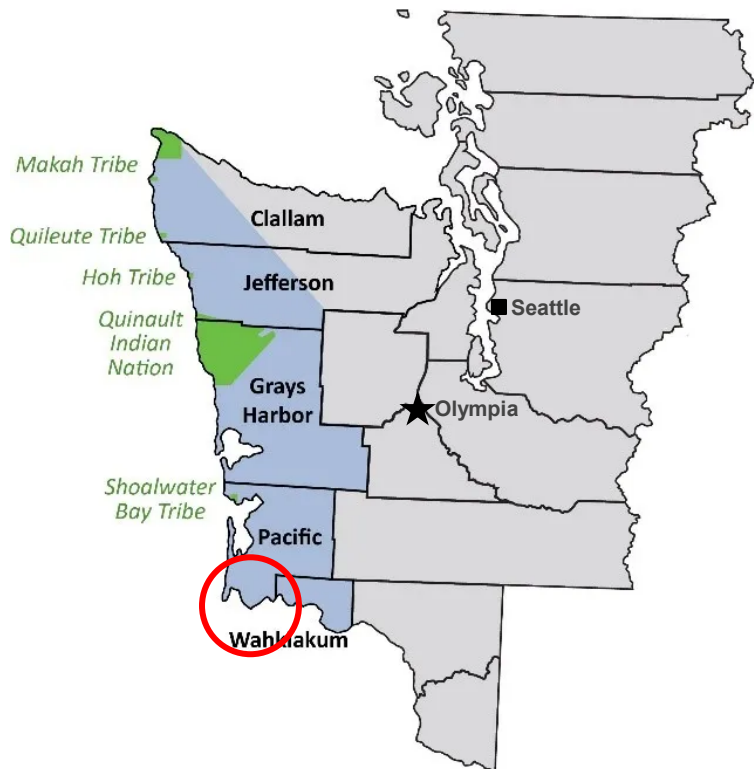
Recover lower Columbia River native habitats

Reduce impacts of flooding and climate change on communities and ecosystems

How? Proactive and collaborative planning:

- Engage community members in action-oriented workshops
- Identify multi-benefit nature-based projects to address issues
- Identify and assist local individuals to champion this work

Washington Sea Grant



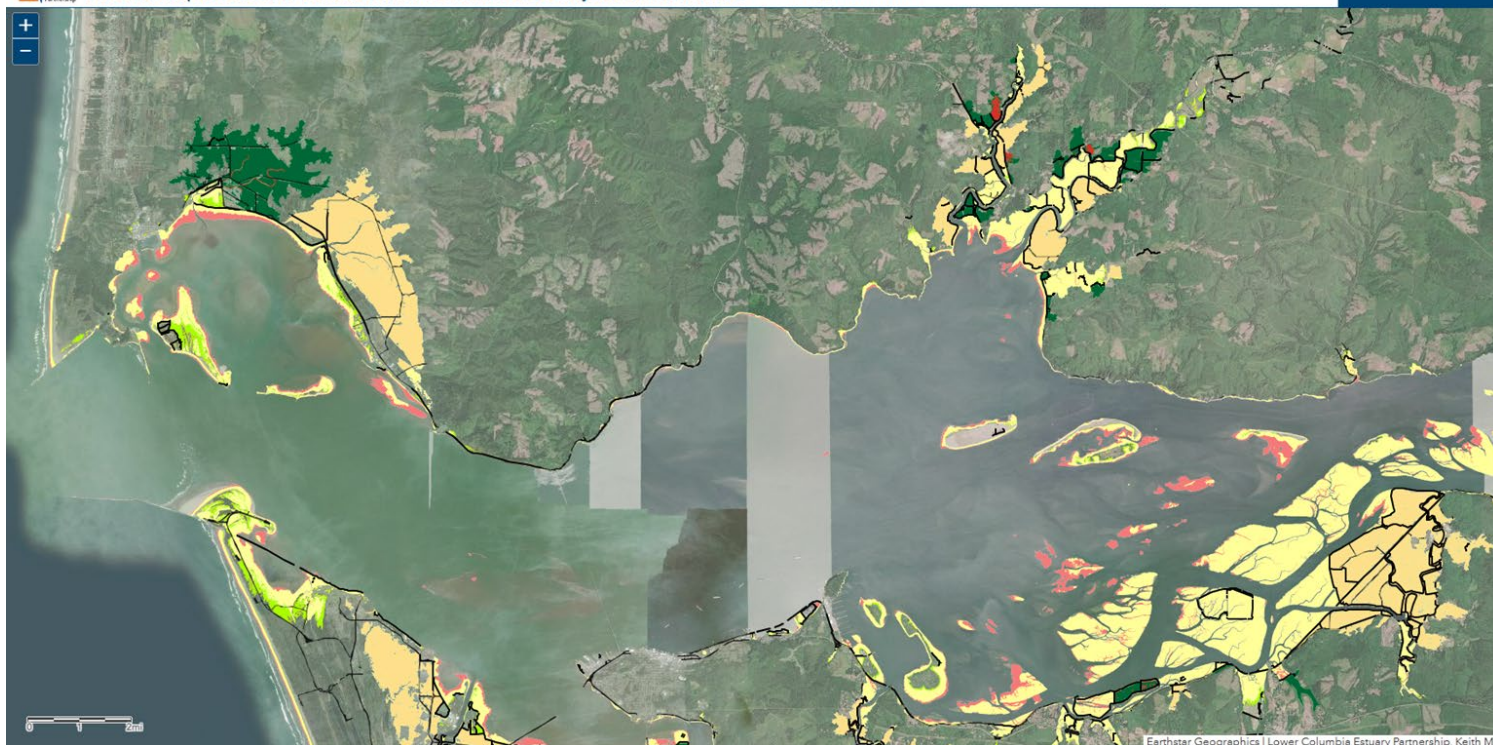
Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership



Lower Columbia
Estuary
Partnership



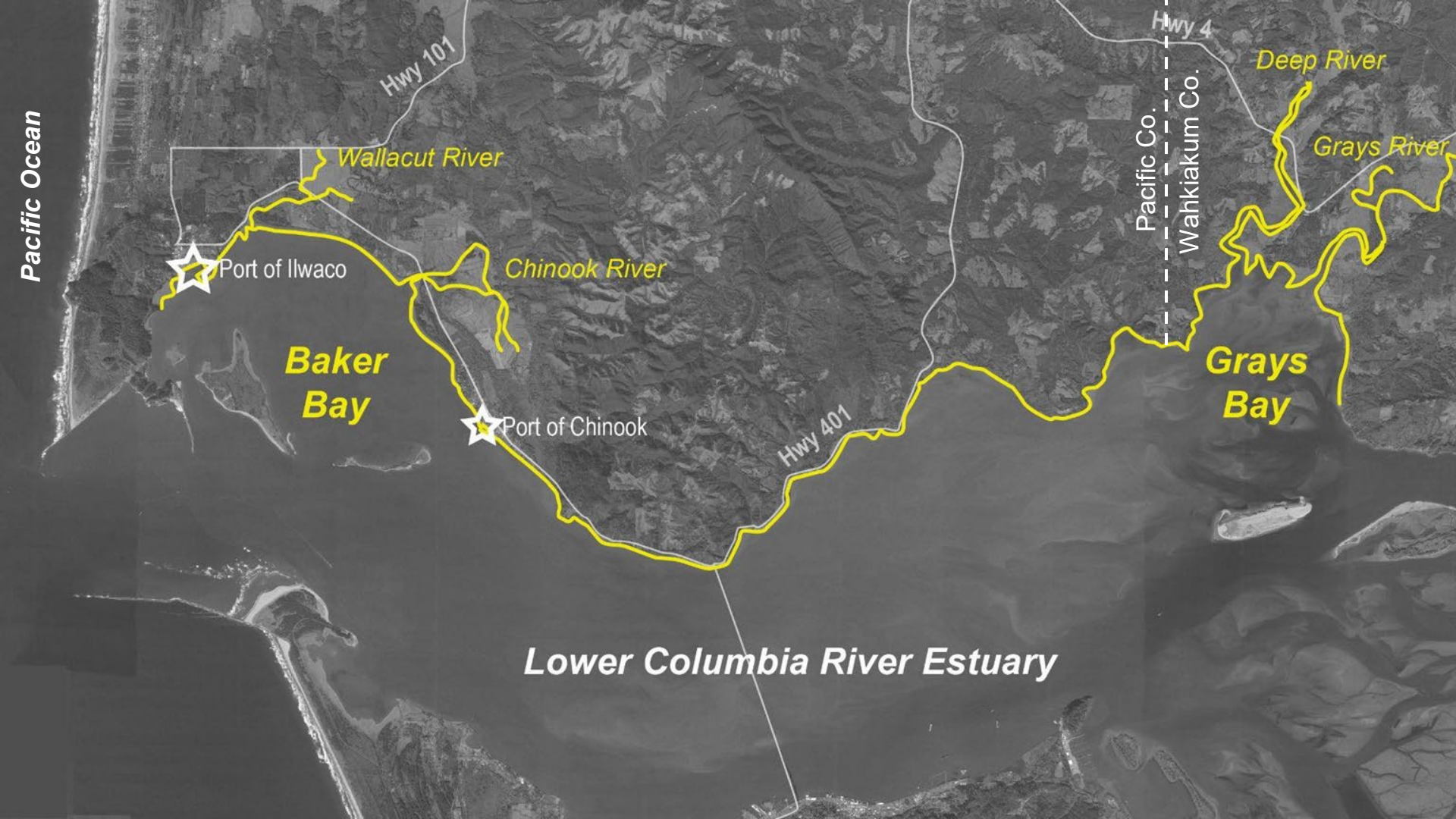
Predicted Impacts to lower Columbia River Wetlands Due to Projected Sea Level Rise with Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS



Earthstar Geographics | Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Keith Mar

Pacific Conservation District





Pacific Ocean

Hwy 101

Wallacut River

Port of Ilwaco

Baker Bay

Chinook River

Port of Chinook

Hwy 401

Lower Columbia River Estuary

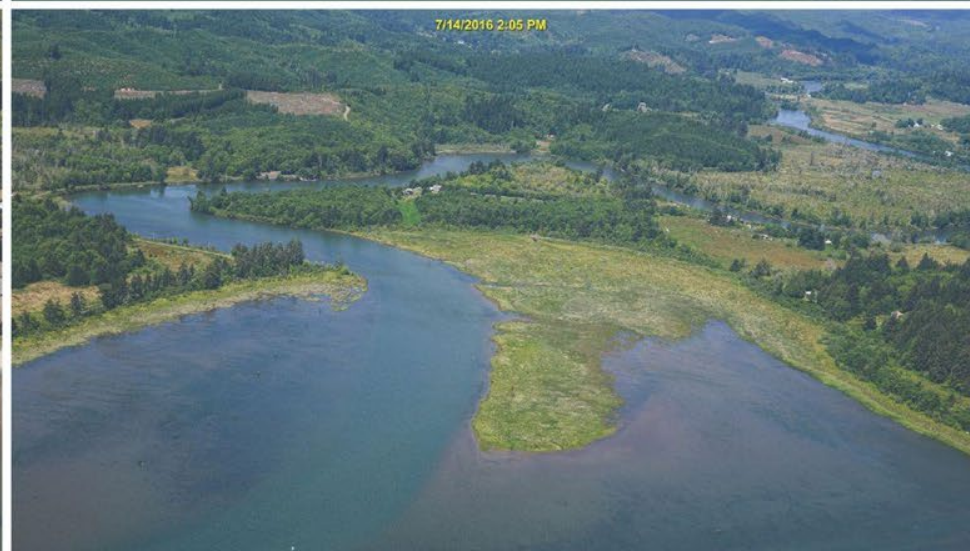
Pacific Co.
Wahkiakum Co.

Hwy 4

Deep River

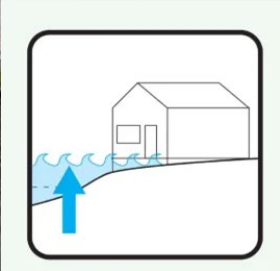
Grays River

Grays Bay





JESSIES
ILWACO FISH CO.



PORT OF ILWACO MARINA

Guy Glenn Jr.

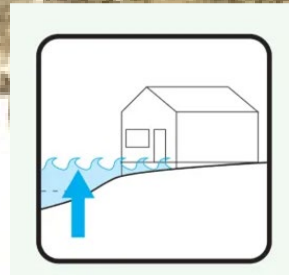
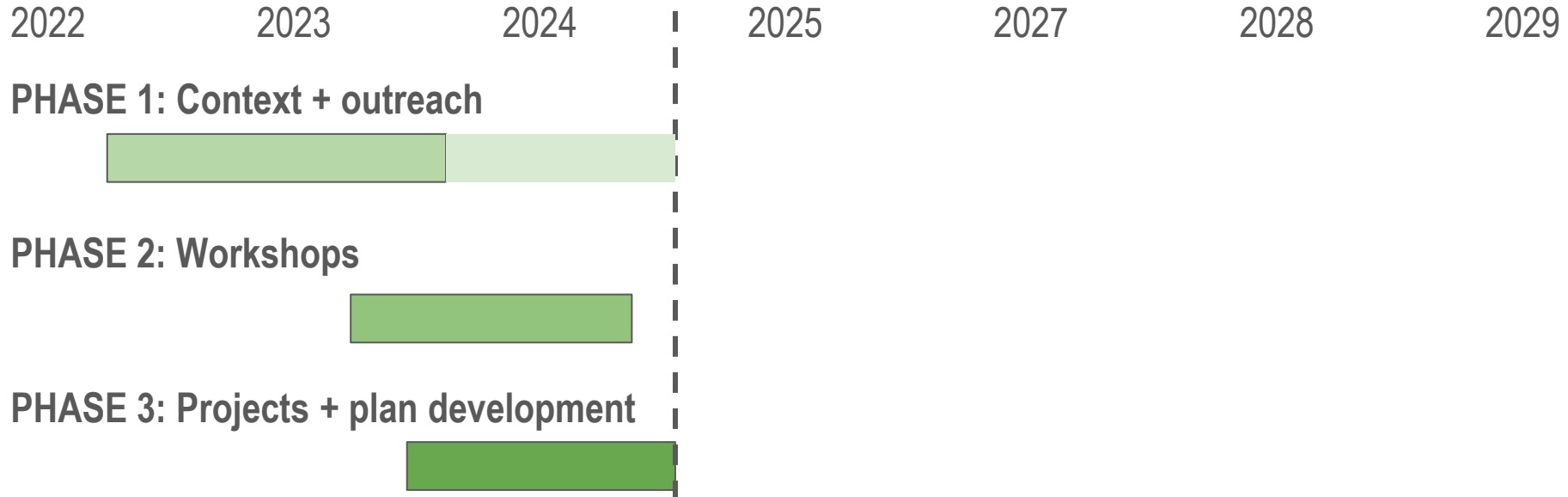


Image: Darrell Alexander,
Wahkiakum Eagle, 1/30 2020
Downriver Dispatches

Rosburg Hall

Methods



POST-PROJECT: next steps for community-developed projects

FUNDED PROJECTS

Future grants/projects TBD

WORKSHOP IS TAKING

- 1. Share: What are you concerned about with these impacts?
- 2. Map it with a sticky note or draw on map (speaker or table facilitator)
- 3. Go around group, note any themes or questions. Add more until time is called.

Climate Resilience
Water Quality
Water Quantity
Water Use
Water Infrastructure





Image: Mark Letham
Wahkiakum County Fire Protection District 3

Chinook shoreline erosion reduction and habitat enhancement

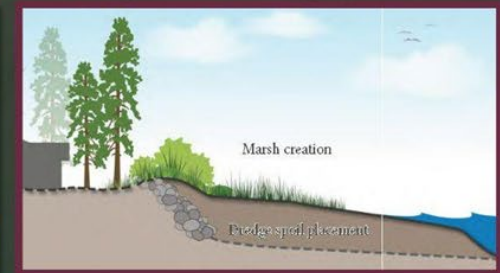
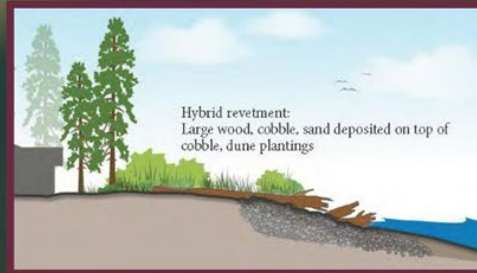
Ports of Chinook and Ilwaco (suggested project lead)

Pacific County
Pacific Conservation District
shoreline residents/businesses/landowners
Columbia Land Trust
CREST
WSDOT
WA State Parks
US Army Corps of Engineers

Provide ongoing in-water disposal site for local sediments dredged by Port of Chinook

Beach slope reduction, marsh creation, and/or hybrid dynamic revetment

Note project could extend east and west beyond extent of graphic



**Overtopping of riprap
along US 101, via WA Dept.
of Fish and Wildlife**

**Note Astoria-Megler Bridge in background
(the only route from Washington to Oregon
across the Columbia River's first 65 river miles)**



Grays River: watershed-wide coordination

Flood impacts reduction is tied to factors across the watershed. A regular action-oriented community forum can ensure that actions are synergistic with related efforts and communicated to interest parties (see Willapa Erosion Control Action Now - WECAN).

Studies, prototype projects, and information/insight-sharing will be critical to affecting large-scale change through smaller projects.

Key organizations by subregion:

(does not include all partners, or regulators)



All key organizations would be regularly involved in outreach, fundraising, project developments, and group coordination. Participation by agencies will ensure permissible work that builds relationships.

***As the only key organization in all subregions, Wahkiakum County is the logical lead coordinator. Subregion-specific leads may be different than the County.

Grays Bay:

Wahkiakum County***

Port District No. 2
US Army Corps
WA State
OR State

Lower Grays River:

Private landowners
Columbia Land Trust
Grays River Grange
Grays River Flood Control District
Wahkiakum Conservation District
Wahkiakum County***
Washington State DOT

Upper Grays River:

Timber landowners
Columbia Land Trust
Pacific County
Wahkiakum Conservation District
Wahkiakum County***
WA Dept. of Natural Resources
Cowlitz Tribe

Ilwaco and Chinook (Pacific County) upland housing development

Construct new homes upland
with focus on affordability

Seek assistance for property
owners (FEMA/others); transfer
development rights

Deconstruct structures as they
become floodprone and restore
to assist flood reduction

New emergency access road

More resilient location for hatchery,
opportunity for community event center,
safe haven for tsunamis, etc.

Locally-led working group would:

- bring together interested parties,
agencies, and funds
- assess feasibility
- develop pilot projects

Pacific County, City of Ilwaco (suggested project leads)

PUD #2
local floodplain residents/landowners
timber/upland landowners
housing organizations
private investors
local newspapers and media
WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Chinook Indian Nation





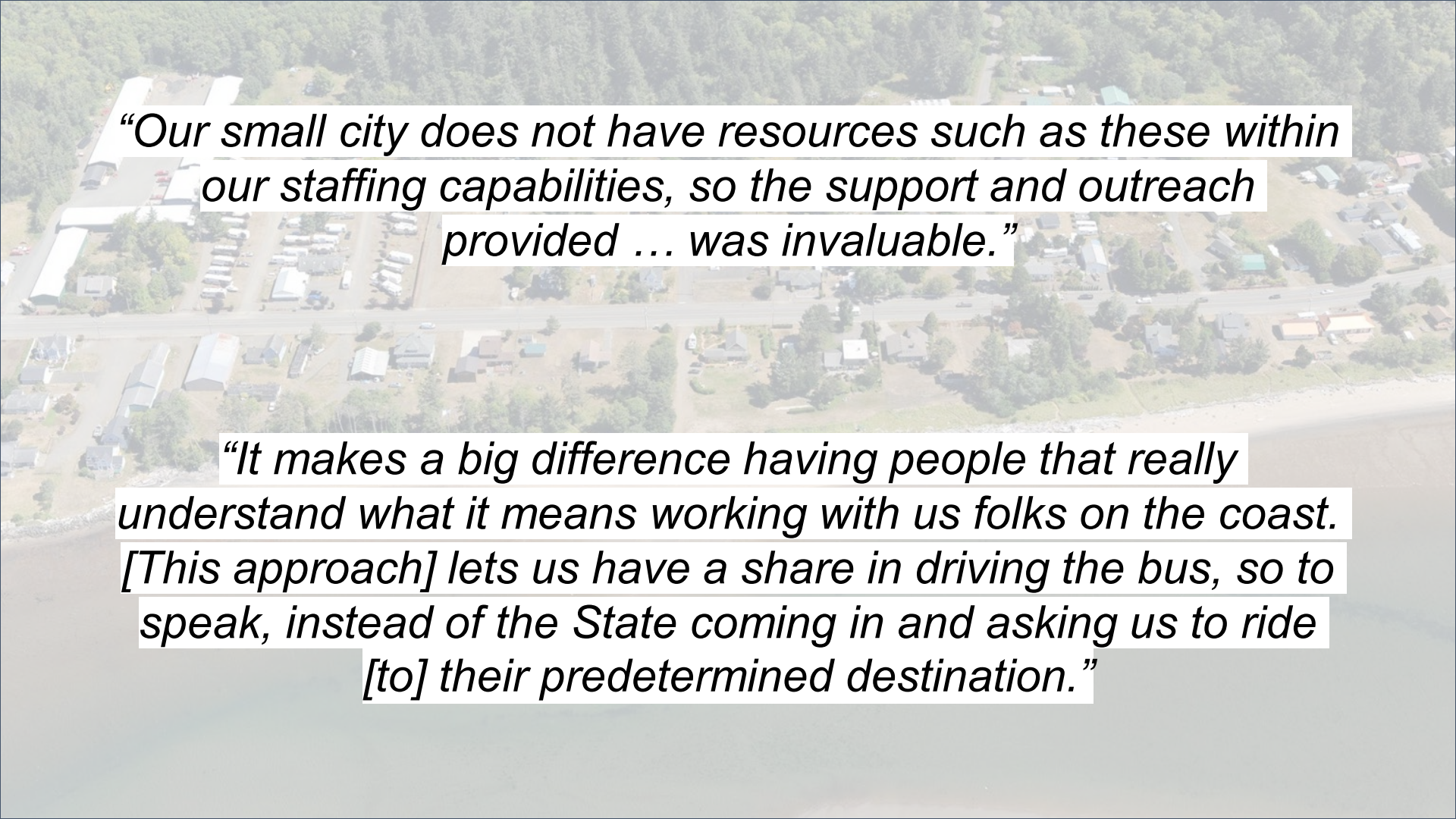
Lessons learned for effective coastal resilience work

- Effective adaptation and restoration requires **local collaboration/leadership**: ensure project dollars go directly to communities as much as possible
- Scale and complexity of this work will require multiple generations. Applied science, creative thinking, and trades **education can build tomorrow's local leaders for this work, and ensure grant dollars stay in communities**
- Complex **underlying issues require larger collaborations and funds**
- **Federal elected officials are necessary partners** to fund local work for USACE and authorize grant programs



Lessons learned for effective coastal resilience work

- Early-stage action-oriented **“Capacity building and planning”** grants can grow into many meaningful physical projects
- **Congressionally-authorized grant programs provide stepping stones for state program development:** this work built on years of federal, state, and local investments that are proving beneficial state-wide
- **Involvement of federally-recognized tribes increases likelihood of effective hazards and habitat resilience projects**

An aerial photograph of a coastal town. The image shows a mix of residential and commercial buildings, several large parking lots filled with cars, and a road that runs horizontally across the middle. In the background, there are dense green trees. In the foreground, a sandy beach and the ocean are visible. The text is overlaid on the image in white boxes with black text.

“Our small city does not have resources such as these within our staffing capabilities, so the support and outreach provided ... was invaluable.”

“It makes a big difference having people that really understand what it means working with us folks on the coast. [This approach] lets us have a share in driving the bus, so to speak, instead of the State coming in and asking us to ride [to] their predetermined destination.”

Thanks!

Report, projects, and news at: bit.ly/bay2bayresilience

Also accessible via: WAcoastalnetwork.com
MER.pacificcd.org

Jackson Blalock
Marine and Estuarine Resilience Program Manager
Pacific Conservation District
jblalock@pacificcd.org

