



## KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

KyMBER WALTMUNSON, County Auditor

# Fish Passage Restoration: Opportunities to Increase Impact, Transparency, and Collaboration

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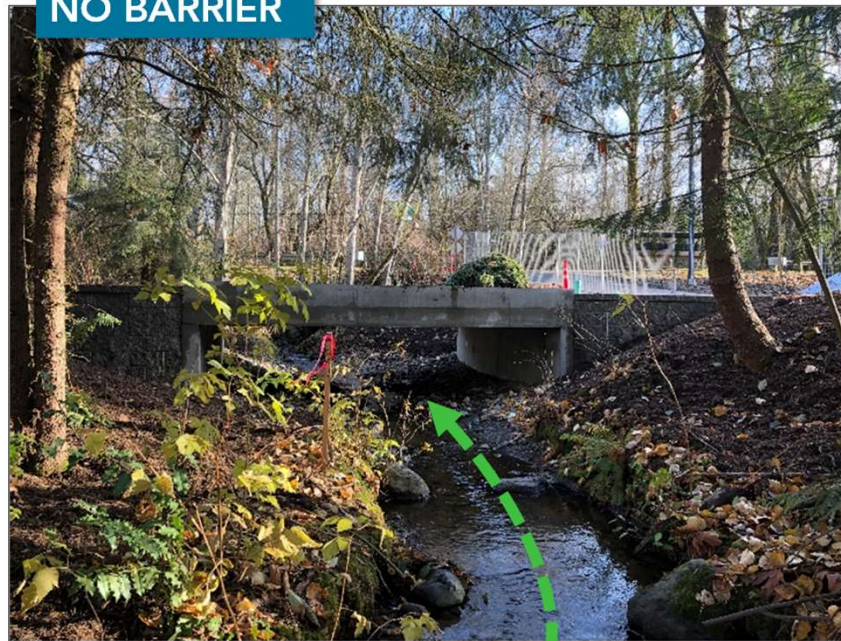
# Barriers block salmon from habitat

**BARRIER**



 **PASSAGE  
BLOCKED**

**NO BARRIER**



 **PASSAGE  
CLEARED**



## Program removes barriers

- Accelerate investments in barrier removal
- Open “the best habitat for the most fish as quickly as possible”



## Key takeaways



Project order not aligned with public goal



Performance measures do not measure habitat gain



Consultation with local tribes could be expanded



# Locating the best habitat

## Prioritization model

- Developed by consensus
- Scored 900+ barriers
- Identify barriers blocking most and best habitat

BARRIERS PRIORITY SCORES



Removing few barriers give big benefits



# Sequencing out of alignment with goals

ASSET MANAGEMENT NEEDS



WHETHER A  
BARRIER HAD PRIOR  
APPROPRIATIONS



10-YEAR  
WORKPLAN





# Barrier removal types

## Habitat-focused projects

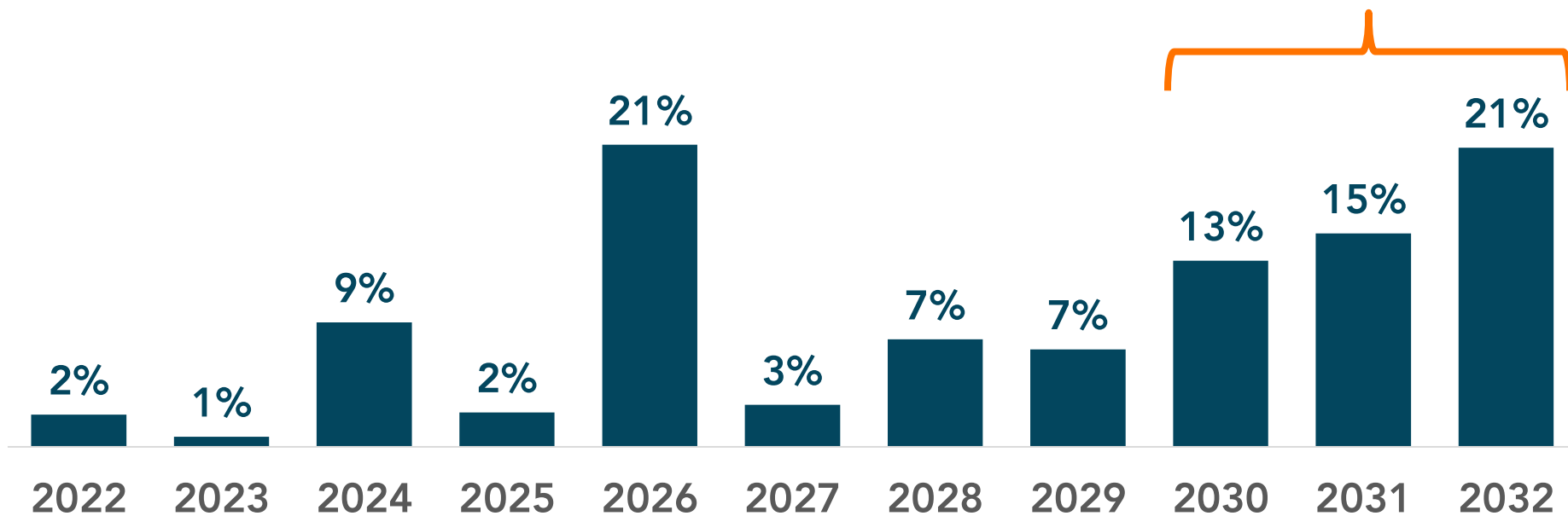
- Top 50 priority scores,
- Contribute to 50% habitat gain, or
- Downstream barriers

## Infrastructure-focused projects



# Early years are infrastructure focused

Almost 50% of total habitat gain comes in the last three years of the workplan. Design for these projects does not start until 2026.



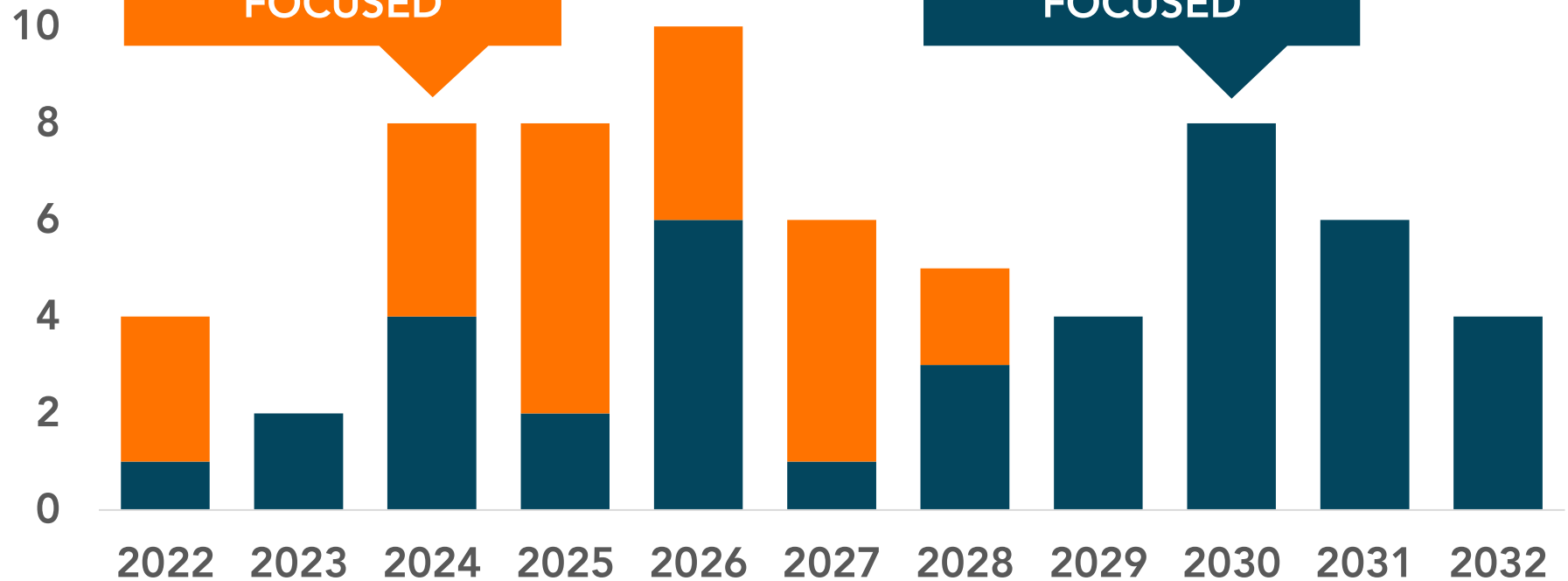


# Early years are infrastructure focused

NUMBER OF SITES

INFRASTRUCTURE-FOCUSED

HABITAT-FOCUSED



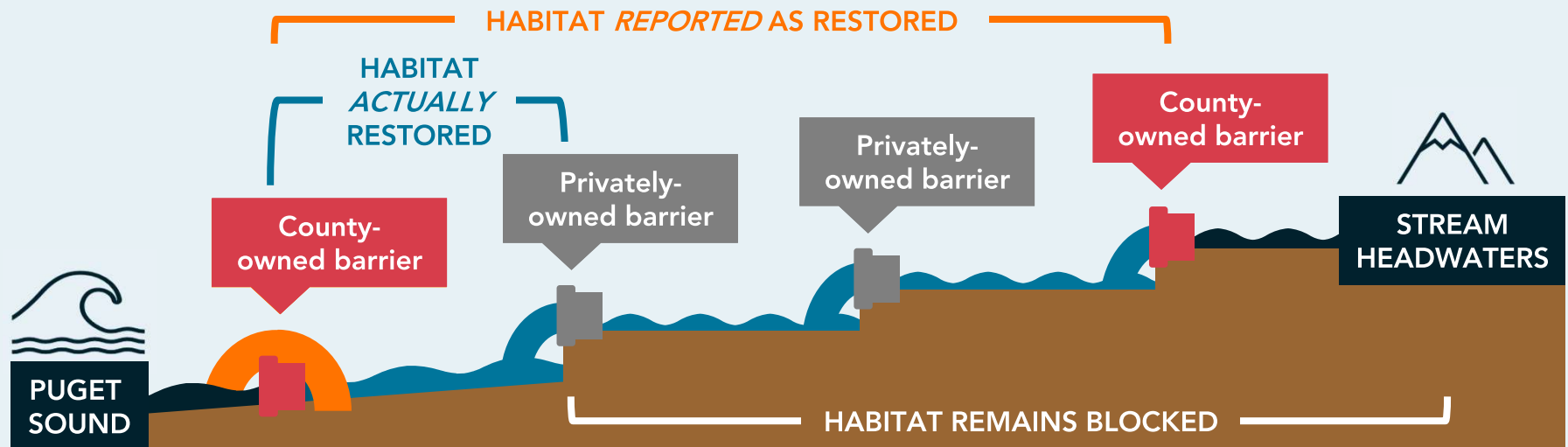


# Recommendations

- Develop a strategic plan
- Update and ensure workplan is aligned with strategic plan
- Ensure public documents accurately reflect program



# Program measures overstate impact





# Recommendation

Develop performance measures reflecting output and outcome



# Collaboration with tribes

- Local tribes have treaty rights to take salmon
- Courts: barriers owned by State infringe on rights
- County is committed to honoring tribal treaty rights



"Coho Spawning"  
Bureau of Land Management Oregon & Washington





## Improve consultation with local tribes

- Positive about the program's approach overall
- Lack of involvement in workplan development
- Input at time of project permitting insufficient





# Expand consultation to increase success

## Project success:

- Shorter permitting timelines
- Letters of support for grants





# Expand consultation to increase success

## County priorities:

- Partnering across governments
- Ensure those affected by decisions provide input







# Recommendations

- Develop plan for ongoing consultation on workplan and individual projects
- Ensure consultation throughout a project lifecycle





## Key takeaways



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# Thank you

Full report available online at  
[KingCounty.gov/Auditor](https://www.kingcounty.gov/Auditor)

Questions?