

Winslow Tap transmission rebuild

Off-site mitigation fact sheet

Puget Sound Energy is committed to providing safe, reliable electric service on Bainbridge Island. We are investing in a collection of energy infrastructure projects that will make the Island's electric grid more reliable and resilient. The Winslow Tap transmission line rebuild project will replace some existing poles and equipment, install new wire and improve safety and access along the corridor. This work will improve reliability by reducing the frequency and duration of power outages for about 4,500 customers on the south end of the Island.

Wetland and wetland buffer mitigation

Throughout project design and construction planning, PSE has identified opportunities to minimize the impacts of the Winslow Tap transmission line rebuild as much as possible. Where impacts to wetlands and buffers are unavoidable, PSE is required to provide compensatory mitigation. PSE's mitigation activities will be consolidated on a location outside of the managed transmission corridor that will be protected for conservation. In considering options for mitigation, we identified an opportunity with a trusted, respected, local community organization with extensive experience in science-based conservation — the Bainbridge Island Land Trust.

Accelerating conservation work

The Land Trust is the leading conservation organization on Bainbridge Island, working to protect and steward its natural environment for the benefit of all. To achieve its conservation goals, the Land Trust utilizes a science-based, landscape-scale approach. They work to safeguard lands having significant, or potentially significant, conservation value such as shorelines, streams, wetlands, forests, tidelands and unique plant and animal habitat networks. These lands provide ecosystem values such as watershed protection, scenic vistas and open spaces.

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LAND TRUST**

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Prior to PSE approaching the Land Trust about mitigation opportunities, the organization had identified and acquired the 10-acre forested and wetland parcel on the North Fork Manzanita Creek directly north of the Land Trust's Miller-Kirkman Preserve in the Little Manzanita Bay Watershed. This acquisition protected a 787-foot stretch of the creek and a rich wetland complex. Acquiring this property aligned with the Land Trust's conservation values and is consistent with their conservation strategy to expand existing protected areas by connecting wildlife and stream corridors. After extensive discussion, the Land Trust and PSE determined that enhancement of wetlands and buffers on this 10-acre parcel was consistent with the Land Trust's restoration and stewardship vision for the property and would also satisfy PSE's mitigation requirements.

When permit approvals from the City of Bainbridge Island are received for the Winslow Tap rebuild, PSE will work with the Land Trust to implement the proposed enhancement of this property. PSE's planned activities will provide valuable enhancement to degraded areas on a portion of the 10-acre site to ensure long-term conservation success. This holistic approach exceeds the City's compensatory mitigation requirements. PSE is grateful for the opportunity to work with the Land Trust to advance their conservation mission while ensuring we can continue to provide safe, dependable power for years to come.

Frequently asked questions

Why did PSE reach out to Land Trust for this mitigation?

PSE began looking for an off-site mitigation location in 2020 with an understanding that suitable properties may be limited. Our primary goal was to find an available property that was in need of enhancement, would complement current conservation strategies on the Island, and could be conserved in perpetuity. Approaching the Land Trust was a logical choice because they are an organization with a proven track record of success in land conservation and restoration on the Island. Through collaboration with the Land Trust, it became clear that PSE's required mitigation could be implemented within the 10-acre North Fork Manzanita Creek property in a way that aligned with the Land Trust's vision for the property while ultimately enhancing the same watershed as a portion of the Winslow Tap rebuild project.

What is compensatory mitigation?

In this case, mitigation refers to minimizing the environmental effects of a project to wetlands, streams and their regulatory buffers. Wetland mitigation usually occurs in a sequence of steps or actions that include avoidance and minimization. Compensatory mitigation is one of the last steps in the mitigation sequence that occurs when unavoidable impacts to wetland or buffer functions are offset by creating, restoring, enhancing or preserving other wetlands and buffers. PSE is proposing to enhance wetlands and buffers on the Land Trust-owned property as compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts during construction activities within the Winslow Tap transmission line corridor.

What project is this mitigation associated with?

PSE is working to replace the existing Winslow Tap transmission line that has been in service since the 1960s. The Winslow Tap transmission line is currently the only transmission line delivering power to the Winslow Substation and is prone to tree-related power outages. By replacing aging infrastructure, installing gravel access to some poles in cross-country areas and managing vegetation along the corridor, we will reduce the number and duration of outages, serving customers reliably into the future.

What work is PSE doing that requires mitigation?

As a part of replacing the existing Winslow Tap transmission line, PSE will be replacing some existing poles and equipment, installing new wire, managing vegetation along the corridor as well as installing new gravel accesses to allow for faster restoration and safer working conditions for crews in the cross country portion of the corridor. A portion of this work will take place in wetlands and wetland/stream buffers.

What will the mitigation and restoration look like?

PSE's proposed wetland and buffer enhancement activities at the Land Trust-owned property include invasive species removal and installation of over 10,000 native trees, shrubs and emergent plants covering over five acres of the property. The improvements are holistic and are designed to improve the ecological function of the entire site while satisfying PSE's mitigation requirements. To ensure success for the long term, PSE will monitor the mitigation area relative to performance standards for a period of seven years. The enhanced areas will be more resilient to a changing climate and will provide improved habitat for wildlife and aquatic species, including species diversity and shading for surface water that flows to the North Fork Manzanita Creek.

What is the timeline for implementing this mitigation?

Installation activities at the mitigation site will begin once PSE receives all necessary permit approvals from the City of Bainbridge Island.