

Life as an ESA Liaison: A model to be repeated?

Logan Kent and Sara Tilley | Northwest Seaport Alliance | ESA Liaisons

Jennifer Lang | WSDOT Local Programs | ESA Liaison

WPPA Environmental Seminar
September 25, 2026



Federal Staffing Challenges

Capacity Impacts

30% of workforce and **50% of supervisors** lost at NMFS

Significant attrition at USFWS with fewer terminations

Hiring freeze January 2025 - October 2025

NMFS Tiering of Work

T1 EO and emergency consultations

T2 Programmatic implementations, high-profile individual consultations

T3 Restoration, conservation and recovery work, majority of individual Section 7 consultations

Liaison Model



Ports Liaisons

- Ports set our priorities
- Pre-consultation coordination and technical assistance



Other Liaisons

- King County, WSDOT, WSF, Sound Transit, US Navy
- Federal Agencies

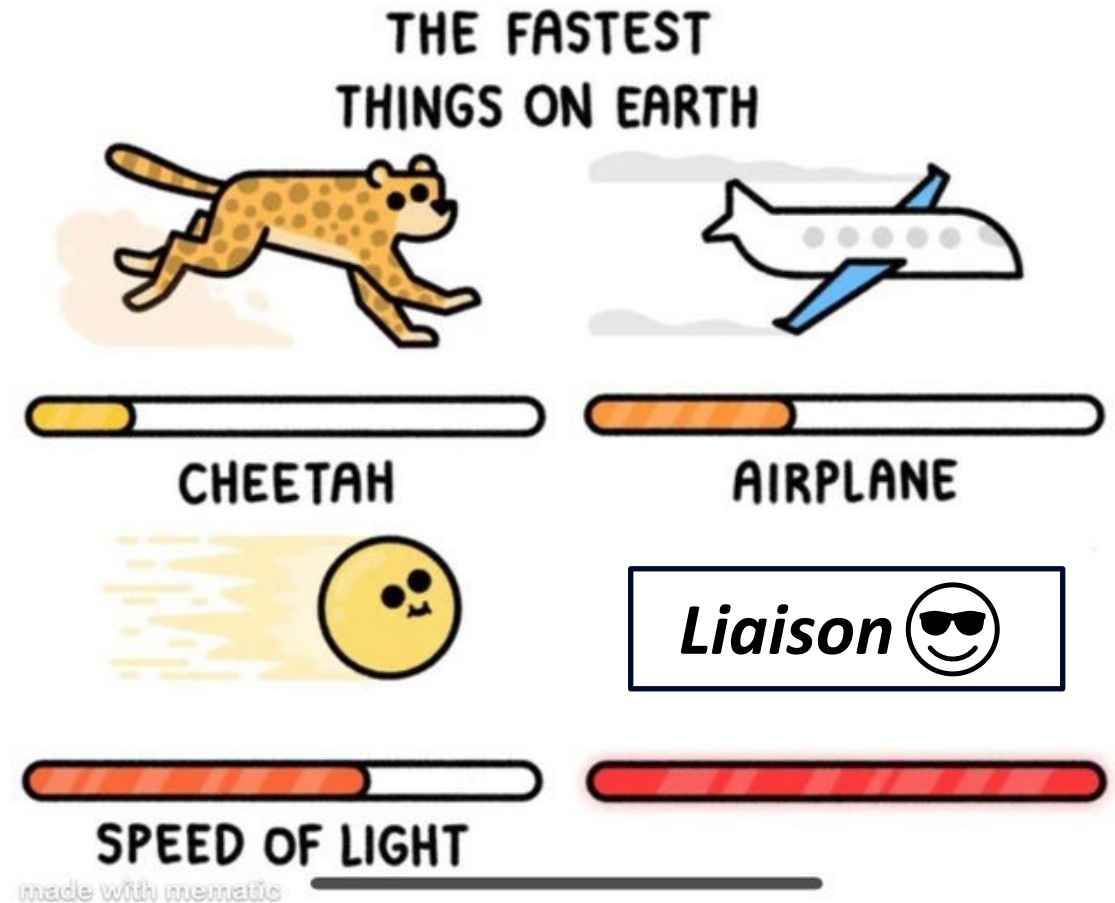


Liaisons Provide

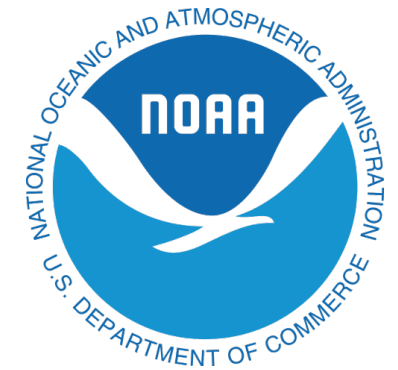
- Pathway to branch supervisors and NMFS/USFWS teams
- Significantly reduced consultation timeline

Reduction in Consultation Timeline

- On average, liaisons cut consultation timelines by about 1 year
- With staffing constraints and streamlining tools, savings can approach 2 years



Liaisons - Species



Photos courtesy of NOAA Fisheries, Thomas Quinn and WDFW

Liaisons - Species



Photos courtesy of USFWS

NWSA Liaison - Projects



Version 1.0, December 2024; Version 1.2, July 2026
Ports of Seattle and Tacoma Comprehensive Repair and Maintenance Programs

Port Calculator Rationale

Prepared for Port of Seattle and Port of Tacoma

Port of Tacoma & Port of Seattle

- USFWS-led ESA credit umbrella conservation bank
- Comprehensive Mitigated Maintenance and Repair program and Port Calculator

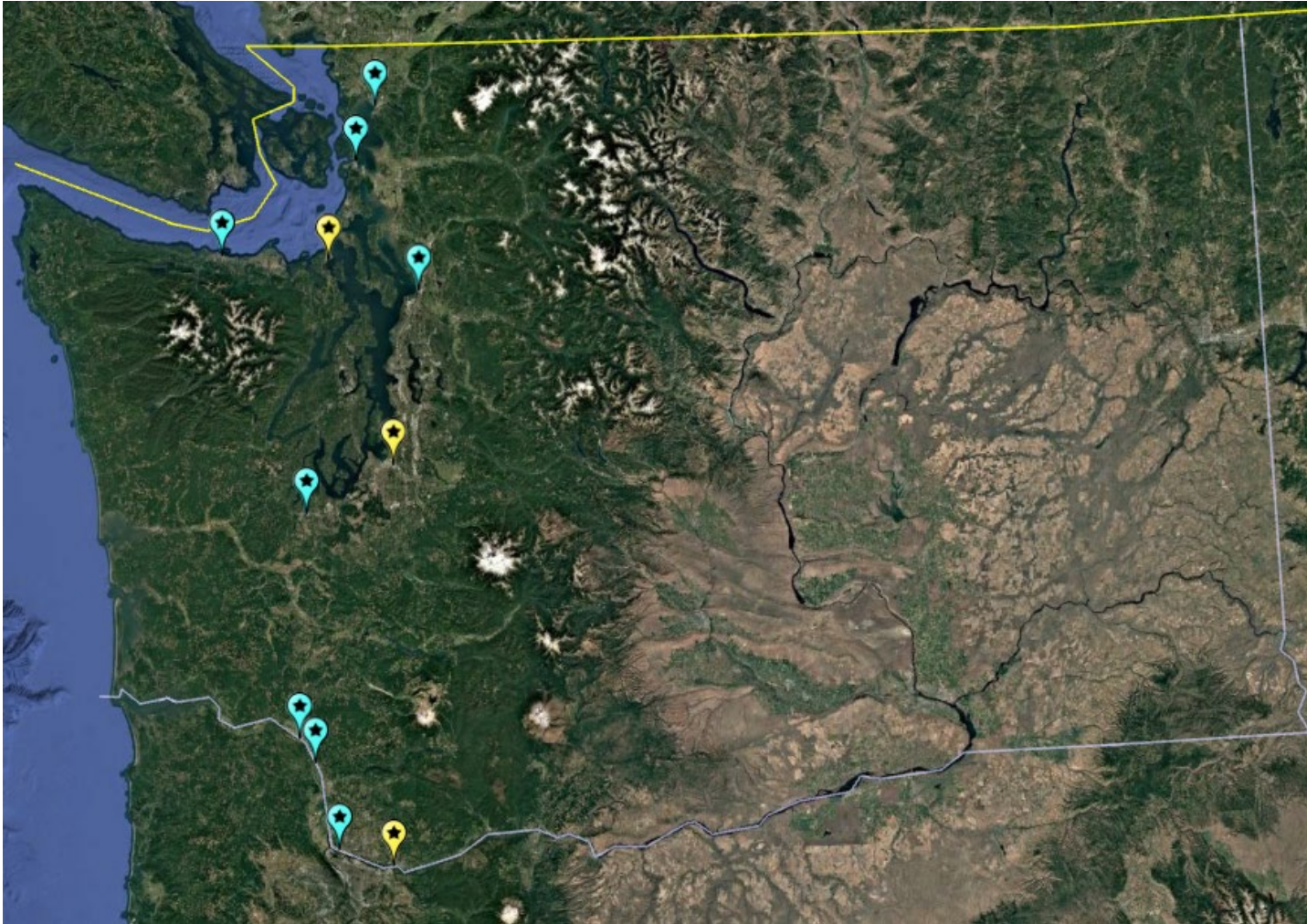
Port of Tacoma

- Blair Waterway Deepening Program
- East Commencement Bay Habitat Opportunity
- Wapato Creek Culvert

Port of Seattle

- SEATAC Sustainable Airport Master Plan

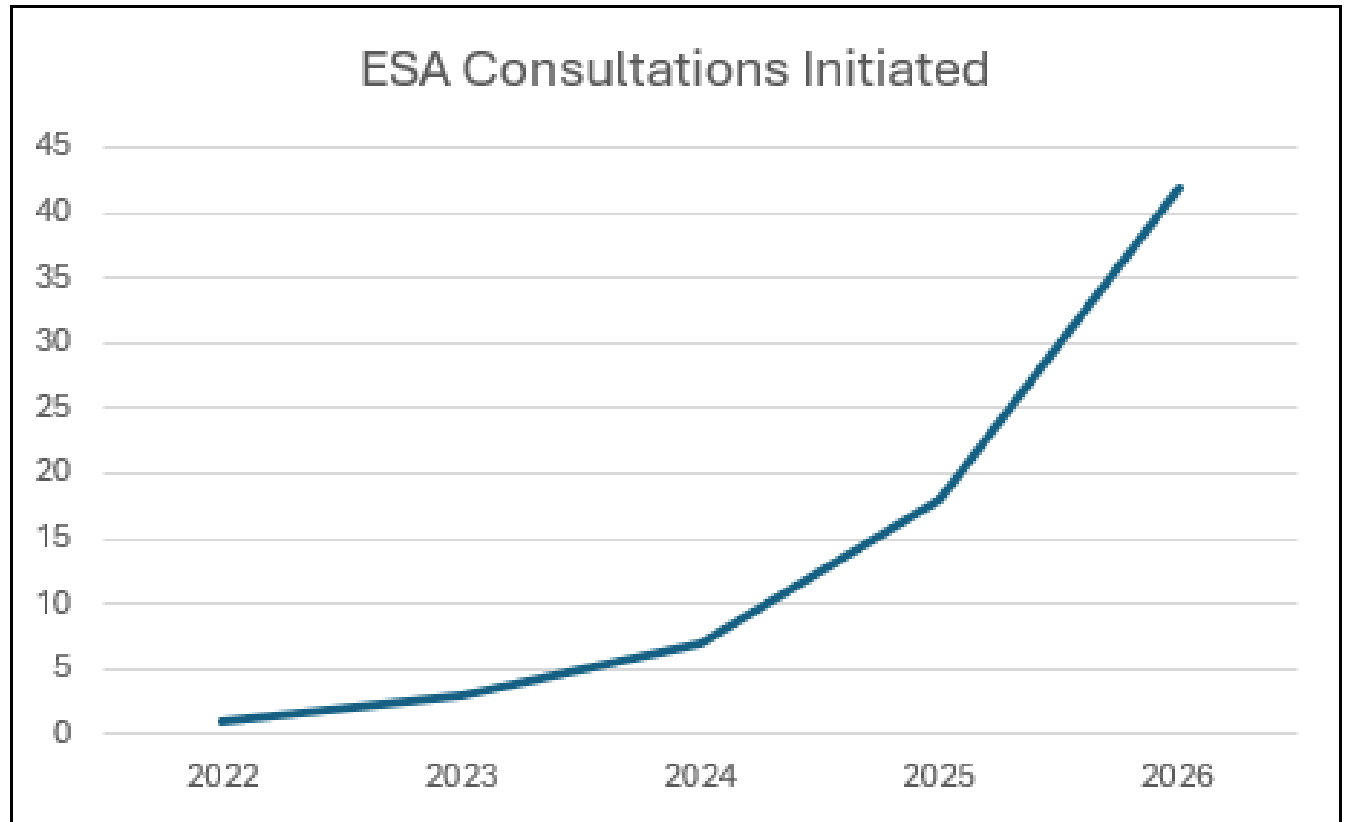
Districts Liaison - Projects



- Larger geography, capacity for additional ports
- Clearing the backlog
- Larger efforts
 - Expanded use of port calculator
 - Advance mitigation

WSDOT Local Programs

- Cities, Counties, Ports, Tribal governments, FHWA funded
 - Statewide, many unique customers
- Address WSDOT LP project backlog
- All individual Section 7 Consultations
- What's next:
Programmatic implementation





Thank you

Questions & Discussion



Logan Kent, Sara Tilley, Jennifer Lang

lkent@nwseaportalliance.com, stilley@nwseaportalliance.com, jennifer.lang@wsdot.wa.gov