

Seawall Scientific Habitat Enhancement Study Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Seawall?

The Alaskan Way Seawall was built between 1916 and 1936 to support rail and road access to the waterfront piers. Over time, the seawall has become increasingly worn and has experienced deterioration from corrosion and marine borer activity. It has exceeded its design life and needs to be replaced to properly protect Alaskan Way the infrastructure it supports.

Why does the seawall need to be replaced?

The original design did not account for earthquakes. One of the two primary vulnerabilities of the seawall is its inability to resist loads associated with liquefaction of the loose soils on which it is constructed. The second vulnerability is significant damage to the timber platform from a variety of marine borers called Gribbles and Toredos.

Why is SDOT installing habitat panels to the Seawall when the seawall needs to be replaced in the next few years?

SDOT is currently installing habitat panels and troughs as a part of a study to determine the seawall design that is most effective at encouraging marine life. SDOT intends to use the findings of this study to better design the new Seawall face so that it will better sustain marine life and improve the ecological function along the waterfront.

How will these panels improve the habitat for young salmon and marine life.

When the Seawall was constructed, the sloping shoreline was permanently altered. The goal of this study is to create habitats similar to a natural environment young salmon and other marine life need for refuge and rearing while traveling through our waterways.

How is the University of Washington involved in this project?

The University of Washington will monitor the panels and troughs and sample for sessile invertebrates, algae and epibenthic invertebrates and conduct overwater observations of fish in the area over a two year period.

What will the panels look like?

The panels are five feet wide and seven feet, six inches tall. The panels will have three different shapes; flat, stepped (wedge) and sloping (fin). Each shape would have two textures that will be tested; a rough finished concrete and concrete formed like natural rock.

Where will the panels be installed?

18 panels total will be installed along the seawall with six at each of the three locations, at Clay Street, Vine Street, and between pier 62 and the Seattle Aquarium.

Will the panels be visible from land?

The panels will be installed at intertidal levels so they will not be visible when the tides are high. The panels will be visible when the tides are lower, between +7.5 and 0 tidal

elevation. To see the panels you will need to walk out on a pier and look east toward the seawall face.

How will the panels be installed?

The panels are being bolted to the seawall and are being set in place with a track hoe from the street during low tides.

Is it safe to install these on the Seawall?

Yes the weight of the panels is very small and will not cause any additional risk to the seawall.

How long will installation take?

Installation will require up to 2 months of work in and out of water to attach the habitat panels and troughs to the seawall at the three test sites.

Will parking be impacted in the area during construction?

Contractors will use several parking spaces on the west side of Alaskan Way at each site for the construction staging. During some phases of the construction more parking restrictions will be necessary for lane closures. These are needed when the panels are unloaded and lowered down to the Seawall and during the drilling operation north of Clay Street.

Will the Installation cause noise in the area?

There may be some evening noise. This noise should be minimal and will likely not be noticeable. A noise variance has been granted for the work to occur during the evenings.