

## **Hood Canal Action Area (Port Hadlock)**

March 5, 2008

### **Community Conversation Summary**

#### **Meeting Purpose**

The Puget Sound Partnership held a community conversation in Port Hadlock on March 5, 2008 and invited the public to share their comments and concerns about protecting and restoring Puget Sound. This public event provided citizens an overview of the Puget Sound Partnership and the Action Agenda process, reviewed highlights from the afternoon workshop discussion, and concluded with an open community discussion.

#### **Meeting Overview**

Approximately 30 people attended the conversation from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Inn at Port Hadlock.

#### **Meeting Summary**

Angie Thomson, meeting facilitator, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. Angie introduced Chris Townsend, Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership, who presented an overview of the Puget Sound Partnership. Chris described the Action Agenda process, the Puget Sound status and threats analysis, and the next steps for the Partnership. Chris gave an overview of the afternoon workshop, some of the threats discussed and highlights of the criteria discussed.

Angie facilitated an open discussion guided by these four questions:

- What do you love about Puget Sound?
- What are the biggest problems that are endangering the health of the Sound?
- Which problems should receive the most attention?
- What actions should we focus on first?

The following is a list of questions and comments heard. Answers from Partnership staff are indicated with italics.

#### What do you love about Puget Sound?

- Trees, forest.
- I enjoy sailing.
- Eating salmon.
- The abundance of life.

- Porpoises and orcas.
- Natural, undeveloped open space.
- Boats.
- Looking at the water, and sitting and listening to the water.
- Walking my dog on the water.

What are the biggest problems that are endangering the Sound?

- Population pressure, our consumptive lifestyle and how we use our resources. It's not just the number of people; it's what those people are doing.
- Industrial pollution is a huge problem. The Port Townsend Paper Corporation puts a huge amount of toxins into the air. Air pollution is a huge problem for the Sound.
- I am an employee of the paper mill and we've been here since 1927. The water we release into the Sound is treated. We are in compliance with all the permits to operate. *Air quality does affect water quality. There are lakes that are so polluted, people can't eat fish. The Partnership has been looking at the air quality issues.*
- I would like to clarify some misinformation about the mill. The Department of Health is the regulatory agency for the mill. We test every load of ash that goes up the hill to the site and we do groundwater testing around the site. Ecology has brought in their solid waste technical experts to make sure we're meeting all the rules and regulations.
- I'm a strong supporter of the mill and the work that it brings to the community. I am concerned about the pyramid of a questionable substance near the mill. I think that the science exists to test this substance but it is not being tested because the mill doesn't want it done. There needs to be some accountability.
- Part of the problem is a growing number of affluent people. More of us can afford to live in this area and can afford to have large houses and large amounts of land.

- I think bureaucracy is a problem. I've asked the DOT to stop mowing an area because it's a habitat and a benefit to stormwater runoff but they keep mowing.
- Non-point source pollution is a problem and is having a cumulative impact. We need to change human behavior.
- I'm curious how much pollution the boat yard contributes and if that might be a problem. *Marine pollution is definitely something that needs to be looked at.*
- I think industrialization which leads to acid rain is one of the biggest problems. I've seen high levels here that are equivalent to industrial areas on the East Coast.
- The biggest problem is enforcement. It takes money and political will. *Bill Ruckelshaus, Leadership Council Chair, is big champion of enforcement. You will see enforcement priorities come from the Leadership Council.*
- We have a problem with diminishing soft substrate beaches. The bluffs are eroding and several fish species need the habitat to exist. We've got to stop armoring of the shorelines.
- The problem does not stem from one problem but lots of little problems. This is a global issue and we need to address the big picture instead of little problems. People are the biggest problem. We need to change people's behaviors.
- It isn't just the people who live on the water. It's the whole watershed. If you live up the creek and you do something wrong, the whole Puget sound suffers. *That's why our action areas go far past the Sound.*
- Mines are also a problem for the Puget Sound.
- Wildlife could be contributing to the problem just as much as the humans. This could get worse if we save their habitat. We just don't know. It's possible that there are some sources of contamination that we can't control.
- In the 1930s and 40s, the shipyards created a lot of pollution because everything went overboard including garbage and old paint cans.
- The regulations have changed and the Port Townsend shipyards have invested millions to treat runoff from ships. Education to boaters is still important.

Which problems should receive the most attention?

- Septic systems.
- How do septic systems contribute to pollution in the Sound? *A septic system has a holding and treatment tank that should be air tight. The treatment tank flows to the drain field to filter and slowly enter the groundwater. If the system is not properly sited or sealed, chemicals will enter the sounds and create algae bloom and possibly contaminated shellfish. Sewage treatment plants that overflow have the same effect but on a larger scale.*
- Urban sewage treatment plants do just as much damage as individual treatment systems. We need them to function properly so no chemicals are released into the Sound.
- Education among boaters is important.
- There is a need for education and communication. We need science to help us determine the real problems. *We've heard that in all the action areas.*
- We need to address the issue of endless growth.
- We need to take away corporate privilege so corporations don't have all the say.
- I work for a corporation and it is very difficult to do anything. We've been applying to put in another shellfish farm for 12 years. The court appeals have cost tens of thousands of dollars. There are a lot of hoops you have to jump through.
- We should reach out to Canada and Vancouver Island. *Chris Townsend is the Partnership's coordinator with Canada. We have had close relations with Canada in the past and we will continue to find ways to work together.*
- We need to talk about sewage treatment. We're very archaic about the engineering of treatment plants and septic systems. We need to focus some big time and money to create some overarching, innovative solutions.
- Plastics are a huge threat to the environment and the Puget Sound. They don't get recycled, they go back into the environment and then back into the food chain.

What should we focus on first?

- Abandoned fishing nets because they create a huge dead zone. *DNR has a derelict fishing gear clean-up program. I believe they have a hotline. I know there are divers working on removing crab pots. The Skokomish Tribe also has a clean-up effort.*
- I'm curious what the feasibility is of creating a region tax on purchasing pollutants as a funding source for restoration.
- I think we need to approach consumers and their behavior. For example, in Oregon, they still pay to recycle aluminum cans. We need consumer incentives like that.
- I think this is a political problem. People don't believe that they are a contributor to pollution. This is going to be the hardest thing the Partnership is going to have deal with. If people are not on board, what are we going to do?
- Is this really going to be based on science? I've seen that used as an excuse to stop the whole discussion. Sometimes common sense is the best thing. *We're not going to let an unending quest for data stop us. We're going to use the best science we have available by our deadline of September 1, 2008.*
- People need to be able to politically champion the projects. We can't ignore the political piece.
- I think you should focus first on the easiest problems, then on the more entrenched problems.

General Comments:

- I don't think that we can live without population growth. We have to learn how to live with nature. We have to have sewer systems and roads that are Sound-friendly. If we want to bring in more people, we have to learn how to do it without hurting nature.
- We need to keep the eye on the prize, which is to restore and protect habitat and to find human balance.
- We need a scientific understanding of what's happening. Fish kills happen in a couple of hours even if the conditions have built up over a couple of months. Things happen very quickly and we need to trust science.

- We should put a dollar value on natural assets. People should be paid to maintain natural assets like other public utilities. The Port Townsend lagoon is a natural stormwater system. We need to preserve things like this. *The Leadership Council has been discussing ecosystem services assessments. This means looking at all the services that you don't typically value like the forest ground as a natural stormwater filter. We need to ask ourselves what the value is of the services being lost when we pave instead of just asking what we gain with a road.*
- Social psychologists should get involved to change people's perceptions. Other counties have a different perception of environmental problems and have more concern for them. *We need social marketing experts to start to turn the ship towards cleaning up.*
- We need a method to address population growth that encompasses all the issues including septic issues, runoff and impervious surfaces. If we don't address all these things now, we're going to be hit with little issues later on.
- Can we make permeable services less expensive? Pervious surfaces are too expensive for families to use on driveways.
- We need to approach the architecture field. We need visionary architects and consumers to change perceptions, using smaller footprints, sod roofs, and other innovative ideas.
- We need to have state-wide vehicle emissions testing. If cars are in the best shape they can be, it will help the highway runoff problem.
- I have a farm and I'd like to get it back to the way it was. It's not too late. Logging hasn't destroyed the forest yet. We still have state and national forests.
- It is refreshing to see the political temperature change here. People are aware of the problems and they want to see change. This is not the case in other parts of the country.
- There have been product shifts in stores. Consumers are asking for healthier products and native plants so prices for those items are coming down. Ask your grocery store for products; they carry what people ask for. We have the ability to change what we're doing.

**Wrap up/Next Steps**

Chris Townsend closed by saying that there are many things we can do in our own daily lives. We can use our cars less, use reusable cups, and bring our own bags to the grocery store.

Chris reminded participants that this does not need to be the end of our conversation. Comment on the Web site or email [actionagenda@psp.wa.gov](mailto:actionagenda@psp.wa.gov). The Puget Sound Partnership is holding workshops and community conversations around the Sound. Topic forums will be held in the next couple of months.