

Puget Sound Partnership 2008 Three Year Work Program Update East Kitsap / West Sound Watershed

Introduction

In April 2008, each of the fourteen watersheds submitted three-year work program updates on accomplishments, status of actions, and proposed actions that built on the 2006 and 2007 three-year work programs. These work programs are intended to provide a road map for implementation of the salmon recovery plans and to help establish a recovery trajectory for the first three years of implementation. The 2008 Three-Year Work Program Update is the last of the first three years for implementation since the Recovery Plan was finalized in 2005. As salmon recovery in the Puget Sound is now part of the Puget Sound Partnership's legislative responsibility, the Puget Sound Partnership will perform an assessment of the development and review of these work programs in order to be as effective as possible in the coming years.

The feedback below is intended to assist the watershed recovery plan implementation team as it continues to address actions and implementation of their salmon recovery plan. The feedback is also used by the Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team (RITT), the Recovery Council Work Group, and the Puget Sound Partnership to inform the continued development and implementation of the regional work program. This includes advancing on issues such as adaptive management and capacity within the watershed teams. The feedback will also stimulate further discussion of recovery objectives to determine what the best investments are for salmon recovery over the next three years.

Guidance for the 2008 work program updates

Factors to be considered by the Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team in performing its technical review of the Update:

- a. Is the Update consistent with the recovery plan hypotheses and strategy for the watershed's work program?
- b. Is the sequencing and timing of the action in your updated three-year work program appropriate?
- c. Are there significant components missing from the work program? If so, what is missing and what can be done about them in the three-year work program update or at a regional scale?

Watersheds were also provided with the following seven questions, answers to which the Recovery Council Work Group and the Partnership salmon recovery watershed liaisons assessed in performing their policy review of the three-year work program

1. Is the work program consistent with the policy feedback and recommendations from the 2004 documents, Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Volume I, Watershed Profiles – Results section, NMFS Supplement, as well as the regional Nearshore Chapter, where applicable?

2. Is the work program tied to the identified three-year objectives and scheduled to proceed at a pace sufficient to achieve the watershed's ten-year goals?
3. Is the work program narrative tightly linked to individual projects and priorities?
4. Do programmatic actions address protection objectives?
5. To what extent are habitat, harvest and habitat actions integrated and included in the work program?
6. How is the capacity to implement the updated three-year work program addressed?
7. What are the three-year work program objectives and how well does the updated program address them? This includes:
 - Improves the level and certainty of protection of habitat and the 22 existing Chinook populations;
 - Preserves options for achieving the future role of this population in the ESU;
 - Ensures habitat protection and restoration and restores ecosystem processes for Chinook; and
 - Advances the coordinated/integrated management of habitat, harvest, and hatchery.

I. Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team Review

The RITT reviewed each of the fourteen individual watershed chapter's salmon recovery three-year work program updates in May and early June 2008. Three primary questions were addressed along with additional regional questions. The questions and the RITT's review comments are below.

East Kitsap / West Sound Watershed

Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team Review

1. *Is their work plan consistent with the hypotheses and strategy for their watershed?*

The revised work program for West Sound is generally consistent with the hypotheses and strategy for this watershed. The nearshore and marine areas of the West Sound are noted as important for supporting Chinook salmon originating from other areas of the Sound. Previous work programs highlighted a nearshore assessment and development of a functional recovery planning organization as critical to recovery success. The assessment was completed in 2007 and the West Sound Watershed Council, formed in January 2007, is showing considerable progress and participation from local, state, and tribal groups.

2. *Is the sequencing and timing of their work plan appropriate for the first 3 years of implementation?*

As in many other watersheds, the West Sound work program reflects a tiered approach to project prioritization. This places many projects on an almost equal footing within any particular tier and allows for a somewhat opportunistic approach to implementation of the projects. In this instance and at this time in the recovery work, with no home population, such an approach is generally

acceptable. However, the recently completed assessment should be used to gain a more complete understanding of potential priorities even among tier 1 projects. Moreover, further consideration should be given to questions of proper sequence among the projects to achieve near-term objectives, even if this leads to “groupings” of projects within the tier.

3. *Are there significant components missing from the work plan? If so, what are these and what can be done about them in the 3-year work plan?*

Adaptive management and H-Integration programs are still missing from the work program. Of these, adaptive management is perhaps the most critical and the RITT encourages the WSWC to begin to address this important element of recovery planning as soon as possible (see 2006 and 2007 comments as well). Without some first steps toward monitoring and adaptive management, any confident evaluation of effectiveness of the projects already underway is impossible.

Puget Sound Partnership Questions

- *Does the Update provide information on the improved level and certainty of protection for habitat and the 22 existing populations*

A monitoring and adaptive management program is a critical step in answering this question. It is noteworthy, however, to read that the West Sound directed some of its resources to a project in the Nisqually Delta that could be very important to recovery of that population.

- *Does the Update provide information on preserving options for achieving the future role of this population in the ESU?*

Although there are no independent populations of Chinook in this watershed, the nearshore actions in West Sound have an important role to play in the successful recovery of other populations that use these nearshore habitats. In contrast, hatcheries in West Sound could affect the recovery of these same populations if they occupy the same nearshore areas as wild populations. This raises an H-integration question in central Puget Sound and perhaps at a regional scale as well. See also #4, below.

- *Does the Update provide information on ensuring protection and restoration of ecosystem processes for Chinook salmon?*

Yes, the broad capital and non-capital or programmatic actions in this update provide for a comprehensive approach to improve the larger watershed and ecosystem processes. This program identifies a number of projects targeted at restoring ecosystem processes such as habitat connectivity and tidal influence to nearshore and estuarine habitats. Such projects are particularly important for restoring continuity of function along the nearshore and providing feeding and refuge areas for out-migrating Chinook.

Due to the nature of programmatic actions (non-capital) they rely on the education of the public and their willingness to implement as well as take advantage of incentives and opportunities. The willingness of the people in Puget Sound to implement the necessary projects, programs and

policies necessary to recover Chinook salmon is essential to ensure the protection and restoration of the ecosystem processes.

- *Does the Update provide a high level of protection and restoration for ecosystem processes for multi-species?*

The focus on restoration and protection of critical structural elements of the marine nearshore and estuarine areas provides a high level of certainty that important feeding, migration, and refuge areas for many species will be protected along with certain of the basic ecosystem processes that support the habitats and their function. The proposed projects seek to restore various functions such as floodplain connectivity (Chico Creek), sediment movement along the nearshore (Pritchard Park), and tidal movement (Barker Creek, Chico Creek estuary) and provide protection to functional habitats (Pilot Point and Taylor Bay).

The scale and location of these projects provides some confidence they will contribute to achieving ecosystem function and connectivity along the marine shoreline. Given past work, the proposed projects for Chico Creek and Beaver Creek, in particular, are near to achieving the recovery of large-scale stream and estuarine processes in this area.

- *Advance the integrated management of harvest, hatchery, and habitat*

This integration is not developed in the work program but is an important element despite the lack of an independent population. Hatchery production could lead to straying into nearby populations and interactions in nearshore habitats. The Nearshore Fish Utilization Assessment program is an excellent example of the data necessary for this integration but must be carried forward into evaluation and development of a more explicitly integrated management program.

II. Policy Review Comments

The Recovery Council Work Group, an interdisciplinary policy team, evaluated each of the fourteen watershed work plans. In addressing the questions identified above, the interdisciplinary team noted accomplishments and strengths as well as gaps and issues warranting special attention. The team assessed each of the watersheds' three-year work plans, as well as the general themes that applied across the region. The general comments addressing common accomplishments and opportunities for advancement are discussed below as well as specific comments for the East Kitsap / West Sound Watershed.

General Comments for 2008 Three-Year Work Program Updates

The 2008 watershed three-year work program updates reflect advancement in terms of project and programmatic identification. Watersheds received capital and non-capital funding through the 2007 biennial budget process, providing a significant increase in resources relative to previous years. Despite these gains, both in funds and in work program, many of the watersheds continue to have gaps, to varying degrees, that were identified in the NOAA supplement as well as the 2006 and 2007 work program reviews. Regional assistance to the watershed planning and implementation teams will be needed to address how best to fill the needs identified below.

Work Plan Accomplishments, Status Updates, Sequencing and Prioritization: As identified in 2007, work program updates are a useful tool for defining progress toward recovery plan goals and ESU-wide recovery. Narratives should continue to be refined to provide a sharper focus on what each watershed expects to accomplish within the three-year period. These narratives should also document what projects have been successfully completed, what programmatic actions are underway, and how successful the watershed has been in implementing the previous year's work plan. This includes documenting how the funds of the previous year are being applied for both on-the-ground projects and capacity within the watersheds.

Providing a more focused description of how needed recovery projects and actions are identified, developed, prioritized and sequenced can strengthen work program updates. It is also important that the narrative provide sufficient information to enable watershed teams and regional reviewers to determine whether the pace of implementation is appropriate to achieve each watershed's ten-year goals and if not, to be able to identify the types of changes necessary to get them on pace. This can include information on adaptive management, status updates on actions, and monitoring data.

Integrated Management of Habitat, Harvest and Hatcheries: All Puget Sound watersheds' work programs would benefit from additional efforts and regional resources to achieve H-Integration. Several watersheds advanced their understanding and application of the six steps of H-Integration during 2007 through the strong support of co-manager resources. It is noteworthy that there is a strong connection between full co-manager engagement within the watershed context and significant progress toward salmon recovery implementation. By the end of 2008, it is anticipated all watersheds with Chinook populations will be engaged in actions that reflect an integrated management of habitat, harvest, and hatcheries for Chinook recovery. The Puget Sound Partnership and RITT liaisons will continue to assist those watersheds without independent Chinook populations to integrate management and capacity of the nearshore to sustain natural and hatchery-origin populations of all salmonids. As integration advances, it will be important for each watershed to document how their actions are integrated and advancing in the work programs.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management: At the end of 2007, Shared Strategy staff along with a work group of technical experts completed a regional draft monitoring and adaptive management plan. The completion of this draft plan included a workshop and a gathering of comments on the plan. Since the completion of this draft plan, the Puget Sound Partnership has officially assumed responsibility for completing a regional adaptive management and monitoring plan, including the monitoring of fish populations and the tracking of implementation and effectiveness of actions identified in the Chinook Recovery Plan. At the regional scale, several actions have been initiated to advance adaptive management, including: 1) a pilot program directed at developing an implementation tracking system at both the watershed and regional scale; 2) a status and trends approach for Washington State, which includes directed resources for the Puget Sound; and 3) an accountability system to identify and hold responsible the appropriate entities at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.

Some watersheds have already begun developing their own monitoring and adaptive management frameworks and initial monitoring tasks. The regional team working on the diverse aspects of adaptive management will coordinate with those watersheds to ensure that the monitoring and adaptive management plans are consistent and complementary. During this transitional time, the Puget Sound Partnership staff, the work group, and the RITT acknowledge that they play an important role in providing assistance to all of the Puget Sound watersheds to advance in their development, refinement, and implementation of an adaptive management and monitoring approach. This is important in order to enable watersheds and the region to assess progress in reducing uncertainties in the population and ESU-wide recovery.

Protecting and restoring ecosystem processes for Chinook and other species by preserving options and addressing threats are critical components of recovery planning both at the local and regional scale. The Chinook Recovery Plan is predicated on the assumption that existing habitat will be protected. Regional work to assess this assumption and to strengthen the regulatory framework is underway through the San Juan Initiative and through the Action Agenda work of the Puget Sound Partnership. Initial findings and recommendations from the San Juan Initiative are expected by the end of 2008. The Action Agenda will be completed by December 2008.

Recovery actions are continuing to become more complex and expensive. All watersheds are challenged in terms of their capacity to acquire land in order to secure future options and to implement large-scale, multi-year projects. It will be important for watersheds to coordinate and partner with other groups, organizations, and agencies locally and regionally to increase capacity and enhance their ability to successfully identify and implement habitat acquisition and restoration efforts. Increased capacity for the key participants in watershed recovery efforts is essential to successfully implement their recovery chapters and protect and restore the ecosystem processes that Chinook and other species require. The Puget Sound Partnership staff and the work group members acknowledge that additional efforts will be needed at the regional scale to assist in securing on-going resources for the watershed groups to protect and restore ecosystem processes.

Water quality and Water quantity: Water quality and water quantity will continue to be important issues for the long-term recovery of all populations within the ESU.

Work on water quality issues is associated with both urban and rural sources. The authority to address these sources is within the purview of the Washington State Department of Ecology and is primarily being addressed through the NPDES permit program, the establishment of TMDLs under the Clean Water Act, and the Forest Practice Rules. It is important to apply these programs and resources in a manner that supports the watershed groups and advances the recovery of salmon in their areas. It is recognized that emerging water quality threats to the health of Puget Sound (e.g. endocrine disruptors) are not adequately addressed under current regulatory regimes and significant new resources are needed to identify and resolve these threats. Watersheds continue to play an important role in ensuring that local jurisdictions implementing these permits adopt water quality programs that include actions and regulations that protect and enhance water quality in rivers and streams critical for salmon recovery.

Work on water quantity issues is also important at both the regional and local watershed scale. At the regional level, the Water Quantity Sub-Committee, coordinated by the Washington State Department of Ecology, is working on advancing the science on instream flows and viable salmon populations (VSP). In May of 2008, the Water Quantity Sub-Committee held an instream flow and VSP workshop to discuss the current state of instream flow/VSP science and flow assessment tools, and to identify and develop a future science agenda for instream flow/VSP work over the next five to 10 years. The workshop also focused on trying to determine the appropriate scale for flow assessment tools and VSP concepts. Additionally, the impacts of climate change will need to be assessed and integrated into salmon recovery planning on a regional scale.

Locally, watershed groups can help move these issues forward in a manner that reflects their priorities for salmon recovery. Each watershed should consider (1) advocating for appropriate instream flow rules in places where they are needed; and (2) working with the Department of Ecology to begin creating protection and enhancement programs (PEPs) in areas where instream flows hinder the recovery of fish populations.

The RITT and the Puget Sound Partnership liaisons will continue to assist watersheds in advancing water quantity and water quality actions.

Nearshore Habitats and Processes: There continues to be a need to advance our understanding of nearshore habitats and processes associated with Chinook recovery. Several nearshore fish presence assessments were funded through the 2007 biennial budget and SRFB round. These assessments are a crucial step in advancing our knowledge of salmonid use of the nearshore and nearshore processes. The Puget Sound Partnership and RITT liaisons recognize the need to support these watersheds in translating the assessments into protection and restoration projects. The Puget Sound Partnership and the work group also acknowledge that we need to increase the scientific certainty regarding sequencing and prioritizing which nearshore areas to protect across the Puget Sound. Finally, we need to develop a standardized framework to not only monitor nearshore fish presence, but to also assess fish utilization of those areas.

Multi-species planning: The Puget Sound Steelhead were listed in May 2007 and a NOAA-appointed Technical Review Team (TRT) is working to define the population and habitat criteria for the listing. This information is anticipated to be available in March 2009. The Puget Sound watersheds will play an instrumental role in sequencing and prioritizing actions across multiple species in order to gain the highest ecosystem benefit. NOAA, the co-managers, and the watersheds are currently discussing options for Puget Sound Steelhead recovery planning. It is expected that the planning process will be defined by the end of 2008. Resources are needed to support the watersheds in steelhead planning over the next several years.

Watershed-Specific Comments

The East Kitsap / West Sound Watershed Three-Year Work Plan Update is a coordinated effort through the Lead Entity to further salmon recovery, focusing specifically on advancing nearshore and marine protection and restoration, as well as developing a coordinated and representative organizational structure.

Significant Advancements

- Progress on organizational structure (creation of West Sound Watershed Council, with broad representation, monthly meetings, and draft inter-local agreement)
- Projects and programs are closely aligned with the chapter's focus on nearshore and marine priority areas
- Use of analysis and modeling of nearshore assessment to guide recovery actions

Issues Needing Advancement

- Identify H-Integration and adaptive management needs and priorities
- Continue to strengthen coordination across jurisdictions and partners, and clarify timing for completion of inter-local agreement
- Include all salmon recovery projects and programs, not just Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) projects, in the three-year work program projects list