

San Juan/Whatcom Action Area Workshop (Friday Harbor)

March 20, 2008

Workshop Summary

Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a workshop in Friday Harbor on March 20, 2008 to gather perspectives from stakeholders and add local knowledge and expertise to partnership work. The meeting focused on addressing the questions: *What is the status of the health of the Puget Sound and what are the greatest threats to it?*

Meeting Overview

Approximately 55 people attended the workshop at the Elements Hotel and Spa Conference Room. Among those represented were local organizations, businesses, federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens, all working for the protection and restoration of Puget Sound.

Meeting Summary

Kevin Ranker, Puget Sound Partnership Ecosystem Coordination Board member, welcomed workshop participants and introduced Tom Cowan, San Juan County Liaison for the Puget Sound Partnership. Kevin thanked everyone for attending and briefly explained the agenda and objectives of the workshop. Kevin reiterated the Partnership's objective to work with communities throughout the Puget Sound region to create an Action Agenda with a strategy for moving forward with the protection and restoration of Puget Sound.

Martha Neuman, Action Agenda Director, provided an overview of the Partnership and the purpose of the Action Agenda. She highlighted the importance of capitalizing on existing information and research, and of developing a plan which includes education and outreach components. Martha also explained the necessity of identifying local conditions and threats facing each territory so as to understand the status and threats facing the Puget Sound region.

Martha summarized NOAA's ongoing Sound-wide status and threats analysis work. She explained that workshop participants would be asked to identify status and threats unique to San Juan County to supplement existing research, and that NOAA's information is preliminary. The content discussed at the workshop will be valuable in developing the action area profile for San Juan County.

Diana Gale, Leadership Council representative for the San Juan/Whatcom action area, shared how excited she was to be a part of this effort and expressed her specific interest in San Juan County. She informed the group that the Puget Sound Partnership was one of the 10 largest habitat recovery efforts in the United States. She closed by mentioning the Partnership's commitment to assessing the condition of Puget Sound and understanding

the status and threats facing the environment so that citizens are able to live both responsibly and sustainably.

Jacques White of the Nature Conservancy and NOAA's risk assessment steering committee gave an overview of assessment and monitoring methods NOAA is using, and visual tools for displaying data. He reminded the audience that the graphics, charts and diagrams being presented were in draft form and invited comments and feedback.

Jacques explained the magnitude of the many threats throughout the Sound and described the Partnership goals. He reiterated the action area workshop's objective of gathering local knowledge and establishing criteria for setting priorities.

Joe Gaydos, Regional Director for the SeaDoc Society, spoke of creating a vision for a healthy Puget Sound and gave an overview of the conditions in the San Juan Islands. Joe discussed projected population growth for the area and environmental concerns such as rising sea levels and endangered species. Joe posed the question: *How can our region grow in such a way that we maintain a balance between the economy, our population and the natural environment?*

Kit Rawson, Tulalip Tribes and Chair of the San Juan County Marine Resources Committee, spoke about local threats and status of indicators in San Juan County and referred to San Juan County's adopted Marine Stewardship Area (MSA) plan. He said the research and work gathered through the MSA plan would be of great use to the Partnership. Kit explained that due to the large size of the San Juan territory, community members would need to work together closely to assess the condition of habitat, water quality, human health, human quality of life and species/biodiversity.

Martha reiterated that work done in San Juan County was impressive and the Partnership hoped to build on that collected information.

The following question was heard after the presentations. The answer is indicated with italics:

- How is this work different than Puget Sound Action Team, Puget Sound Water Quality Authority, etc. There seem to be new agencies all the time doing the same thing. *Each agency was built upon a pre-existing agency. Unlike past agencies, the Partnership will go beyond planning and will turn the plan into action. The Partnership will rely on science to determine actions and will hold partners and itself accountable for those actions.*

Four topic specific workgroups, based on the ecosystem goals, were asked to consider and provide input on indicators currently being used, threats to the San Juan region and criteria for establishing priorities. The topic specific discussion notes are available upon request. Highlights from the small group discussions are listed below:

What targets (indicators) need to be developed within San Juan County to address all ecosystem goals identified by the Puget Sound Partnership?

Water Quality/Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwater (increasing nitrate contamination) • Surf (temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity) • Marine (temperature, toxins, pathogens, pharmaceuticals) • Inadequate education
Species/Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invertebrate indicators (abalone, sea cucumbers/urchins, crab/shrimp, plankton, forage fish) • Terrestrial species (sea birds, river otters, lichen, amphibians, cactus, butterflies, bald eagle, spider, sea otters) • Plants (kelp, algae, sea grass)
Land Use/Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upland habitat/vegetation • Nearshore - feeder bluffs • Shoreline habitat/vegetation and development regulations • Wetland vegetation • Hydrologic connectivity • Wildlife habitat connectivity
Human Health/Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing • Water quality • Preservation of natural qualities of the islands • Health of species

What are the known threats to ecosystem targets?

Water Quality/Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catastrophic oil spill • Chronic oil/chemicals/contaminants discharged into water • Climate change • Septics • Growth and development • Inadequate education
Species/Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution • Climate change • Harvesting • Population growth • Soil compaction • Decreased groundwater discharge • Increased stormwater • Boating • Invasive species

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filling wetlands/ponds • Removal of critical vegetation • Lack of awareness
Land Use/Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased groundwater • Stormwater • Filling wetlands/ponds • Construction and development (especially when not sustainable) • Personal land use decisions • Pollution • Lack of enforcement
Human Health/Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectation of common access • How people live/community options • Economic viability • Population growth • Seasonable nature of tourism (seasonal residents vs. visitors) • Access to local food • Climate change

The MSA identified 5 strategies to improve ecosystem health, what needs to be added to address all the Action Agenda goals?

Water Quality/Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Ongoing methods to evaluate water quality monitoring and overall effectiveness • Incorporate low impact development • Wastewater treatment • Septic operation and maintenance program
Species/Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Areas Ordinance update • Stormwater Ordinance • Conservation easements • Education/improved awareness • Target outreach efforts towards specific groups (visitors, realtors, builder) • Cross-border communication/collaboration (island/mainland & USA/Canada) • Use incentives
Land Use/Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education/information • Data sources (Health Department, Port of Friday Harbor) • Incentives • Enforcement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of critical habitat
Quality of Life/Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term management • Low impact development • More complete wastewater treatment • Septic operation/enforcement • More education to change behavior

Following the topic specific discussions, participants shared additional comments and questions. The following are the responses. Answers are highlighted in italics.

- Population pressure is the elephant in room because of the widespread effect it has upon everything. There is high population turnover on the islands because of seasonal residents and tourists. While we can work to inform, educate and encourage a stewardship ethic, population growth will always be ahead of us.
- Growth is inevitable. The islands need to be able to increase population without increasing population pressure.
- A terrestrial stewardship plan needs to be implemented. Marine stewardship already exists and terrestrial species are in need of having the same protection process enforced. There is a large data gap on terrestrial species and much more research needs to be compiled.
- The approach for research and for the Partnership should be to implement what you know and adapt to what you learn.
- The overall condition of the Puget Sound in San Juan County is a state of preservation, not restoration. Funding for preservation efforts are a lot less expensive than restoration plans. San Juan County has much to protect and that is what the core of funding for the San Juan territory should go towards. *The Leadership Council's role is to decide how money will be allocated. It is critical that local citizens voice their funding preferences. Some money will be available for topic-wide efforts, and other funds will be available for specific geographic regions.*
- Friday Harbor and the San Juan Islands have a unique geographic location. It will be important to utilize this location and take advantage of being surrounded by water. (This idea was supported by many workshop participants)
- The diversity of communities on the islands must be preserved. It is important to recognize the way that different people live and the importance of incorporating people's needs and human-related goals into the process.

- Education and community involvement is hard to measure, but it will be essential to get local people on-board with the Partnership's message and plan. When awareness comes from a local level, it is informal and provides an effective way to reach the critical masses.
- There must be a balance between economic viability and sustainability.
- A stormwater management plan could be marketed as a long-term, cost-effective opportunity for the island/county. When it comes to budgeting, the community could spend less money on monitoring if a stormwater management plan is implemented.
- There is an important difference between the terms *preservation* and *conservation* and they should not be used interchangeably. Preservation implies strict measures and the sense of 'locking everything up' and essentially restricting a community from living. The reality is that a living community is going to change. *Conservation* seems like it is a better term to use for the Partnership's efforts.
- Development is going to happen and it is unavoidable. What will be key will be to keep the future in mind and plan for development and growth.

Wrap-Up

Martha Neuman thanked people for coming and let them know that the work from the Friday Harbor workshop would be compiled with the information gathered at the other eight Action Agenda workshops and made available for review at a future date. She invited participants to fill out comment cards and/or submit comments by email. Martha also shared that the action area profiles would be made available by May 2008 and that the Partnership planned to return to Friday Harbor in summer 2008 for another workshop.