

South Sound Action Area (Olympia)

March 7, 2008

Community Conversation Summary

Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a community conversation in Olympia on March 7, 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 40 people attended the conversation from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Evergreen State College.

Meeting Summary

Pat Serie, meeting facilitator, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. Pat introduced Scott Redman, from the Puget Sound Partnership staff, who provided an overview of the Action Agenda. Scott also reviewed the Partnership's six ecosystem goals, NOAA's status and threats analysis, and the need for local information to supplement this work. Scott opened up the discussion for general comments, questions and concerns.

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

- On the threats graphic, what does harvest mean? Fish or shellfish? *Right now the graphic shows fish harvest, but we can verify for you.*
- What do you mean by captive breeding—are these hatcheries? *These are areas where there are not enough wild fish so new populations are brought in.*
- Are the colors based on real data or are they just there to give us an idea of what we might see in a few months? *These are based on real data but these data are still incomplete.*
- Is red supposed to be good or bad? *Red generally implies a negative value.*
- Does white mean that no information is available? *Yes, but NOAA is still analyzing additional data to incorporate into the analysis.*

- Regarding captive breeding, hatcheries are also used to replace wild populations when breeding declines. It is misleading to say the South Sound is better because we do not have the same problems that exist in other parts of the Sound.
- Who's gathering these data? *This is a draft graphic from an ongoing analysis by NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center. We are helping them add more information to their study through the recent science workshop and the action area workshops.*
- Who will be doing a surface/groundwater study? *NOAA Fisheries is in the process of analyzing existing data. They do not have Sound-wide data sources yet but are still gathering information.*
- Is information available on the Web about who is gathering scientific information, and what their references and resources are? *Information from the science workshop on February 20th is on the Web site. A summary of that information, and later the draft report, will be posted on the Web.*

Pat facilitated a group conversation guided by the following questions:

- What local resources are most important to you?
- What are the biggest problems that are endangering the health of the Sound?
- What criteria do you think should be considered in setting priorities?

The following is a list of questions and comments heard, with answers from Partnership staff in italics.

- My interest is in getting more people engaged, particularly youth. I would like to see more prevention education and involvement of people who normally would not be involved.
- Why isn't education on the list of criteria? *Certainly we heard this today and would love ideas from you.*
- Education did come up today. People recognize that in order to achieve critical behavior changes, we need to bring this to our youth. We are one of a few states that require environmental education and we need to take advantage of this.
- We need to figure out ways to "preach" to people other than the "choir".
- There needs to be outreach and education for property owners along the shoreline. They need to know what to do, what they can not do and what they should be doing.

- Where is the information from tonight going? When do you expect the Action Agenda to be completed or ready for comments? What role does this meeting have in the process? *Information we collect today will supplement the NOAA status and threats process and inform expert groups engaging on these topics. South Sound has a very nice core group led by ECB member Dan Wrye. He gathered information today and we will share information on South Sound activities. The draft Agenda will be made available for public comment on the Web. There will be a number of opportunities for people to get involved, e.g. workshops, and then we will come back to you in May for further feedback. The overall Action Agenda will be available this summer for comment and completed by September 1.*
- So the goal today is for us to come together and point out issues specific to our local area for use in the process? *Yes. This is our chance to talk to you here, but if you also have bigger picture issues don't hold back.*
- Does the inventory include education that is already going on? *The inventory encompasses education, science, regulatory and capital programs. We asked governments and watershed groups to let us know what programs are currently underway that will affect Puget Sound. This is going into a database where it can be compiled and sorted to see what is happening in what region. Information is still coming in. We have received over 300 submittals so far.*
- It's one thing to have a lot of data, but I think we also need good discernment about program effectiveness. We have lots of groups with PIE grants that have been providing quality environmental education. How will the Partnership judge what works in different locales with different audiences, and how will that influence what happens down the line? *The criteria discussion we are having is attempting to do exactly that. We are answering the question: what are we doing that is effective, and how might we use that?*
- Are there some examples from North America and around the world where effective environmental education has influenced change in behavior? What about effective social marketing? We may want to look abroad, perhaps to the UK, Australia or Japan.
- Lots of people in south Puget Sound try to offer input, for example making phone calls, and they never get anywhere. There are a lot frustrated people getting left out. At what point do we move away from governments making these decisions and listen to the people living in this community who do not have a voice. *We would love to get your ideas about what works locally.*

- How will people know about this process? *We have to get your advice. We publicize on the Web and through email, and use media. Sometimes we put up posters, or a table outside the grocery store.*
- Did you run advertisements to get people here tonight? How many of you saw newspaper ads? *Yes, but we need a whole range of different ways to get to people. We need to get to where they are, and not always have meetings. We are also looking at ways to be creative, such as You Tube.*
- I saw a front-page exposé on this project in the Olympian. A good question to ask the audience is *how did you hear about this meeting?*
- I saw a poster at the library which drew my attention to the Puget Sound Partnership.
- Another group of organizations that you might approach are the local garden centers. Lowes and Home Depot would be a good place for that publicity.
- I think the Partnership is challenged to be both participatory and engaging, and use sound science. We have both assignments – to be science-based and also to be understandable.
- Is there a language that might be more approachable? “Status” and “threats” are project management language. I understand the Partnership’s need for this information, but I am not sure this is approachable to others who care deeply and will need to participate in the process. We need to be more colorful and creative. This is the engagement process that people have been talking about. *We need to keep that in mind and we are trying to be collaborative. This afternoon did involve a more technical summary of what we are working on now.*
- I chair a transportation improvement committee for the City of Bainbridge Island. We’ve learned the typical streetscape uses more concrete than is safe and efficient. If we improve design, we could reduce costs, improve transportation safety and efficiency, and reduce water pollution. *Do you have any examples?* We are working with city council members and using natural design principles.
- My big concern is mercury, a major toxin. We’re looking at a movement that was adopted in Scandinavia to ban dental mercury.
- I support a more holistic approach to ecosystems. I recommend changing regulations around septic systems and creating more restrictive regulations around stormwater conservation projects. To what extent can the Partnership help form and change regulations? *The Partnership is looking at how we might*

leverage existing resources better. The Sound is lacking enforcement of existing regulations. Through this process we will inventory regulations around the Sound. Federal and State agencies are caucusing, so we have a forum for discussing the needs of the Sound and where Federal and State agencies are focusing efforts.

- I'm concerned about international freighters dumping bilge with invasive creatures like green crabs and plants. What government agency would be able to control that? *Washington State Department of Ecology has a ballast water exchange program.*
- Is there anyone who checks the ships coming in? *Ships are being asked to dump their bilge in deeper water before entering the Sound, but that program is voluntary.*
- There is only one inspector. This falls squarely on the issues of lack of funding and political will.
- Was there any conversation today about the military and pollution? Are we working on getting them involved, in having a conversation? *Dan Wrye has representatives from McChord AFB and Ft. Lewis in the South Sound core group. In Dyes Inlet we have tremendous participation from the military community. There are examples of successes. Fort Lewis, for example, has worked with tribes on harvesting.*
- Hardballing and micromanagement will not work. Conversations and open communication will work better.
- Land-use decisions underscore many problems currently impacting the Sound.
- Since there is no local Department of Ecology, we can not ask them for help on the local level. No one can stop pollution because there is no one to call. One criterion should be looking at the problem to figure out how to fix it. *Yes, we do need to look at lack of coordination.*
- I heard people remark about the diminishing quality of water flowing to the Sound. Wetlands play a vital role. The way land is parceled, many of these areas are not protected. We have lost the land's ability to deliver quality water to the Sound.
- I am on a mailing list for Thurston County about building and permitting activity. They send information every time someone requests a building permit. Maybe the Partnership should join this list.

- Our thinking needs to move forward. This state is the largest producer of shellfish. It is a win-win since shellfish clean up the Sound. We should restore old shellfish like the Olympia oyster and work with shellfish growers. We also need new paradigms for land-use. Counties will be built out and we need to have community development services to help balance human needs with resource management. We need restoration rather than managing commercial harvests that no longer exist. We need good hatchery management – our hatcheries are the largest in the country. More sports fishermen are getting involved in these issues. We need people at the top with new ideas.
- Is the Partnership making an effort to involve tribes in this process? *Dan Wrye's South Sound core group and the County are involving the Nisqually and Squaxin tribes. We are also involving tribes at all levels. There are two tribal seats on the Ecosystem Coordination Board, and Billy Frank, Jr. is on the Leadership Council.*
- What is the specific function of the Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB)? *The legislation directs the ECB to advise the Leadership Council on the development and implementation of the Action Agenda. There is a real commitment from the Leadership Council and David Dicks to ask the ECB for help on how to get this done.*
- How do caucuses fit in? *Representatives on those boards are accountable to their caucuses.*
- I notice that there is no group that would represent private landowners on the ECB. *Good point.*
- Many people would like to see more discussion on land-use zoning, restrictions on the use of property, and CAOs. Many people are not being represented in the Partnership's leadership. *There are also individuals on the Leadership Council and ECB that are representing citizen interests, based on their roles as elected officials.*
- My experience on the State board is that having elected officials participating does not guarantee representation of interests.
- How will the PSP engage property owners, especially shoreline property owners?
- We are developing an inventory of existing management plans, but not examining existing ordinances. We don't have any evaluation of our capacity.

Should this be added to the charge of the Partnership? *There is some effort underway in the Topic Forums to address this question, but maybe not to the level of detail requested. We are looking at level of effectiveness of existing programs.*

- We need to look at our existing regulations.
- I heard a reference to the government setting buffers. At the local level the buffers are deteriorating down to almost nothing and their purpose is lost. Nothing can be done about it.
- We need to look more at transportation alternatives, particularly active transportation, and better designs. We need good leadership to bring people on board.

Which problems should receive the most attention?

- I agree with concerns about industrial uses. There are a lot of old toxic sites that are not being dealt with. Trenching and digging in port areas is an important issue.
- Stormwater treatment is a big issue. Design standards need to be considered for major developments. We need to use more natural drainages and innovative designs.
- The shoreline is not very accessible to the general public. What should a healthy beach look like? What is a good buffer? People do not know. I think we need to generate better information.
- My focus coming from a non-profit nature center is engaging the community. People are diverse and it's hard to get everyone to agree on solutions. Large portions of the community never get served at all. We need to involve more citizens in gathering data and get them out into the natural environment. I hope to see a lot more engagement by the community. It is not an easy charge, but I think it can be done, it has been done on the local level. *Where would you direct people to show them a healthy area?* I would highly recommend exploring the Nisqually Delta/Luhr Beach.
- In today's presentation did you cover climate change? Is the Partnership working on this issue? *It is in the Agenda within the topics, i.e. how climate change impacts different resources and how can we mitigate for these impacts.*

- South Sound eelgrass beds have been degraded for a long period of time and data is missing. WDFW has databases of herring spawning sites that document this vegetation. This information seems to have fallen through the cracks.
- Another regulatory effort that has not been mentioned is personal boat use on Puget Sound. This needs to be examined more carefully. It is impacting water quality in the San Juan Islands and contributing to the disappearance of eel grass beds.

What criteria should we consider first?

- Looking for successful examples in other countries and areas of our country is a good first step. What do we know works? *We have been looking at many programs including Chesapeake Bay and others.*
- We need to look at the values and interests of our population. How do we use the land, want to use the land and feel about the land?
- We need to enforce existing programs. We should look at what is in place and do a thorough analysis of whether it is effective. The first criterion any new program should meet is whether there is a program already in place that is demonstrated to be effective. Also, we need to consider existing programs that could be effective with better funding and enforcement. What are we already doing that we could scale up to get us to our goals?
- We should prioritize programs that offer multiple benefits, such as shellfish.
- I think we need to look at integration better as a criterion. We need to think more broadly about water, air and land since all contribute to degrading the Sound if improperly used. We need to think about not only clean water but water that can be used all year. We need to know that we have high enough water quality to support shellfish life.
- I want to emphasize education and outreach. My interest is in collaboration and replicating successful models to involve disengaged youth, especially urban youth. We had a project on the Evergreen campus with youth in Tacoma. The project, called Sound Science, brought in urban kids and gave them the opportunity to work with internationally known scientists. They wrote and recorded hip-hop songs based on their scientific discoveries, for example about clams. This is a tremendous opportunity to engage and excite kids around prevention education. You have to be willing to work with the youth culture. *Thank you, we will share information on your project after the meeting.*

- Our efforts need to be sustainable. Certainly if we are educating children that increases sustainability of efforts.
- I would look at where coalitions exist.
- I agree with the gentleman who spoke about looking at local communities' successful projects. Here in Budd Inlet, the Port of Olympia is trying to bring Weyerhaeuser from Tacoma. Taxpayers are paying for this. We will subsidize an industry that will pollute Budd Inlet. I see a disconnect here. I hope the Partnership can shed more light on how local communities can be involved.
- Sound science and integrated resource management are critical. Agencies have mismanaged resources and are moving management around between agencies. Different species are managed differently. We need to re-examine management policy and base them on sound science, not just look at harvesting.

Wrap up/Next Steps

Pat Serie closed the meeting with a discussion of what happens next, reviewed the roadmap to completion, and noted how the four Partnership questions will be addressed through future meetings. She encouraged participants to visit the Web site to find out more about topic forums. She reminded everyone that we are at the beginning of the process and there will be many opportunities to get involved.