

South Central Action Area Workshop (Tacoma)

February 26, 2008

Community Conversation Summary

Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a community conversation in Tacoma on February 26, 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 Pacific Lutheran University's Chris Knutson Hall.

Meeting Summary

Paul Bergman, Communications Director for the Puget Sound Partnership presented an overview of the state of the Puget Sound, the structure of the Partnership and a brief introduction to the Action Agenda.

Angie Thomson, member of the Action Agenda management team, provided a more detailed overview of the Action Agenda. Angie also reviewed the Partnership's six ecosystem goals, NOAA's status and threats analysis, and the need for local information to supplement this work.. Angie opened up the discussion for general comments, questions and concerns.

The following is a list of questions and comments heard following the presentations. Answers are indicated with italics.

Questions:

- What does captive breeding mean? *Aquaculture in general, but salmon farming was the one activity represented in the analysis.*
- What addresses the aqua-fauna? *NOAA may not have a dataset for that yet. If you have dataset, we would love to know about it.*
- Maybe aqua-fauna could be used as a measureable benchmark. *They do use eel grass as an indicator.*
- Have the tribes weighed in on any of this? *Yes, they are involved. They are key in this process. They have a seat on the Ecosystem Coordination Board.*

- Judging from the map, the action areas come close to Canada. Is there a counterpart organization in Canada? Are you interacting with Canada at all? *We are looking at how to engage Canada in this process. There is no plan yet but we know it's important. They are a key partner in this work and this will be a long-term dialogue.*
- Where is the funding coming from? *A funding strategy will be coming forward this spring. We are looking at existing sources and identifying the gaps in funding. There has been no statement from Leadership Council yet but I expect they will want us to analyze current spending before we go after new funding sources. Then we'll figure out what we need to do to fill the gaps.*
- Will funding come through the Partnership? *We won't fund projects. We have developed cooperative relationships with agencies, and they will align their funding priorities with the Action Agenda. We will hold them accountable and make sure funding is spent correctly.*
- Who has final say on this? The Ecosystem Coordination Board? Will there be a lot of red tape to get a project on the Action Agenda? *Our hope is that the priorities and the system we are creating streamline existing processes.*
- What groups were here in the earlier session? Was the local government represented? *The afternoon workshop included a variety of organizations including Pierce County, City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Watershed Council, Tacoma Public Utilities, Fish and Wildlife, Department of Health, People for Puget Sound, Citizens for a Healthy Bay.*
- Was this successful? It sounds like you were asking for micro-projects but only got big organizations. *We're looking to make the datasets more complete so these organizations were very helpful. What typically happens with projects like this is that a team of scientists come up with a draft report and the public gets 90 days to comment on it. We want to do this from the bottom up, that's why you're seeing data that's half done. We want your input all along the way. It is a lot of meetings but we believe it's important.*
- Did your groups today talk about water pollution and air pollution and how the two interface? *Yes.*
- What about sound pollution? What about light pollution? *That may not have been discussed. We'll take both issues to the science team.*
- Have you looked at point source pollution from the current population versus the point source pollution from anticipated population? For example, requiring no new point source pollution from new developments? *The Partnership has*

not taken a position yet but it's definitely under discussion. The question is, how do we change the behavior of the future population?

- We're standing in the South Puget Sound and talking about South Central. What are the implications for land use regulations? I think we have weakened the mental area and diminished our resources by splitting this region in two action areas. *We didn't want to get caught up on the boundary for this meeting. We wanted to make sure we talked to people. It is possible to redo the boundaries in the next legislative session so that we're not dealing with jurisdictions crossing action area lines.*
- I noticed that flip chart mentions enforcement? *This is the work of the small groups today. They felt enforcement was a big issue. [A group member explained: If there is already a standard in place, don't reinvent the wheel, just push enforcement.]*
- This is all well and good until people have to pay for it. Many home owners cannot afford to pay for a new stormwater system if their septic is failing. It changes their feeling about this whole process if there is a price tag on it. *Public awareness is really important and it is why we are working from the bottom up on this process. The Sound is in trouble, people need to understand why that drives the need for these things.*
- This is an issue of people's perceptions of their property rights. What are people willing to do? Some people will have to sacrifice. How do you make that fair and equitable? Do you have anyone representing the homeowner and business owner issues? *We do have people representing the building community on the Ecosystem Coordination Board. That's why we set this up as a bottom up approach instead of the government top down approach – everyone is at the table from the beginning. It's going to be hard, but this will make it easier.*

Bill Ruckelshaus says if we grow like we have for the past 50 years for the next 50 years, we're done. We have to find common ground among people to make changes. There have to be sacrifices.

- Are you working with corporations? I mean the corporations that make cleaning supplies, the things that people put on their lawn and down their sinks. The average person is totally ignorant of where these things go. The Tacoma recycling program is a good example of success. With pressure from neighbors you could see people signed on quickly. We need to give people the means to change.

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- I work for an organization that does a lot of outreach – most people still think the pollution comes from large industry. People are indignant when I tell them that citizens are the biggest polluters.
- Locally, and on the state and federal levels, we have to integrate our land use and ecosystem regulations so they're all doing the same things – they're not now.
- I'm from Walking Waterfront, a group working to improve Tacoma's waterfront by making it more people-friendly instead of industrial. Eel grass is an indicator of the condition of the waterfront. In the past there was eel grass all along the shallow areas of the shoreline. Woodchips were thrown in the water, docks put shade over their habitat and the eel grass disappeared. But eel grass can be restored and we'd like to promote the restoration of eel grass in Tacoma. I want everyone to be aware of this issue and if we can, work with other organizations who may be working on the same thing.
- I work for Department of Ecology. We are developing criteria for wood waste. There are currently no criteria for wood waste. How much is too much? We're trying to figure that out.
- I'm concerned about the forest between the Tacoma Narrows Airport and the Narrows Park in Gig Harbor. It drains right into Puget Sound and it is the last of its kind. I'm afraid that where we are now, we may be beyond the tipping point. I think that we may have to start from scratch and it might be too late.
- We need to look at land use laws. They are supposed to be created from the bottom up but citizens are not taking a stance on this. We need to find a way to influence the legislature. Since the Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed, there have only been two appeals in land use laws. If our local governments are not passing good laws, we need to say something.
- Appealing laws has too high of a cost, at a local level we can't do it.
- I'm worried about the Suisun Bay effect – where they are mothballing ships and allowing them to decay in the harbor. This is now happening in the Puget Sound. We all have concerns, let's do something about it. Let's figure out how we protest those land use laws. Thank you to the Puget Sound Partnership for giving us a forum to start talking about issues.
- We need to look at the individual homeowner and hold people accountable. I have spent many hours revising the Spanaway-Parkland-Midland Land Use Plan – twice. We've included environmental laws but no one at the county backs us up. There is no enforcement on a local level and it's too expensive to

go to court. I'm quite frustrated. We've talked about rain gardens and smart land use plans since we are a sole-use aquifer. Some new developments have done the right thing (building an underground storage tank to catch spills so it doesn't seep into the aquifer) but I don't think we have the mental capacity to do what needs to be done.

- I am concerned about fresh water and the need to maintain the connection between fresh water and the Sound. I think armoring of shoreline is important. I think we need to think more about stormwater management. You as a homeowner need to think about where the water goes. I would like to see more rain gardens and green roofs. Commencement Bay is unique to our region and we need to continue to watch the Asarco site.
- Global warming might make this whole thing irrelevant.
- I've been a lifelong resident of Pacific and a member of Friends of the Lower White River, a group dedicated to protecting biodiversity of Lower White River. A reading from "The Coming of the Wasechu," a Native American story about humans taking over the Earth.
- We're talking about a 20-year plan here. We need to involve children. It's the next generation that needs to understand this.
- There is a lot happening on this campus (Pacific Lutheran University).
- The best available science is used because the legislature wants to cover themselves. It is our job to tell our commissioners, our land use planners, that we believe this should be based in science. We have to work together. We have to tell them that this is our idea, that we want this to happen.

Next Steps

Puget Sound Partnership is holding seven other workshops and community conversations around the Sound. Friday Harbor and Bellingham meetings have been postponed. The Partnership will be conducting another round of workshops and outreach in June. Please contact us with your comments via our Web site.

Paul Bergman closed the meeting with some comments on the optimism he has seen surrounding this project. He said people are excited and there is tremendous grassroots momentum. The legislature is optimistic and in the national arena, people are confident that we can do this in the Puget Sound. We are resource rich and we have smart people. We wouldn't be doing this if we didn't think that it could be done.