

## South Central Action Area Workshop (Tacoma)

February 26, 2008

### Workshop Summary

#### Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a workshop in Tacoma on February 26, 2008 to gather perspectives from stakeholders and add local knowledge and expertise to Partnership work. The meeting focused on addressing the question: *What is the status of the health of Puget Sound and the greatest threats to it?*

#### Meeting Overview

Approximately 60 people attended the workshop at the Pacific Lutheran University. Among those represented were local and tribal governments, local organizations, businesses, federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens, all working for the protection and restoration of Puget Sound.

#### Meeting Summary

Angie Thomson, the meeting facilitator, welcomed participants to the meeting. Angie introduced David St. John, King County Department of Natural Resources and loaned staff member of the Puget Sound Partnership. David introduced the Puget Sound Partnership and reviewed the development of the Action Agenda. He highlighted the importance of capitalizing on existing information in creating the Action Agenda, and the need to include education and outreach throughout the process.

David St. John gave a brief presentation about National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) ongoing Sound-wide status and threats analysis. David explained how NOAA's analysis is working in parallel with the Partnership's local outreach efforts to establish the current status and threats to Puget Sound.

Tom Kantz, Pierce County Special Projects Division for Habitat Protection and Restoration, provided information on Pierce County's additions to the Sound-wide status and threats analysis. Tom provided a list of current studies and reports, and their respective organizations. He reiterated that the break-out sessions were intended to help fill in local gaps in NOAA's Sound-wide analysis.

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

- You said "experts will refine" the status and threats assessment. Who are those experts? Is this related to topic forums? *NOAA is conducting the assessment and has formed a steering committee. They are not gathering new data, they are distilling existing data.*

- On the first threats slide, which ones don't apply to this action area? How was this data collected? *It does not include shorebirds. This is based on data from The Nature Conservancy.*
- Where you have "NA for today", does that mean we just don't have it today? *Yes. Today in these small groups, we want to figure out how to fill those boxes.*
- It looks like the only place shellfish are addressed is in human health? *It's the only place it is shown but it can appear in more than one category.*
- This is all a very early draft. Part of what we're doing today is finding more sources, correct? *Absolutely. If you have more information, give it to us. If you know of other indicators, we'd like those as well.*
- You include salmon harvest under captive breeding. That's also an issue for geoducks. *We'll take that to NOAA.*
- Can you clarify captive breeding? *Shellfish and salmon are the two species we have data for. There may be more.*
- For species diversity, there is a lot of data available on salmon but there are others species that should be included. *Yes, we'd like to capture those as well.*
- There is no information about groundwater and surface water on the threats graph/spreadsheets. *This is just a preliminary graph and all the datasets have not yet been synthesized. It is going to be addressed.*
- How can you be sure groundwater will be addressed? Groundwater/surface water is the primary cause of pollution in Puget Sound, how can it not be included? *This data is part of our work plan. This graph will be filled in before it becomes an actual product. Don't read into the blanks. This will not be finished until all the boxes are filled in.*
- There should already be data on groundwater and surface water. We've been working on this for years. *Work is being done. As data is analyzed these boxes will be filled in. This will not be finished until this dataset is filled in.*
- What do the colors mean? *Red means it's a more intense threat, green means it's a less intense threat.*
- I would like to comment on the colors. Green implies good and people may feel that those green areas are actually healthy, which may not be the case. I think you

could use other colors to avoid that confusion. *Great comment, we have heard before and we're definitely addressing it.*

- Can you elaborate on “pollution” in the threats graph? *It's a general term, there are many things behind that.*
- What is the timeline for filling in the blank boxes? *This analysis should be finalized in March.*
- Is it possible to take some boxes and break them down? For example, “natural drivers” is a huge category. *We will share that comment with the steering committee.*
- You've broken the Puget Sound out by geographic region. The Sound is dynamic. Is this information being integrated into a flow pattern map? Pollution issues flow between regions. *We will share that comment with the steering committee.*
- What is the process for getting you information? Are we supposed to be at all topic forums? Or is there a way to get you everything in one place? *Topic Forums are topic specific and information will be spread between groups. Choose the most relevant. We are sharing information between the forums.*
- Do the action areas go all the way to the head waters? *Yes.*
- *Angie let people know that she had the data source list from Mary Ruckelshaus at NOAA so interested participants could contact her about what datasets are being used in the Sound-wide status and threats synthesis.*
- Where do benchmarks come into play? *The Leadership Council is discussing benchmarks. We call them “targets for indicators.” Once we establish indicators, we will have the discussion about targets.*
- Will benchmarks be presented in the draft Action Agenda? *Yes, they will be in the Action Agenda.*
- Have you established what a healthy Puget Sound looks like? Historically? Are you using the current NOAA data? *We have not answered that question yet. We have the six qualitative goals but we will establish the quantitative goals as part of the Action Agenda.*
- Tom Kantz's list of organizations identifies organizations that are all sub-organizations of the Puyallup Watershed. I did not see the watershed councils on the list. *I realize that. I just wanted to get as many as possible. They should definitely be on there.*

- Due to the complexity of the watershed, you should use the watershed councils as a way to reach the public. *Excellent point. One of the things the watershed councils do well is coordinating with those smaller organizations. It's even more important now that we're part of a larger action area. There needs to be coordination throughout.*
- There is no groundwater/surface water data here. You are ignoring 15 years of work by these watersheds. That's not a good way to reach the public. *You're misinterpreting. They are working on it and gathering existing data. Local groups can really help in this area by pointing to that data.*
- When was the Partnership work started? *The Partnership started last May with the end of the legislative session. Most of the staff were hired at the end of 2007. Previously, there was a Puget Sound Action Team and we want to build on that work. Where you see gaps today, tell us where they are so that we can make this report the best it can be.*
- Do we have the ability to add more threats? *If you think there are more, tell us.*
- Can you clarify "resource equity"? *It refers to how we allocate money and people to work on these issues and how that can be done equitably throughout the Sound.*

Five topic specific workgroups, based on the ecosystem goals, were asked to consider and provide input on indicators currently being used, threats to Puget Sound and criteria for establishing priorities. The topic specific discussion notes will be available upon request. Key responses are highlighted below:

What are the biggest threats to the Puget Sound?

Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollution sources</li> <li>• Land use changes</li> <li>• Inadequate education</li> </ul>
Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current conditions of the built environment and the regulatory framework</li> <li>• Population growth</li> <li>• Density (e.g. increasing impervious surface, water demand, wastewater system)</li> </ul>
Species/Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of habitat related to land use</li> <li>• Toxics</li> <li>• Stormwater</li> <li>• Invasive species</li> </ul>
Habitat/Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population growth and increased density</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land conversion and development</li> <li>• Lack of awareness about importance of the value of habitat</li> </ul>
Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of political will and continuity</li> <li>• Pollution</li> </ul>
Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land cover change</li> <li>• Oil spills</li> </ul>

What criteria are most important in evaluating potential projects?

Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on prevention</li> <li>• Currency to evaluate effectiveness</li> <li>• Make a real difference</li> </ul>
Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase knowledge of how surface water and ground water interact</li> <li>• Better the natural environment</li> <li>• Maintain consistency of delivery to clients</li> <li>• Promote conservation</li> </ul>
Species/Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biggest benefit for whole ecosystems</li> <li>• Multiple benefits in relation to goals</li> <li>• Public support</li> </ul>
Habitat/Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of impact (probability of success)</li> <li>• Community support</li> <li>• Fundable and doable</li> </ul>
Quality of Life/Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforcement of exiting regulations</li> <li>• Focus on pollution prevention</li> <li>• Direct risk to human health</li> <li>• Most fundamental/most difficult</li> </ul>

Following the breakout sessions the group was asked if they felt the meeting in Tacoma as a second meeting in the South Central Action Area was useful and then opened up the discussion for comments and questions. The following are the responses. Answers are highlighted in italics.

- It was definitely helpful to have a Tacoma meeting. Locally there was a concern that Tacoma was an afterthought. We would like to have more access to the process.
- I don't think there should have been a meeting in Tacoma. There is a tendency to feel a division between Pierce and King Counties and this made the division stronger. There needs to be more coordination within the action area with one workshop if we want to work together.

# PugetSoundPartnership

our sound, our community, our chance

- We represent a small fraction of the people who are interested in the work you are doing. You need to get comments from people who are not here. We're looking forward to the Urban Waters building being built on the Thea Foss and the Puget Sound Partnership having offices here in Tacoma.
- Pierce County has the Tacoma Narrows (a choke point for Puget Sound waters) and it represents three different action areas. Because of that, people want to attend a lot of meetings. Can we do a live, online podcast of the meeting? It could be an interactive session where people could send their comments to the meeting via e-mail or call in. I know you can submit comments online but there are other organizations who are setting up SharePoint accounts. Can you do that for each action area? *We are looking into both of those things and have talked with TVW.*
- Education to the public is the most important thing. TVW needs to realize that and help the process by broadcasting Puget Sound Partnership meetings.
- A wealth of reports and studies are already available with the information we talked about today from the Puget Sound Action Team. I appreciate that you are trying to include the public but it feels a little like "make work." Could you have given us the current list of threats before we started the small group sessions? I don't know if you're getting any new ideas at these workshops because each group is starting from scratch. Would you consider modifying the process? *We're trying to do that. We don't want to make assumptions that people already know all of this. For some people this is old news. If we're not drawing out new ideas, we need to make sure that we are. I agree that it would be nice to have that list. I don't want to bring things up that are waste of people's time.*
- This is a good format for getting things up on the wall but how do we get documents to the Partnership? How do we know it's getting to you? *Mary Ruckelshaus should get all of the scientific data. You can also send things to [actionagenda@psp.wa.gov](mailto:actionagenda@psp.wa.gov) and we can get them to Mary.*
- I noticed education came up several times. Have you thought about establishing education centers? There are many examples in the area such as Seattle Aquarium and Friday Harbor Aquarium. We need some centers on the Sound so kids can get involved. *Education is key. We're developing an environmental education program. There are great programs in place. We don't need to reinvent the wheel but we know they need support. Our program will provide funding and support. We want to align environmental education with Action Agenda priorities – if stormwater is a priority, education will reflect that. Educational groups will apply for funding and if it fits with the Action Agenda, we'll fund it and drive volunteers to those programs.*

- How will the little guys find the money that's available for these programs? *As a first step we have a network of 200 environmental educators on an Eco-Net group. They meet quarterly.*
- I represent a community that has faced and addressed the same issues as the Partnership. What I'm hearing is that small communities and less interesting areas will be sacrificed in this process. These things need to be equitable if you want public participation and public support.
- Is there any attempt to measure where the habitat has the most degradation? Implement a sort of "wetland banking" program that would enforce penalties on people who are building huge developments and then give money to folks who are cleaning up the Sound. *We're getting a funding strategy going. The Leadership Council will have to make a decision but my guess is that they are going to ask for us to account for existing funding and make sure it's being spent wisely before we start on new ideas.*
- We don't have time to wait a decade for this process to start. *I am not suggesting that we will take a decade, just that it is a process. I think you'll see that it will be talked about. Taxpayers need to see that the money is being spent wisely.*
- But the Partnership is not a regulatory agency. *It's not, but we have to align with our partner agencies. It's a matter of getting them on board and that means using resources responsibly.*
- Who is releasing the funding? Is there a watchdog or a system of checks and balances? Is there a way to verify that small communities are getting the same amount of money? *We are not a funder. The Puget Sound Partnership sets the Action Agenda. Our partner agencies provide funding and we will hold them accountable for aligning priorities with the Action Agenda. These agencies have always been giving money but now they will have a new lens for funding projects. Then, we will hold agencies accountable to their commitments.*
- This lens is manufactured. We have smaller projects that no one sees but that are important. The projects are not in King County but they make a difference. There needs to be a mechanism up front that gives those small projects some merit.
- These small, insignificant things are adding up to a big mess. Small cities that don't have funding are adding up. You can't always choose the "big bang for the buck" project. *Yes, this is all correct. Ecosystem goals will be important.*

*Local assessments need to be balanced with the Action Agenda. That's the art in this and we have to get there. We can't continue like we are.*

- I would like to know what is going to happen in the topic forums. Are they a result of these workshops and will they use this material? Are they a synthesis of the workshop data? *Yes, but there will also be some additional data used. There will be a topic forum for each of the six goals, looking at what we know now and where the gaps are between what were doing now and a healthy Puget Sound. There will be a lead person for each of the topic forums and a group of 4-5 people who will do the synthesis of the workshop material. Stakeholders for each topic will review the materials coming out of the forums. These will happen in April.*
- When will the next set of status and threats be released? *March.*
- Geoducks have an unknown impact on the environment. Are they on the Partnership's radar? *Yes.*

### **Wrap-Up**

Angie Thomson thanked people for coming and let them know that the Friday Harbor and Bellingham meetings have been postponed. She invited participants to fill out comment cards and/or submit comments on the Web site.