

## **South Central Puget Sound Action Area Workshop (Tukwila)**

July 30, 2008

### **Workshop Summary**

#### **Meeting Purpose**

The Puget Sound Partnership held a workshop in Tukwila on July 30, 2008 to gather perspectives from stakeholders and add local knowledge and expertise to Partnership work. The meeting focused on reviewing the Partnership's regional priorities for the recovery of Puget Sound, discussing the newly-drafted action area profile and identifying local priorities.

#### **Meeting Overview**

Approximately 78 people attended the workshop at the Tukwila Community Center. Among those represented were local and tribal governments, local organizations, businesses, federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens.

#### **Meeting Summary**

Martha Kongsgaard, Leadership Council Vice Chairperson, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. She described the Action Agenda process so far, where it is today and where it is going. She discussed the Partnership's desire to find actions that fit the needs of the problems we are facing and solutions to the upcoming funding burden. She stressed that participation is key to the success of the Partnership's work as this is a collaborative, honest and iterative process.

Angie Thomson, meeting facilitator, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She recognized those affiliated with the Partnership and the elected officials present: Jeanne Burbidge, Martha Neuman, Martha Kongsgaard, John Taylor, Bill Ruckelshaus, Burien Mayor Joan McGilton and Tukwila Mayor Jim Haggerton. She summarized the day's agenda and asked for questions and comments from the audience.

Martha Neuman, Action Agenda Director, gave a brief presentation about the Partnership. She underscored the importance of the Action Agenda as a living, adaptable roadmap for the protection and restoration of Puget Sound. She outlined the Partnership's role and gave a timeline of the Action Agenda development process, including: inventory work, February and March action area meetings, and topic forums. Martha briefly described the action area profiles as overview snapshots of the action areas, which attempt to show the essence and uniqueness of the areas.

#### **Session 1: Strategic priorities and action area profile**

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Martha Neuman briefly described the Partnership's initial strategic priorities. She mentioned that the priorities are based on the topic forum work and have been reviewed

by the Leadership Council and Ecosystem Coordination Board. She emphasized the importance of efficiency and effectiveness in the process and explained that every action area will have a chance to weigh in and give feedback as to whether or not these priorities capture the essence of local environmental efforts.

- Can you explain what “urgent and important” means in Priority A? *We need to reword Priority A, and this priority is still evolving. We have been thinking about it as “working together.”*

John Taylor, South Central Action Area Regional Liaison, gave an overview of the action area profile. He said the content of the document is divided into four, necessarily brief, sections. He explained that the Partnership has already received some feedback on this profile, but would appreciate hearing from this audience today and from others through Aug. 15. John mentioned the maps and conceptual models on display and asked participants to review them during the break and make comments.

The following is a list of questions and comments heard regarding the initial strategic priorities following the presentation. Answers are indicated with italics:

- The first statistic about 77% of land in this action area is lightly developed or undeveloped – what percentage of that land could be negatively affected moving forward? *I could not quote an exact percentage right now. Much of that land is protected, but I do not know exact percentages.*
- The profile is well done, but the description is stereotypical of this area. Focus more on:
  - The stress of having 150,000 people living outside the urban growth area
  - Six of the listed Chinook runs in this action area
  - The farmlands preservation ordinance in King County
  - Studies to determine if we have enough water to meet the projected demand
  - King County’s work to address wastewater discharges into Puget Sound
  - Two new wastewater treatment plants under construction
- Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 9 is inventorying all of the current work in this action area, which is not reflected in the profile. Acknowledge the number of jurisdictions in this area responsible for regulatory implementation.
- Make the profile for this action area longer, at least four pages. *The final versions will be a bit longer.*
- **Emphasize air quality in the document. Of the two wastewater treatment plants in the area, only 50% of the wastewater is industrial.**
- This document feels like a missed opportunity to capture all of the growth management work done in this area. The Puget Sound Regional Council’s Vision 2040 is a very comprehensive document on this subject and also heavily emphasizes related environmental concepts. The Partnership seems to have missed another opportunity by not using it as a reference.

- In the physical description or ecosystem stressors sections, mention that there are major pockets of restored habitat in this action area.
- Separate this action area into two action areas based on the physical divide between the area north of Dumas Bay and the area south of Dumas Bay. Add to the profile:
  - Both Commencement Bay and Duwamish Bay will be delisted soon
  - There is an effective habitat restoration plan in place for this action area and we know it will work for urban areas
  - The White River is the only native salmon run in South Puget Sound
- Add the effects of commercial vessels and sewage-related issues to the ecosystem stressors section. Indicate that the size and capacity of the current treatment plants are inadequate.
- From an ecologist's standpoint, the profile does not follow the standard ecological structure or use standard ecological language and statistics. Use more supporting numbers for the facts and a better, more standardized physical description with a systematic model, such as the one used in the Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership paper.
- For every basin in this action area, minimum instream flows have been established. Mention in the section regarding salmon that certain salmon use different streams and habitats at different times. Add percentages and absolute numbers to statistics.
- Mention septs in the profile.
- Add impervious surfaces as a stressor.
- Include ecosystem services in the unique ecosystem characteristics and assets section.
- Mention atmospheric deposition as a stressor.
- The variation in performance within land use categories, such as residential, is much more variable than between land use categories, such as residential versus industrial. The solution is not to reduce runoff in land use categories – the solution is in performance standards.
- Add dates for when instream flows were recorded. Acknowledge the activities in the basin that support instream flows through conservation and efficiency measures. Stressors on instream flows range from urban exempt wells, to lack of enforcement on water resources.
- Ecosystem stressors do not do justice to the upper watershed areas in regards to forests, agriculture and open space. There is a marine bias in this document.
- Indicate the impacts of glacial systems on sediment load in streams and global warming.
- Place more emphasis on education in schools. We need to get kids involved.
- Appropriately sized culverts have been a challenge for this action area.
- Add more upland watershed data, such as, the percentage of harvested forest land in each watershed.
- Mention the decrease in biodiversity in this action area as a result of development related impacts on the ecosystem.

- This action area represents over half of the State's economy. This action area has made many investments to protect the Sound already, such as treatment plants, which are very expensive. I would like to reinforce themes of cost-effectiveness throughout the Partnership work.

Angie encouraged people to comment on the working drafts of the ecosystem models at the break.

## **Session 2: Aligning local and regional priorities**

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Angie led a discussion about the initial priorities by asking the following questions about each priority:

1. What are you currently doing in support of this priority?
2. What are the top priorities?
3. What are the local barriers to achieving the priority?
4. What else can you do to help the Partnership achieve this priority? How can the Partnership help you achieve this priority in your action area?

### **Priority D: *Prevent the sources of water pollution***

Martha Neuman introduced Priority D. She suggested that the attendees think about subjects like source control, treatment, delivery, clean-up, capital projects, education and outreach.

- The Port of Tacoma was recently made secondary permittee under the phase one municipal stormwater permit. The Port is implementing a large program around that mandate.
- Maximize the Vision 2040 plan, which went through a three-year regional process to reach agreement on a list of items. This work should be acknowledged by the Partnership and it has not been so far, as evidenced by your diagram. The diagram does not show an urban growth area and there is no reference to the process utilized to arrive at those conclusions.
- I would like to see a field compliance test for new technologies in the local areas such as bioremediation for drainfields. Strict regulations on local applications are barriers.
- Citizens for a Healthy Bay works locally with cities to mark storm drains with a "no dumping" stencil. Lack of volunteers is a barrier.
- King County is working on a public education program, which includes participation in a group of 36 jurisdictions to educate the public on nonpoint source pollution. King County is also working on a program to overhaul current restrictions on returning unused pharmaceuticals so they do not end up in the Sound. Another program King County is looking at is mapping the most critical urban areas for stormwater retrofit to ensure that money is spent where the largest gains can be made. In addition, the Brightwater Wastewater Treatment plant will

- treat effluent to Class A treatment standards, but we need help with Department of Ecology regulations on reclaimed water use.
- Priority D should not be so generic. A lot of Puget Sound Regional Council's work concludes that transportation is a prime polluter of the Sound. This needs to be emphasized when talking about cleanup and restoration and we need to promote clean methods of transportation. The Vision 2040 plan has a lot of information about transportation as a polluter as well as other polluters.
  - We need to learn from our mistakes and take stock of what actions and programs have failed in the past. For instance, we need to understand what caused the sewer mistake at Seward Park. We also need to understand how pollution controls on Tiger Mountain failed during heavy rains last year, allowing excessive runoff and mud flows to enter the storm drain system.
  - There is little support for low impact development strategies in local jurisdictions with water quality and quantity concerns. Barriers include the lack of training for the local jurisdictional staff, interagency standardization, and coordination of codes.
  - In the Upper Green River watershed, Tacoma Water is moving roads away from streams and adding filtration systems to address runoff into upland streams. Tacoma is also implementing an open space plan.
  - More training should be available at the local level for planners and engineers on low impact development. King County Green Tools is a good program. Stormwater programs should be the most critical focus of the Partnership.
  - The Department of Health and Department of Ecology maintain a shellfish program and a swimming beach program. There is no state funding for the swimming beach program, which identifies polluted areas, notifies the public, and addresses the pollution. The biggest barrier is lack of funding for outreach and education. *The Partnership has a group looking at outreach and education.*
  - Seattle Public Utilities is working on outreach and education, superfund programs, and business inspections. Twenty to twenty-five percent of Seattle is covered by transportation networks, which causes a huge amount of pollution. Funding and inter-agency coordination are barriers. Another barrier is source control for household chemicals that are governed by regulations beyond our control. We need to look at the bigger picture and take the choice out of consumer's hands by regulating what companies are allowed to put into products.
  - Counties and major cities of this action area have been issued permits for stormwater management programs. At the same time, 113 jurisdictions in the state have been asked to draft stormwater management plans. Resources and support through coordinating efforts to help develop and implement these plans is needed. *When we discuss Priority A some of these same issues will surface again.*
  - In King County, there are approximately 150,000 existing septic systems. The County has developed a management plan for septics and amended the necessary codes, but the main barrier is funding. Also, the County has staff to work with specific community members, but not whole communities. We need to implement a population-based approach because sewage problems are a regional issue. The

- Partnership could provide resources to reach out to communities and understand onsite sewage problems.
- Low impact development strategies should be required for all stormwater permits statewide. All known and reasonable technologies need to be considered when addressing our treatment plants. There are 15 toxic chemicals going into Puget Sound, they have not been studied sufficiently. There also needs to be more emphasis on air quality and household products.
  - The City of Seattle installed natural drainage systems throughout neighborhoods to address stormwater pollution. The City is also promoting citizen stewardship of resources through the use of cisterns, green roofs and other water filtration techniques. The barrier is funding.
  - Assist private landowners or provide incentives to encourage behavior change. Place a tax on harmful chemicals to reduce use.
  - The City of Seattle is addressing the problems that street sweeping creates and exploring street vacuuming as an alternative. The City is also trying to understand where toxics are most prevalent in the carbon footprint and use those areas as targets for the limited available funding.
  - The profile needs to better articulate that these problems do not respect jurisdictional boundaries.

**Priority C: *Reestablish the ecosystem processes that sustain Puget Sound***

- King County is developing an intergovernmental salmon recovery effort. The County has been very successful at involving many jurisdictions in this action area to tackle problems like salmon recovery, but the barrier is keeping them involved due to lack of sustainable funding. There is also a local waste management program in King County that focuses on upstream impacts and household chemicals, which we are trying to approach at a national level.
- The Cascade Land Conservancy has found restoration projects in this area challenging due to the lack of community involvement and jurisdictional support, primarily because most of the areas we work in are largely forgotten and ignored. Barriers include lack of funding for vegetation.
- It is an onerous and costly process for communities to initiate shoreline armoring removal projects, but there are agencies and resources within the State that can help. In Commencement Bay, we have an estuarine landscape scale habitat restoration plan to help people navigate this process.
- In the Fennel Creek watershed, land is being devastated due to deforestation and development activity. Citizens see these things happening, but do not know how or where to voice their concerns.
- The City of Seattle has a grant program for citizens and community groups to restore habitat and creeks damaged by stormwater. The City did a survey of shoreline homeowners on Lake Washington and developed a citizen's guide describing how to accomplish activities like removing armoring. The process is

- technically difficult and expensive for citizens. If landowners are willing to do the right thing, we should find ways to make it easier.
- The Cascade Land Conservancy helps people who want to engage in restoration projects. We find the technical expertise, assist in understanding the rules and regulations, and help obtain funding.
  - The City of Seattle is updating its shoreline regulations. The Department of Ecology requires a restoration plan as part of this update, but provides no technical assistance. The Partnership could help in bridge these gaps.
  - King County is retrofitting roads and bridges for salmon passage, reconnecting the floodplains where possible, and promoting reclaimed water for non-potable re-use.
  - Friends of the Cedar River Watershed partnered with the City of Seattle, King County and local communities to provide free labor for plantings and weed pulls. We efficiently leverage County dollars because we only pay one person during the actual cleanup. We have access to resources, as far as man power, but we need more funding to keep the organization intact.
  - Seattle Public Utilities has the Cedar River Processes plan that encompasses land management, fish and water flow management. This is a comprehensive effort that includes an ongoing oversight group.
  - The Puyallup River Watershed Council is developing an education program using the farm planning model, the biodiversity planning model and a shellfish restoration model. The goal is to target sensitive and critical areas and to apply it to an urban level through education at the parcel or neighborhood level. We hope to offer some incentives through cost-sharing or technical assistance.

**Priority B: *Protect the intact ecosystem processes that sustain Puget Sound***

- American Rivers is developing a petition for outstanding resource water protection. It is used to protect high quality sources before they become degraded.
- The City of Kent has a wetland management program, which includes staff to assess sensitive areas near new development and make recommendations. The City also has a native plant nursery to help mitigate post-development effects to sensitive areas.
- The Washington State onsite code has no field compliance standard. We need to pass legislation to amend these codes.
- Consider using prior information for growth management planning, such as the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 plan. There is a useful model for assessing effects of impervious surfaces currently and over time. There is no reward system or incentives for developers to move away from current development strategies towards low impact development.
- We need to identify intact processes throughout the Sound and monitor them to find a starting point.
- The Vision 2040 plan addresses global warming, critical areas ordinances, the Growth Management Act and implemented salmon plans.

- Implement salmon plans through steady, predictable and sustainable funding sources.
- I do not agree with the practice of mitigating wetlands loss by creating or enhancing wetlands elsewhere.

**Priority A: *Ensure that activities and funding are focused on the most urgent and important problems facing the Sound. (That is: Work more effectively and efficiently on priorities)***

- The Partnership should emphasize community stewardship and maintain a database of community level programs.
- Local governments need help with local regulations, how they work and how to enforce them. The Department of Ecology has a program which funds some projects regarding regulations and may be able to do more in the future.
- The challenge of prioritization and funding is that there is not enough to go around. Implementing projects that benefit the entire region will create effects on a broader level and funds will have been used more efficiently. The Partnership should consider creating one funding source for all Puget Sound recovery projects; a clearinghouse through which all funding sources pool their monies.
- From a regional perspective, we should be looking systemically at issues rather than piece by piece. We should target projects that have a ripple effect. Also, local jurisdictions face very restrictive state permitting regulations. We might see more efficient implementation if we could find a way to loosen those controls.
- We need a system of regional messaging for better effectiveness.
- We need to establish a strategic stewardship base.
- A good pilot project example previously used for transportation is the Interstate 405 program. It was a collaborative program oriented towards actions and planning. The funding was broken up into three regional sections so the burden was shared. They used a narrative rather than a catalogue, like the profiles, for their communication piece. You need to create a story, but the story needs an image to capture the ecosystem boundaries. Initiate a GIS mapping effort supporting the narrative and creating something tangible that can be shared with the public – like a brochure telling the Partnership’s story.
- Do not pick one specific area to focus on. An ecosystem-wide balance that avoids fads is needed.
- An administrative lien is a tool to look at private sector processes and apply them to public sector processes. They improve efficiency in the public workplace to free up time for work outside the daily scope.
- We need to better understand the relationships between our impacts and our environment. We also need to understand how monitoring and adaptive management fit into all of this work.
- Friends of the Cedar River Watershed is developing the Cedar River WASL Applied program. We have access to school systems and therefore students. We

- also have contact with non-profits. Bringing these two sectors together will create a model for environmental education.
- The Partnership could be effective in monitoring the environmental impacts of King County permitted developments over time.
  - People for Puget Sound identified the following barriers to Priority A: budget cutbacks lead to the loss of enforcement staff, no system for tracking waivers from critical areas ordinances, and cumulative impacts from permits are not addressed, especially for air quality permitting.
  - Monitoring and adaptive management are key in the first few years of a project's implementation to determine a baseline for tracking accountability.
  - Mitigation Works is creating a database that could be helpful as an information clearinghouse.
  - Do not lose sight of the science-based view of what will truly help Puget Sound. This seems to have gotten lost today, as well as in the topic forum discussion papers.
  - King County is initiating a study to address the effectiveness of regulations in aquatic resources.
  - The Departments of Health and Ecology are focusing on existing programs and determining where there are gaps.
  - A shift in attitude about what the government can actually do without the help of the populace is necessary. We need to find the compelling piece that is going to get people to change their behavior and collectively step up. We need to look at what is cost-effective to implement, like water conservation, which has been successful.
  - The Cascade Land Conservancy has set a goal to conserve 1.3 million acres over 100 years across three counties in Western Washington. We are looking at transferable development rights to help with this goal.
  - Earth Economics is conducting an ecosystem services study to find their value and locate funding mechanisms for protecting them.
  - In Norway, there is compact development due to higher taxes on income rather than property value. Look beyond our borders and see how land is conserved in other parts of the country and the world. Look at real incentive-based solutions.
  - There are 2.5 million people in this action area, therefore, we have a tax base that could help fund many of these actions, but we are limited by the state. The Partnership may want to think broadly about ways we can help each other across action areas to achieve our end goal.

## **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

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Martha Neuman explained some of the upcoming work the Partnership will be engaged in, such as developing a long-term funding plan, developing a strategic science program and communications and outreach strategy, refining and rebuilding the problem statement, and identifying where the Partnership can fill in gaps and help coordinate actions. She explained that the Partnership is in the process of working on a SEPA

checklist and there will be a public comment period. Martha thanked everyone for their time and input.

Bill Ruckelshaus thanked everyone for attending. He acknowledged this is the last of several meetings conducted over the past few weeks and that they have been very useful and necessary if the Partnership is to be successful in restoring and maintaining the health of Puget Sound. Bill agreed with the sentiment that funding is a problem, but another issue is how to achieve this goal while supporting human prosperity and well-being. He discussed the need for education and outreach and garnering the public's support for this process.