

South Sound Action Area Workshop (Olympia)

March 7, 2008

Workshop Summary

Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a workshop in Olympia on March 7, 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 100 people attended the afternoon workshop from 1 – 5 p.m. at Evergreen State College in Olympia. Among those represented were local and tribal governments, city and county staff, local organizations, business, federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens working for the protection and restoration of south Puget Sound.

Meeting Summary

Pat Serie, facilitator, opened the meeting. Scott Redman, Puget Sound Partnership staff, gave an overview presentation describing the Puget Sound Partnership, the six ecosystem goals and the Action Agenda process. He then summarized next steps including NOAA's status and threats analysis, topic forums, and incorporating public input into the Action Agenda.

Scott introduced Mary Mahaffey, Puget Sound Partnership Risk Analysis steering committee representative from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who presented an overview of NOAA's status and threats analysis. She indicated that Mary Ruckelshaus, NOAA scientist, is synthesizing information from existing data sources to produce a current snapshot of the health of Puget Sound. Mary emphasized that the data are not complete; the images presented are only examples of how to represent the data.

Scott Redman introduced Dan Wrye, Ecosystem Coordination Board representative for the South Sound action area. Dan discussed the south sound core group, a newly formed local collaborative effort consisting of counties, tribes, cities, ports, conservation and watershed groups, salmon recovery entities, military bases, and Ecosystem Coordination Board members. Dan outlined the core group's goals and upcoming workshops and events. He emphasized the core group's focus on sound science, the emphasis on watershed/inlet level detail, and identified key threats and existing plans for each identified watershed/inlet.

Dan summarized his presentation by noting that South Puget Sound is unique geographically, socially, and thus requires a unique process. He reiterated that the Puget Sound Partnership must not start over from the beginning. The core group is looking at

existing recovery plans, and at aligning risks and actions on a watershed/inlet basis, and will pass its findings along to the Partnership.

Pat Serie encouraged attendees to continue participating in the dialogue by filling out inventory comment forms, meeting comment forms or submitting comments online.

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

- Will local information be included in the Sound-wide analysis of status and threats? *Yes.*
- Are you considering throwing out previous plans? *No, but the Partnership is re-evaluating existing plans and strategies.*
- The problem is that the existing plans are not funded.
- The legislation requires the Partnership to set benchmarks, but what is a “target”? *Targets are quantitative long-term goals while benchmarks are interim goals. The Leadership Council has agreed to use existing benchmarks and targets where possible.*
- The inventory report is missing Department of Health information. *This is a snapshot, but not all programs are in the database and reported here.*
- Some of us have seen smelt in Budd Inlet. The Partnership needs to emphasize innovation and bioremediation, look to Japan for examples.
- I didn’t see land use anywhere in these presentations. There was no mention of critical ordinances or other regulatory measures. *We must look at land use and conversion, and things that push the carrying capacity, if we are to improve or maintain conditions. People are coming, and we need to sustain the economy. We need to retrofit existing infrastructure. Looking to Chambers Clover Watershed as an example, this is the overall strategy – retrofit, maintain, restore. In other more pristine areas there is a preservation approach and efforts to reduce future development pressures.*
- I am concerned about scientific rigor and evaluation. Will there be a process to look at plans and say whether plans and actions identified will get where we want to go and address key gaps? Will science be applied to actions which already exist in management plans? *There will be a process and we will do the best we can given time limitations. When the September 2008 deadline arrives not everything will be complete, but science work will continue as a priority.*

- The last legislative session passed a measure for Marine Resource Committees (MRCs) to be created in the South Sound. They already exist in the northern areas. Henderson Inlet needs help. Mason County is working with the Conservation District to create MRCs. I think in the South Sound the legislature needs to have the ability to create these MRCs. I'm not sure that just watershed groups are going to do it.
- One thing we know is that the majority of the people aren't aware of the problem. Implicit in your remarks is the need for a long-term education program to get people involved. *Every one of the plans listed has a component for education and citizen involvement. It is something that is absolutely essential and we need formal structure to make sure it happens. Also it's true that there has been talk that the Partnership needs to move the needle in informing people that the Sound is in dire need of improvement. I think that this will be a huge challenge because people look at the surface, not below it. People relate to the idea that "this is where I live" and will own their watershed.*
- I want to make sure I understand what's happening here. These workshops are to identify problems and you will go back later and bring in the scientific community to prioritize and implement programs? *We will be identifying threats and also identifying criteria for prioritizing actions.*

Five facilitated 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. Pat Serie let participants know that a meeting summary will be produced with highlights and that the topic forum leads will get the notes from each flip chart for each action area (available to others upon request). Key responses from the breakout groups are highlighted below:

What are the biggest threats to the Puget Sound?

Water Quality	Land use (e.g. removal of vegetation/decrease of native vegetation, population growth, stormwater quantity and contents); public/political will and lack of enforcement of existing regulations; lack of education
Water Quantity	More people coming, loss of tree cover, disruption of flows
Species/Biodiversity	Interruption of the food web through overfishing, overharvesting, and pollution; existing land use practices and water quality; land use conversion from forested to developed; invasive species
Human Health/Quality of Life	Pollution (point source, non-point source, air pollution),

	population increases, lack of funding, policy status quo, values and behavior changes, chronic disease, infrastructure failure
Habitat/Land Use	Financial incentives to develop in the shore zone, values of ecosystem goals and services not quantified compared to economic benefits, lack of incentives and resources for stewardship and restoration, lack of political will and consistent commitment, lack of enforcement of existing policies, population growth and associated development

What criteria are most important in evaluating potential projects?

Water Quality	Measurable results, prevention over restoration, consideration of cost and level of difficulty to get best cost benefit
Water Quantity	Thorough thought process; “bang for the buck,” reuse and conserve; consider rising costs and act now; educate, involve, and inform
Species/Biodiversity	Sound science, focus on lasting results, focus on causes over symptoms, results-oriented focus with measurable benchmarks, greatest ecological benefits over other benefits, focus on conservation/prevention over restoration
Human Health/Quality of Life	Impact on behavior with measurable impacts/metrics, costs and benefits (appropriateness), direct link to goals and sub-goals, reaching a new audience
Habitat/Land Use	None listed

Following the breakout sessions workshop participants shared additional comments and questions. The following are the responses. Answers are highlighted in italics.

- The lack of funding needs to be addressed.
- A lot of people identified population growth, but even with zero growth we have issues today.
- Political will is lacking in enforcing existing regulations. Until we have the ability to enforce regulations, things are only going to get worse.
- We might think the Sound has problems right now, but in my lifetime it has been significantly cleaned up. There used to be no sewage treatment. I remember Lake Union in Seattle catching fire. I remember raw sewage flushing directly

into the Bay in Olympia. Things have come a long way already and we should see it in a positive sense. We are getting better.

- I'm sure in our breakout groups many of us were revisiting problems we've seen before. It's great that the Partnership is going through this process, but in some areas we are using old thinking, and we need more new thinking. One example is habitat restoration money being spent that might be better spent on septic systems.
- What role is DFW playing? Are they going to be stepping forward with the Partnership? I read that smelt fishing has decreased dramatically. DFW stands back and doesn't act proactively. I would like to see DFW step forward with the people and not be so standoffish. *[Response from DFW staff person]: DFW is actively involved and encourages the Partnership in this Action Agenda process.*
- I was struck with the word "ecological" in one of those reports. Many people are just getting used to that word. I think it's wonderful that there's such an emphasis on science. I wonder about the role of spirituality in this. Many people associate themselves with the environment in a spiritual way. Faith communities could become extraordinary partners. There are a lot of people writing about this now and it might be a dimension worth exploring.
- Our group discussed public education. I wonder if the Partnership has any thoughts on how to frame the issue in a more positive light to get more people involved who are not aware of the health of the Sound. Creating a more positive message might help involve more people.
- I'd like to see more attention on areas away from the shoreline. Inland areas, creeks, streams and rivers often carry a great deal of pollutants into the Sound. Loss of water inland is not being correlated to the loss of oxygen rich water in the bay. *Snowcaps to whitecaps is one of our themes but it's good feedback that you're not seeing this yet.*
- One theme I'm hearing is outreach/education. I suggest going to Starbucks.com and checking out the Make Your Mark program. There are incentives for their employees to volunteer and write a check for community organizations.
- What about the role of chlorine entering the Sound? With more wastewater treatment it's accelerated and is creating dissolved oxygen problems.
- Is there any way to get this publicized better? *Send out to list serves, tell people you know, and if you have any other ideas we'd like to hear them. This was a fast process, but we should be able to get more advance notice next time.*

- Perhaps the Partnership could include on your distribution list the members of the original WRIA Boards. *Good idea.*
- Is there going to be a database created to capture elements of this discussion? Will that be accessible online to the public? *There is a database, but we are not yet sure how easy it will be to access. Meeting summaries will all be posted online.*
- I run a dataset online. If you put data out and make it available, you will have more people than you ever wanted offering feedback. Be sure to put a feedback loop in so you have a manageable way of bringing back information. Maybe implement some kind of online voting process.
- Was it intentional to leave out solutions? *It was intentional to wait until later to talk about it. We are in the process of gathering the inventory of actions people are already taking. Then we will come back and talk about what's missing. Certainly in May that's what we will be talking about.*

Wrap-Up

Pat Serie thanked people for coming and invited participants to attend the community conversation that included a generalized presentation and open discussion of threats and other material. She reminded participants to stay involved by filling out comment forms. She mentioned that the Web site is growing rapidly and is a good place to see what is happening and submit comments. Scott Redman also mentioned the topic forums and their role in processing and synthesizing information.