

Topic Forums – Frequently Asked Questions

What are the topic forums?

The topic forums are the Partnership’s process to help synthesize our region’s understanding of each of the six Partnership goals and identify strategies needed in order to have a healthy Puget Sound. The topic forums are designed to engage science and policy experts at the strategic and tactical level. The forums are not intended to identify detailed actions or how to implement specific strategies and actions.

There are five individual topic forums which will be followed by an integrated workshop synthesizing across topics, leading to a more unified ecosystem approach to protecting and restoring Puget Sound. The topic forums are:

- Habitat and land use (protection and restoration)
- Human health
- Species, food-webs and biodiversity
- Water quality (wastewater and stormwater, as well as toxic, nutrient and pathogen inputs)
- Water quantity (instream and non-instream)

How will the topic forums inform the Action Agenda?

Each individual topic forum and the cross-topic workshop will provide scientific and policy information to help answer the following questions:

Action Agenda Question	Role of Topic Forum
What is the current status of the Puget Sound’s health and what are the biggest threats to it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help define the overall problem statement for each Partnership goal. This issue-focused work will complement the geographic-focused status and threats analysis.
What actions must be taken that will move us from where we are today towards a healthy Puget Sound by 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help identify strategic level principles for setting priorities • Help identify strategic and tactical direction for each issue and the ecosystem as a whole. This work will include identifying what actions are on track, should be added, or may need to be changed.

What will the topic forums produce?

Each individual topic forum will produce very brief discussion papers, one to answer each of the following questions. The papers are meant to provide an overview of the answer to each question; papers will not be a comprehensive summary of each topic.

1. From a scientific perspective, what is the current, documented knowledge about this issue?
2. From a scientific perspective, what do we know about the effectiveness and certainty of management approaches aimed at addressing threats to each issue?
3. What policy approaches are currently being used to address each issue in Puget Sound?
4. Using the results from the first three questions:
 - a. What principles should be used to guide strategies and actions?
 - b. What work needs to be done to address the documented threats (what strategies should continue, be added, or changed)
 - c. How will we know we are making progress on each issue?

Detailed, topic specific questions are at the end of this FAQ.

An additional discussion paper will be prepared prior to the cross-topic workshop. This paper will synthesize the work of the individual topic forums and help identify the inter-relationships and inter-dependencies that exist across the six topic areas. The goal of this cross-topic synthesis is to develop an integrated understanding of the priorities for restoring the health of the Puget Sound ecosystem as a whole.

Who is leading the topic forums?

The Partnership selected six experts in their respective fields to lead each topic forum. Small teams of scientists and policy specialists are assisting the lead expert in answering specific questions related to each topic. These teams will present the information for broader review by other experts and interests in the topic forum workshop.

How do I help prepare for and contribute to the topic forums?

Five individual topic forums will be held in April and early May to discuss draft papers, and one cross-topic workshop will be held in late May. (Note that the Quality of Life Topic Forum will be part of the cross-topic synthesis workshop to ensure the discussion integrates human concerns.) Scientific and policy experts can help prepare for the topic forums by reviewing the draft discussion papers that will be available on the Partnership Web site on April 14. Reviews should focus on whether the discussion papers accurately characterize the answer to each question. Topic forum discussions will be focused and facilitated.

For those who cannot attend a topic forum or would like to submit comments, there will be a Web-based form for each topic forum.

What information is being considered as part of the topic forums?

The topic forums build on previous work conducted throughout the Puget Sound region. Specific work being included are the group reports and public comments from the 2006 Partnership and some advanced work conducted in early 2007, Sound Science, the 2007-09 Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan, as well as plans and reports that exist for each individual topic. The topic forum working papers will include documentation and references to help the Partnership base decisions on science.

What about other important topics that the Partnership will address?

In addition to the six topics, several cross-discipline workgroups will meet independently to advise the topic forums on issues that are not limited to specific forums. These cross-discipline workgroups include:

- Accountability (as linked to monitoring)
- Ecological Monitoring and Adaptive Management, including data management
- Education
- Funding Strategy
- Science Plan

The Partnership will be organizing separate working groups and review processes for these topics.

Specific Topic Questions

Questions related to science are labeled S1 and S2. Questions related to policy are labeled P1 and P2. Answers to each question will be summarized in a separate paper, approximately five pages in length.

Human Health Forum

S1: Status of Threats to Human Health in Puget Sound

1. Summarizing/synthesizing key findings from previous efforts, and updating as appropriate, what is the current documented knowledge about threats to human health in the water, sediment and biota of Puget Sound?
2. How does the current status compare to a ‘healthy’ or reference condition for human health in Puget Sound?

S2: Management Approaches Addressing Threats to Human Health

1. From a scientific standpoint, what do we know about the effectiveness and certainty of current management approaches aimed at addressing threats to human health?
2. What are the primary empirical findings relating to these management approaches and their documented effectiveness?
3. How is effectiveness measured and documented?
4. From an empirical perspective, which management approaches have been documented to have the most effective results?

P1: Policy Approaches to Address Threats to Human Health: What is currently being done?

1. What policy approaches are being used to address threats to human health associated with water, sediments and biota in the Puget Sound region?

P2: Needs Assessment and Actions: What are the gaps?

1. Using the results from S1, S2 and P1, what needs to be done to address the documented threats to human health from water, sediments and biota in the Puget Sound region?
2. What criteria should be considered for prioritizing actions to address threats to human health?
3. How will we know we are making progress on human health?

Human Quality of Life Forum (Note that the Quality of Life Topic Forum will be part of the cross-topic synthesis workshop to ensure the discussion integrates human concerns.)

P1: Attributes Contributing to Human Quality of Life in Puget Sound

1. Summarizing/synthesizing key findings from previous efforts, and updating as appropriate, what attributes in the Puget Sound region contribute to the overall quality of life?

P2: Threats to Quality of Life

1. What are the known/documented threats to the attributes contributing to the quality of life in the Puget Sound region?

P3: Policy Approaches to Address Threats

1. What do we know about the effectiveness and certainty of management approaches aimed at addressing threats to quality of life?

P4: Needs Assessment and Actions: What needs to be done to address the threats to quality of life in Puget Sound?

1. Using the results from P1, P2 and P3, what needs to be done to address the documented threats to quality of life in the Puget Sound region?
2. What needs the greatest attention?
3. What criteria should be considered for prioritizing actions to address threats to quality of life?
4. How will we know we are making progress on improving human quality of life?

Land Use/Habitat Protection and Restoration Forum

S1: Status of Land Use/Habitat in Puget Sound

1. Summarizing/synthesizing key findings from previous efforts and updating as appropriate, what is the current documented knowledge about threats to habitat as a result of land use practices in Puget Sound?
2. How does the current status compare to a ‘healthy’ or reference condition for habitat in the Puget Sound region?

S2: Management Approaches Addressing Land Use/Habitat Protection and Restoration

1. From an empirical perspective, what do we know about the effectiveness and certainty of protection and restoration approaches aimed at addressing threats to habitat?

2. What are the primary empirical findings relating to management approaches and their documented effectiveness?

P1: Policy Approaches to Address Land Use and Habitat: What is currently being done?

1. What policy approaches are being used to address land use management relative to habitat protection and enhancement in the Puget Sound region?

P2: Needs Assessment and Actions: What are the gaps?

1. Using the results from S1, S2 and P1, what needs to be done to address the documented threats to habitat from land use practices in the Puget Sound region?
2. What criteria should be considered for prioritizing actions to address land use impacts to habitat?
3. How will we measure progress?

Species and Biodiversity Forum

S1: Status of Species, Biodiversity and Food Web Function in Puget Sound

1. Summarizing/synthesizing key findings from previous efforts, and updating as appropriate, what is the current status of the species, biodiversity and food web function in Puget Sound?
2. What are the threats to species, biodiversity and food web function in the Puget Sound region?
3. How does current status compare to a 'healthy' or reference condition for species, biodiversity or food web function in the Puget Sound region?

S2: Management Approaches Addressing Species, Biodiversity and Food Web Functions

1. From an empirical perspective, what do we know about the effectiveness and certainty of management approaches aimed at addressing threats to key species, biodiversity and food web functioning?

P1: Policy Approaches to Address Biodiversity in Puget Sound: What is currently being done?

1. What are the policy approaches that are being used to address biodiversity in the Puget Sound region?

P2: Needs Assessment and Actions: What are the gaps?

1. Using the results from S1, S2 and P1, what needs to be done to address the documented threats to species and biodiversity in the Puget Sound region?
2. What criteria should be considered for prioritizing actions to address species, biodiversity and the food web?
3. How will we know we are making progress on species, biodiversity and the food web?

Water Quantity Forum

S1: Status of Freshwater Quantity

1. Summarizing/synthesizing key findings from previous efforts to date and updating as appropriate, what do we know about the quantity of freshwater in the Puget Sound region?

S2: Effectiveness of Management Approaches

1. What does the scientific literature tell us about the most effective approaches for managing freshwater supply?

P1: Policy Approaches to Address Freshwater Supply in Puget Sound: What are we doing now?

1. What policy approaches are being used to manage water supply in the Puget Sound region, for habitat, species and for supply?

P2: Needs assessment and Actions: Where are the gaps?

1. Using answers to questions S1, S2, P1 and summaries for the Action Areas, what needs to be done to address documented threats to freshwater supply management in the Puget Sound region?
2. What criteria should be considered for prioritizing actions to address freshwater supply needs?
3. What scientific and/or policy-based target “endpoints” could be considered for this topic?
4. How will we know we are making progress on improving the condition of freshwater supply in the Puget Sound region?

Water Quality Forum

S1: Status of Water Quality in Puget Sound

1. Summarizing/synthesizing key findings from previous efforts and updating as appropriate, what is the current documented knowledge about threats to water quality in Puget Sound?
2. How does the current status compare to a ‘healthy’ or reference condition for water quality in the Puget Sound region?

S2: Management Approaches Addressing Water Quality

1. From an empirical perspective, what do we know about the effectiveness and certainty of management approaches aimed at addressing threats to water quality?

P1: Policy Approaches to Address Water Quality: What is currently being done?

1. What are the policy approaches that are being used to address water quality in the Puget Sound region?

P2: Needs Assessment and Actions: What are the gaps?

1. Using the answers to the questions addressed in S1, S2 and P1 what needs to be done to address the documented threats to water quality in the Puget Sound region?
2. What criteria should be considered for prioritizing actions for to address threats to water quality?
3. What scientific and/or policy-based target “endpoints” could be considered for this topic (e.g., “how much”)?
4. How will we know we are making progress on water quality?