PugetSoundPartnership
our sound, our community, our chance

Water Quality Topic Forum Workshop

Seattle, April 25, 2008
Workshop Summary

Meeting Purpose
In April 2008, the Puget Sound Partnership asked experts from around the region to lead a series of six topic forums, each designed to address one of the six Partnership goals (human health, quality of life, water quantity, water quality, species/biodiversity/food web, and habitat/land use). Forum leads helped identify a core team and developed a discussion paper guided by science and policy questions provided by the Partnership. Each topic forum (with the exception of quality of life) hosted a public workshop to present the paper's findings and solicit feedback.

Meeting Overview
Approximately 160 people attended the Water Quality topic forum at the Washington State Convention & Trade Center in Seattle. Among those represented were local and tribal governments, local organizations, businesses, federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens.

Meeting Summary
The meeting facilitator, Pat Serie, welcomed participants and introduced presenters, Partnership staff and topic forum core team members. David Dicks, Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership, provided an introduction to the Partnership and Martha Neuman, Action Agenda Director, described the development of the Action Agenda and gave an overview of the topic forum process.

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

- How are you going to integrate tribes? *We know tribal issues are central to our region and our culture, politically and geographically, so we are working extensively with the tribes. In fact, within the Partnership leadership, tribes are well represented with one seat on the Leadership Council and three seats on the Ecosystem Coordination Board.*

- In the Discussion Paper, there are many quotations from past studies. These are not easy to find online. Can you hyperlink the references to the actual studies? *Great comment, we will try to get that done to the best of our ability.*

- Looking at the agenda, it seems like there is a heavy emphasis on science. We would like to talk about strategies and where we go next, when do we do that? *We*

want to link the science to the actions. That's the design of this process. Session two in the afternoon is action based.

- Are you going to take an "institutional barriers screen" to this information? It isn't recognized here. *Yes, that's a huge part of what were doing. The Leadership Council is talking about this practical aspect, about how we are going to get this done. Institutional impediments are huge and it's a large part of what we're doing.*

- What are we doing with Canada? *We have had some meetings with Canada. We know it's important and it will be part of the Action Agenda.*

- You're not in this alone. We're fighting this battle at NOAA. We are excited to see the progress and the monitoring changes, and then to get our limited enforcement staff out in the field getting this done.

Session 1: Overview of discussion papers

- What do we know about the status and threats to Puget Sound?
  What is the documented effectiveness of solutions to addressing the threats?
  What are we currently doing to address the problem?

Jacques White, The Nature Conservancy, provided an update on the risk assessment work underway by NOAA. Joan Lee, Bill Derry, and Randy Shuman, Water Quality core team members, gave an overview of the discussion paper.

Eight facilitated workgroups were asked to consider the following questions regarding the discussion of status and threats to Puget Sound in the paper:

- What did we get right?
- Have we missed any major findings?
- What are the key themes from this paper that should carry forward to the Action Agenda?

Discussion notes from these workgroups are available upon request. Key responses are highlighted below:

What did we get right?

- Sources of pollution
- Balance of stormwater vs. wastewater
- Land use vs. water quality
- Broad coverage of topics

- Good to differentiate pre-1995 development vs. current (using current stormwater standards)

Have we missed any major findings?

- Oil issues not considered adequately
- Toxics in biota
- Circulation patterns of Puget Sound (South Sound in particular)
- Vehicle emissions carried by stormwater is unregulated and needs more emphasis
- Need to look at the Department of Ecology's paper on loading and flame retardants

What are the key themes from this paper that should carry forward to the Action Agenda?

- Take a look at legacies:
    - Rural shoreline developments
    - Untreated stormwater
- Consider ecosystem values to cost/benefit analysis
- The connection between land use and transportation and how the Growth Management Act treats them
- Pollution prevention source control

The workgroups were also asked to consider the following questions with regards to the paper's discussion of the effectiveness of solutions for addressing problems:

- What did we get right?
- Have we missed any major findings (in the literature)? Local? Elsewhere?
- What are the key themes from this paper that should carry forward to the Action Agenda?

What did we get right?

- Recognition that we have to make up for the past
- Integrated monitoring program
- General context

Have we missed any major findings (in the literature)? Local? Elsewhere?

- Data exists of effect of LID techniques
- Don't know the effects of infiltration on groundwater – Redmond will generate data on retrofits for 2008
- "Smart Growth"
- Street sweeping is a water quality issue – City of Baltimore study

- Sinclair Inlet information

What are the key themes from this paper that should carry forward to the Action Agenda?

- Address new and existing development (retrofit) –land use strategy, regulations, current process
- Funding for local monitoring, enforcement, education
- Identify institutional barriers to implementation
- Education / behavior change
- Pollution prevention source control

After a brief summary of workgroup discussions, the following comments were heard:

- I didn't hear you say the Clean Air Act is a regulatory tool – that's very powerful.

- Water quality has to be linked to biology in this paper. The biological link will connect the topic of water quality to the topic of species/biodiversity/food web.

- Lack of enforcement and institutional barriers to doing this work need to be recognized as a theme.

- Newer, more modern tools for monitoring are available now but are not being used.

- The reports in this paper cast too positive a light on the current status and don't reflect the enormity of the problem we are facing.

- If you spend money, you should get something for it. We've done a lot here in the Puget Sound after spending lots of money. In order to build public support, we have to say "we've done a lot." We have to say that these things are worth doing. We aren't just correcting things that are wrong. Good things are here today that are worth saving.

- We need to paint a dire picture of Puget Sound and tell people what we need to do. We can't say, "If we have time and money, we'll do this. . ." We keep listing species on the Endangered Species List. By looking at the biology associated with events such as fish kills, we can figure out what actions to take in order to prevent these things from happening.

Session 2: What are the gaps? What principles/criteria should we use? What actions should we stop, add, realign, continue?

The Water Quality core team presented their personal highlights of the discussion paper. Core team panel members included:

- Derek Booth, Stillwater Sciences
- Bill Derry, CH2MHill
- Randy Shuman, King County Department of Natural Resources
- John Ferguson, University of Washington
- Bill Moore, Department of Ecology
- Anne Fairbrother, Parametrix
- Charles Wisdom, Parametrix

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

- I haven't heard anyone address a numeric standard for temperature or other measures of water quality. Are temperature and dissolved oxygen problems that are natural? Can we possibly meet the goals we're setting? *The 303(d) list is always a source of tension.*

- In wastewater treatment, how can we retrofit to fix nitrous oxide problems? *Some people are working on this but we have not studied it.*

- For air quality we've established critical loads and it's been successful. A lot of the issues we are discussing here are the same issues of air quality and global climate change. We need to address problems for all these reasons. Can synergy take place?

- In our discussion we talked about the rules and regulations that we have and how we can make better use of them. *Current regulations are inconsistent and not well-applied. This is a social commitment.*

- Thanks for bringing up the conflicting nature of regulations. Some regulations are in conflict with the Growth Management Act. I'd like to see ideas on how we can change the Growth Management Act so that it doesn't interfere.

Martha Neuman stated that funding and education and outreach are intentionally not in the paper. She asked participants to contact her if they would like to be involved in the Partnership's education and outreach efforts.

Eight facilitated workgroups were asked to consider the following questions:

- Have we accurately captured the criteria that should be reflected in the strategies to address threats to Puget Sound?

- Did we capture actions that should continue, be added, be changed or stopped?
- What are the key themes from this paper that need to be carried forward into the Action Agenda?

Discussion notes from these workgroups are available upon request. Key responses are highlighted below:

Have we accurately captured the criteria that should be reflected in the strategies to address threats to Puget Sound?

- Address toughest political agendas
- Ecosystem based approach
- Region-wide projects
- Creative solutions
- Ecosystem services
- Partnerships (e.g. with farms, pharmaceutical companies)

Did we capture actions that should continue, be added, be changed or stopped?

- Low impact development
- Watershed-based stormwater planning
- Lack of staff experience, expertise with NPDES permits
- Limitation of local and state governments
- More status and threats work needed
- Legal programs not working effectively
- Water reuse
- Source control
- Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

What are the key themes from this paper that need to be carried forward into the Action Agenda?

- Revisit existing tools
- Prioritize actions
- Consider population growth
- Address institutional barriers (political will, integrated science, different entities regulating different aspects)
- Prevention / source control
- Low impact development (requirement vs. market-based approach)
- Non-point programs and solutions – education, regulatory, codes/incentives
- Use “plain talk”
- Oil spill prevention
- Enforce and use existing regulations

- Address cumulative effects of management practices
- Develop incentives – business and personal
- Develop regional management for on-site septics
- Education / social marketing / behavior change
- Monitoring should be refocused

Wrap up and Next Steps

Martha Neuman thanked everyone for coming and thanked the core team for their hard work. She stressed the importance of continuing to contribute online and via e-mail. The Partnership will accept comments on the papers through May 6, and post comments received on the Web site. Pat Serie reminded everyone to check the Web site for the summary notes and for information on the other topic forums.