

Whidbey Action Area Workshop

February 27, 2008

Workshop Summary

Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a workshop in Everett on February 27, 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 75 people attended the workshop at the Northwest Stream Center. 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

Sarah Brandt, the meeting facilitator, welcomed participants to the meeting. Sarah introduced Steve Sakuma, Leadership Council representative, who discussed the Partnership and the Action Agenda process, reminding the group that this is an adaptive, iterative process that will build upon existing programs and information that has already been collected. Steve emphasized the importance of working collaboratively, compromising as decisions are considered, and reaching out to the community at large within an urgent timeframe in order to build a legacy for future generations.

Gary Rowe, Ecosystem Conservation Board (ECB) representative for the Whidbey action area, explained the role of the ECB as advisor to the Leadership Council.

David St. John, King County Department of Natural Resources and staff member of the Puget Sound Partnership, spoke regarding the purpose of the workshop within the Action Agenda process. David explained that the workshop discussion will focus on current status and current threats and encouraged participants to share local data. He also introduced the topic forums and reminded organizations to turn in project and program inventory forms by February 29, 2008.

Jacques White, The Nature Conservancy of Washington's Director of Marine Conservation, as well as a member of the Ecosystem Coordination Board, the risk analysis panel and the indicators workgroup, gave a presentation about status and threats and the work the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has been doing to assist in the Action Agenda process. Jacques indicated that this is a work in

progress and that if participants see something that is missing, to please follow up with proposed ideas/solutions.

Jeff Tate, Planning Director, Island County, and Kit Rawson, staff for the Tulalip Tribes, gave a presentation on the local perspective based on the Partnership's six ecosystem goals. Jeff and Kit explained that this is the largest action area and was designed this way because the watersheds in the area all flow into the region around Whidbey Island. They reviewed the status and trends of many indicators in the Whidbey area. Both speakers reminded participants that lists provided are not comprehensive and that participants in the workshop are encouraged to help fill in the gaps.

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

- Rural threats and priorities are different from urban areas. If they are mixed together, the standards for rural areas may go down
- Will organizations that are not represented in the project and program inventory summaries that the Partnership is developing still have an opportunity to receive funding from the Partnership? Or will funding be based only on information that's existing? Some information seems to be missing from the inventory report. *The Partnership hasn't made decisions about funding yet, and there is still time to include information in the inventory. It is critical that everyone puts as much information as possible on the inventory report and state when you are making a projection or assumption. This will be an ongoing discussion.*
- The Whidbey Action Area is nearly twice as large as other areas. I am concerned that some information may be lost due to the large size of area. I am also concerned that islands such as Whidbey have unique concerns. *Yes, that's why we need people to bring local concerns forward.*
- Will this process include a meaningful tracking of the ecosystem? *Part of the work being done involves building and compiling a list of indicators being tracked.*
- Does the Action Agenda include legal action on issues such as a moratorium on growth? *The Partnership-recommended actions will probably not include litigation as the Partnership is a State agency. The community will need to establish expectations and build back from these.*
- Where will we be a year from now? *We will have a completed agenda, implementation will be in process, there will be a monitoring system, and agencies will be receiving funding recommendations from the Partnership.*

- Is there a similar process happening in British Columbia? *The issue has been brought up but not at an action level.*
- Climate change is a driver that influences all other threats. Are existing datasets being incorporated? *There is not a lot of quantitative information about what impacts will be, but existing data will be taken into account. The Sound Science peer-reviewed science document developed by NOAA Fisheries provides a background on specific issues (www.nwfsc.noaa.gov). This is a qualitative analysis based on our best guess. It's what we can do right now.*
- Will the Partnership be involved in making political/legal recommendations? *Participants should raise issues and they will be considered by the Partnership.*

Group Feedback

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 three biggest threats to the Puget Sound?

Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications and inputs to local flow regimes (transportation management is a significant challenge) • Stormwater • Development and sprawl (increasing impervious surfaces, challenges associated with forestry management)
Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human population growth in Whidbey basin (landscape changes/impacts such as flooding) • Climate change (decreased flow, increased human needs) • Lack of data (surface water and groundwater data, conceptual models, knowledge)
Habitat/Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population growth/development footprint • Land/habitat conversion • Climate change
Quality of Life/Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding/ambivalence • Lack of long-term planning • Lack of coordination between jurisdictions and organizations
Species/Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use changes (e.g. shoreline armoring) • Contaminants included in stormwater • Forest cover loss

What three criteria are most important in evaluating potential projects?

Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes Low-Impact Development (LID) or no development • Demonstrates ability to apply local solutions to local problems
Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves away from litigation-driven actions
Habitat/Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes land use/land cover mapping analysis • Supports or improves healthy shoreline processes • Improves understanding of biological interactions within habitat
Quality of Life/Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on root causes of problems, include education and outreach • Builds off existing programs and laws, include cost/benefit analysis in anything that is done • Focused on solutions that are working
Species/Biodiversity	Did not discuss criteria

Following the breakout sessions, the discussion was opened up for comments and questions and included the following responses. Answers are again highlighted in italics.

- There is a need for more public understanding/involvement. A lot of people in this area do not join in causes so it may be difficult to engage them in this process.
- The marine research community is not well represented at this meeting.
- People are confused about the role of this action area in the whole process, as well as the links between the six different goals.
- Will the Puget Sound Partnership provide presentation materials to members of the community? *Yes, some materials are currently being developed. This is clearly a challenge because a lot of groups are already out there. The basic materials will be provided, but the capacity doesn't exist to fully meet local needs. We trust that local folks can take information from the Communications Director and make it relevant to their local community.*
- The Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee is a group working together to create partnerships and neighbor-to-neighbor conversations.
- Could the Partnership put a search function on the web page?
- We need more time to list and rank threats.

- I recommend that the Partnership train locals about how to do effective public outreach.
- This is a dysfunctional process. The information coming out of this meeting may not be useful. *South Puget Sound is moving forward with its own process and not waiting for the Partnership. Perhaps the Whidbey Action Area should do the same. The Whidbey Action Area may need to self-assemble in geographies that make sense and push forward.*
- A survey might help inform an effective approach to public outreach.
- In our small groups we were asked to prioritize the three greatest threats and criteria for our goal. Three is not necessarily a useful number. The problems are more complicated.
- Speaking of threes, the E3 Education, Environment, and Economy Summit (<http://www.e3washington.org/Results/Results/SIe3>) for Snohomish County is coming up, and everyone is welcome to attend.
- What is scientific peer review/timeline for topic forums? *Topic Forums are an opportunity to develop content of the Action Agenda. A lead person for each goal will assemble a group of experts to attend the topic forum workshops.*

Wrap-Up

Sarah Brandt thanked people for coming and invited participants to fill out comment cards and/or submit comments on the Web site.