

Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda Update Workshop: Protect and Restore Marine and Marine Nearshore Ecosystems

September 15, 2011
Rhodes Center, Tacoma, WA

It is intended that this summary be used along with materials provided to participants. The below comments on Soundwide strategies are provided without attributed comments.

Introduction – Context for Today’s Discussion and Overview of All Strategies/Sub-Strategies

Martha Neuman, PSP, welcomed participants to the workshop, and thanked them for dedicating their time to the Action Agenda update. Martha reviewed the workshop objectives, which included:

- Information sharing about work on revising strategies and sub-strategies for the 2011 Action Agenda update.
- Reviewing in detail each of the pressure reduction/priority strategies and sub-strategies, and briefly reviewing each of the non-pressure reduction strategies and sub-strategies
- Gathering feedback on ideas for changes or improvements to existing strategies and sub-strategies.

A powerpoint presentation was provided that reviewed the overall schedule and goals for the 2011 Action Agenda update, a review of near term actions (NTAs), ongoing programs, prioritization considerations, and next steps after the workshops. For this iteration of the Action Agenda, a tension will exist between clearly explaining what needs to get done in the next two years and an honest assessment of what can be done now with limited resources. To this end, the Action Agenda is a short and long term document. Participants were reminded that the Action Agenda belongs to everyone, not just PSP, and a continuing conversation throughout the update process was encouraged.

For the 2011 update, the focus of the strategy and action update work is on those strategies and actions that help achieve targets for reducing five key pressures on the ecosystem: land development, shoreline alteration, runoff from the built environment, wastewater, and loss of floodplain function. Draft strategies and actions for these pressure-reduction strategies were developed by interdisciplinary teams using the Open Standards for Conservation process to inform their work. Non-pressure reduction strategies were updated as needed to provide more clarity and reflect any new information and progress.

In the previous Action Agenda, some actions were not clearly defined or delegated; the 2011 Action Agenda will focus on clear, measurable actions with identified leaders. Ongoing programs will also be nested in this iteration of the Action Agenda to provide clarity on the work already being done and its

level of importance in working towards Puget Sound recovery. The process for prioritization is still being developed, but it is clear that it will be largely science based (Open Standards). The upcoming October 12-13 Action Agenda Update workshops will be an opportunity for participants to weigh in on prioritization.

On October 6, the Ecosystem Coordination Board will review the draft strategies and actions discussed at these workshops and form recommendations on key issues and decisions for the Leadership Council, who meets October 20-21.

The below summary describes the general impressions expressed by the participants in attendance on the various strategies and actions. The specific strategies, sub-strategies, and near term actions (NTAs) were provided as separate handouts and should be referred to for clarity. In some cases the numbering of strategies overlapped or was not sequential; participants were asked to not be too concerned with this, as the numbering will be in constant flux until the final draft is prepared. Participants shared their thoughts verbally during the meeting and were also encouraged to provide brief, written responses by September 21.

Review of Priority Marine and Nearshore Ecosystem Strategies/Sub-Strategies

Todd Hass, PSP provided an overview of the current draft document addressing priority marine and nearshore ecosystem strategies and sub-strategies.

B1.1 Ensure complete, accurate and recent information directly assists shoreline planning and decision making at the site-specific and regional levels

Comments:

- Strategy should address the scientific uncertainty of tidal power on marine ecosystems; possibly incorporate this into a Near Term Action.

B2. Protect and conserve relatively intact and relatively intact ecosystems to maintain the health of Puget Sound.

Comments:

- High value forage fish habitat, eelgrass beds, and critical salmon habitat have all been mapped and now require protection; adjacent areas should be protected as well. The PSP document on shellfish includes an unlimited aquaculture expansion program, which infringes upon eelgrass areas.
- There is no single source of data on which everyone agrees; there must be credible information presented in a way that both policy-level personnel and the general public can understand.
- A primary action in this section should be to improve regulatory guidance.
- This section of the Action Agenda update should include references to three or four key implementation items within Shoreline Master Plans.

B2.3 Where armoring is required, ensure that soft armoring techniques are used wherever they can be applied.

(See comments in next section)

B3.2 Provide incentives to encourage removal of armoring and associated fill and use of soft armoring techniques when bulkheads fail, need repair, and during redevelopment.

Comments (apply to both B2.3 and B3.2):

- The draft document focuses on armoring, however armoring is only one element of a drift cell (other elements include riparian coverage and water extent).
- There is a lack of NTAs associated with this sub-strategy for preventing new shoreline armoring. If a landowner wants hard shoreline armoring they will always be able to find an expert to support them, whereas government agencies typically lack such expertise (typically a geo-morphologist) on staff to either refute the case for hard armoring or support the viability of soft-shore armoring. One approach to an NTA for this strategy is to update SMP language related to the “imminent risk” section which provides justification for hard shoreline armoring.
- In several cases of re-armoring shoreline, when federal agencies such as FEMA and USDOT are involved they are often unwilling to provide funding for soft-shore armoring. These agencies should be brought into the discussion. State DOTs also often recommend to County DOTs that rebuilding hard shore armoring is an easier option than pursuing alternatives.
- As part of the building permit review for new bulkheads or similar structures, ensure that the parties understand and accept the risk of living in a zone of potential sea level rise.

B1.3 Use outreach and education to encourage actions to protect and restore nearshore and marine habitats.

Comments:

- Private landowners in South Puget Sound are generally unaware of information and options available to them for shoreline protection except for installing large bulkheads. The strategy should include development of a fact sheet that provides options and definitions for items such as riparian vegetation, the drift cell concept, and soft shore armoring. Providing such resources will remove the onus for landowners to educate and/or be at odds with their neighbors. Outreach strategies should help shoreline landowners take pride in environmentally friendly actions.
- Provide design standards on alternatives and technical assistance for soft shoreline armoring.
- Rather than focusing on bulkhead regulations, the strategy should discuss the point at which land use regulation decisions are made.
- The strategy should include a discussion of how to incentivize innovative behavior from property owners.

B2.4 Take actions to protect migratory corridors and vegetation particularly in sensitive areas such as eelgrass beds.

Comments:

- The strategy should include boat ramps within the discussion of docks; for example in unincorporated King County there are as many cement boat ramps as docks.

B2.5 Take actions that protect intact marine environments and priority marine physical and ecological processes consistent with the Soundwide priorities identified in B1.

Comments:

- Regarding science based priority maps (B2.5 NTA 1): Do not repeat the argument that the three central Puget Sound counties are a “lost cause” with respect to Puget Sound protection and restoration.

B3.4 Accelerate restoration projects on public lands where government can lead by example.

Comments:

- The strategy should include a reference to the fact that there is greater opportunity for environmentally conscious infrastructure projects on publicly owned lands, as these lands are less contentious than private properties with single family residences.
- Washington State Parks are specifically mentioned, but the RCO funds many local Puget Sound parks.

B4.1 Ports/Marine Industry: Use, coordinate, expand and promote financial incentives and programs for best practices at ports and in the marine industry that are protective of ecosystem health.

Comments:

- Require LID at ports and marinas, especially as a stormwater control measure.
- Regarding strategies and actions related to public access to Puget Sound:
 - Clarify the public trust doctrine in the State of Washington and where people have a right to be.
 - Work with the Agency Boating Committee and the Washington Boating Alliance.
 - Develop public access constituencies by incorporating public access into strategies involving redevelopment, restoration, or cleanup efforts.
 - Washington State Parks plays a significant role in public access to shorelines, so someone from that agency should be involved. Given economic conditions, there could be a conflict between getting more people to come to parks and access cost (i.e. parks now funded by passes).
 - Consider air quality impacts from recreational boating.

B5. Improve shellfish water quality and increase harvestable, upgraded shellfish acres in commercial production and use. Coordinate, expand and promote financial incentives and programs for working aquatic lands that are protective of ecosystem health to provide abundant shellfish for commercial, subsistence, and recreational harvest consistent with ecosystem protection.

Comments:

- The document appears to support unlimited expansion of shellfish operations; however aquaculture is one of the top six threats to Puget Sound and there is little reference to the science behind water quality and its connections to aquaculture. Emphasizing aquaculture as a strategy for Puget Sound cleanup seems counterintuitive.
- The emphasis on shellfish expansion reflects a lack of targets and objects for categories outside of environmental protection/restoration, such as a thriving economy. It might be useful to separate these categories.
- Small shellfish operations have traditionally been great environmental stewards; the problem is industrialization of the harvest and scaling up to an export level business, which harms the environment. We should help the small shellfish growers and/or provide more direction on where the footprint of commercial aquaculture operations should expand.

B5.1 Shellfish Bed Protection: Protect and prevent downgrade of important current commercial areas.

Comments:

- Suggest adding concept of “upgrading” to this strategy as well, not just preventing downgrade.

B5.3 Resolve conflicts between aquaculture and upland uses.

Comments:

- Suggest changing this to include nearshore and habitat (“Resolve conflicts between aquaculture, **nearshore, habitat,** and upland uses.”).
- The issue is science, not a conflict between aquaculture and upland uses.

B7.1 Biodiversity Strategy: Implement existing biodiversity plans in a coordinated way while a more integrated planning approach is created.

Comments:

- Aquaculture reduces biodiversity
- Consider dynamics of lower levels of the food web in the marine environment, especially effects on higher levels.

B7.2 Marine and Nearshore Species Recovery: Implement existing marine and nearshore species recovery plans in a coordinated way.

Comments:

- This strategy should mention forage fish, including sand lance (candlefish) as it comprises 60% of juvenile salmon diet.
- It is problematic to create a long list of species-specific recovery plans; it would be better to identify where actions with those plans overlap or are mentioned in other parts of the Action Agenda.

B8.1 Prevent and rapidly respond to the introduction and spread of marine invasive species.

Comments:

- This section appears to be a lot of “reinventing the wheel”. For example, WDFW has been working on the ballast water issue since 2001.
- This strategy appears to ignore estuarine invasive species issues by only focusing on marine and freshwater invasives.
- The strategy is overly concerned with perpetuating the Invasive Species Council and does not focus enough on actions to address the invasive species issue.
- According to the marine biodiversity website, 79% of marine invasive species are coming from aquaculture.
- The strategy mentions ISC’s fifty priority species; at the scale of PS recovery, is it necessary to start thinking about the top five that are affecting ecosystem function in PS?

Upcoming opportunities

The Partnership is holding several public open houses across the Sound. The purpose of the open houses is to:

- Share information about PSP’s measure of Puget Sound health - the Vital Signs;
- Highlight Puget Sound recovery priorities and accomplishments, especially any local priorities and accomplishments you wish to highlight;
- Describe the upcoming update to the Puget Sound recovery plan, the Action Agenda, and get public input;
- An opportunity to provide general educational information about Puget Sound, recovery, and what individuals can do to help.

Tuesday, September 27 in Sequim at the Guy Cole Convention Center at Barrie Blake Park

Monday, October 3 in Mill Creek at the Department of Fish and Wildlife Mill Creek Regional Office

Tuesday, October 4 in Poulsbo at the Poulsbo City Council Chamber in City Hall

Monday October 10 in Mount Vernon at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Tuesday, October 11 in Olympia at the LOTT Clean Water Alliance

Wednesday, October 19 in Friday Harbor at a location TBD