



Washington State Association of Counties

February 3, 2012

Mr. Gerry O'Keefe, Executive Director
Puget Sound Partnership
326 E D Street
Tacoma, WA 98421

RE: Comments on draft Action Agenda

Dear Director O'Keefe:

We are writing on behalf of the WSAC Coastal Caucus counties, comprised of the 12 Puget Sound counties and the counties on the Pacific coast. As you know, we have been actively monitoring and participating in the development of the revised Action Agenda. A restored and functioning Puget Sound is vital to our local economy, as well as to our enjoyment of the area we all live in.

The WSAC Coastal Caucus has been watching with great interest as the revised Action Agenda has progressed. Counties have a variety of responsibilities under state law. While we want to do as much as we can to protect and restore Puget Sound, we also need to be able to carry out all of our other duties in a time of scarce funding. In that spirit, we offer the following general comments:

1. There are still a large number of Near Term Actions (NTAs). We understand the prioritization process, which occurs after the close of the comment period, is intended to reduce this number to a more manageable size. We believe it is very important to have a smaller number of NTAs in order to have a realistic, attainable list of tasks to focus on during this next two-year window.
2. For each NTA, there is a column on "owner" and "secondary owner". There should also be a column listing the implementers of each action. Local government is often a major implementer, yet is not specifically mentioned in many of them.
3. A number of NTAs address floodplain management and set forth different processes intended to result in changes to federal and state laws and regulations. It is unclear how the current efforts to respond to FEMA and the NMFS BiOp will be affected by these NTAs, or whether the NTAs will need to change as a result. Local governments are very concerned about the current status of changes required by the BiOp, and this is further confused by the recent lawsuit filed by the National Wildlife Federation against FEMA. For these reasons, please proceed very carefully in how the Action Agenda addresses floodplain management.
4. Strategy C lists a number of NTAs related to oil spill response and readiness. We are concerned about the impacts from potential oil spills and support these NTAs.



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Counties are ready to carry out their responsibilities to protect and restore Puget Sound. As we have discussed with the Partnership on a number of occasions, we are continuing to face serious budget shortfalls due to the downturn in the economy. We will need financial assistance to carry out new responsibilities and ask for your continued attention in this arena.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments; individual counties will be providing their own detailed comments. We look forward to continuing to work with you in protecting and restoring Puget Sound.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helen Price Johnson".

Helen Price Johnson, Coastal Caucus Co-Chair
Island County Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip Johnson".

Phillip Johnson, Coastal Caucus Co-Chair
Jefferson County Commissioner