



February 3, 2012

Puget Sound Partnership Science Panel

**RE: Puget Sound Partnership Biennial Science Work Plan for 2011-2013**

Dear Puget Sound Science Panel,

Friends of the San Juans (“Friends”) submits the following comments to identify two critical omissions from the Puget Sound Science Panel’s Draft Biennial Science Work Plan:

1. Sea level rise (and other likely climate change impacts except ocean acidification, which is included in the draft work plan), and
2. The cumulative effects of development on processes, species and habitats.

Friends urges the Panel to incorporate these to priority science topics into the final draft of the Biennial Work Plan so that the proper amount of attention can be allocated to them. Each of these topics has significant associated research questions as well as policy-science information gaps applicable to multiple of the priority topic areas, including but not limited to marine and nearshore ecosystems, species and food webs, emerging issues and scientific tools for informing policy. Human responses to sea level rise, such as engineered shorelines that reduce or eliminate suitable forage fish spawning habitat, constitute one of the greatest threats to the health of the Salish Sea’s nearshore ecosystems. Cumulative impacts analyses establish impact baselines that are essential for developing policies that will protect and recover the Puget Sound when applied at the individual project scale. Thus, these two priorities must be included in the final Science Work Plan so that the Partnership can explore the risks to coastal processes, habitats, species, and human infrastructure, as well as the opportunities available to improve resiliency.

Friends is encouraged by the attention the Partnership has focused on policy-related science questions, and we look forward to the Partnership playing a lead role in implementing these high priority actions.

Regards,

Tina Whitman  
Science Director