

ECB Input on Governance for a Coordinated Ecosystem Monitoring Program Agenda Item #2

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Approved

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Proposed Action: Briefing and direction

Summary: The Partnership is one of many Puget Sound stakeholders interested in reforming the current approach to monitoring ecosystem indicators. Stakeholders believe that more meaningful and useful data can be collected with the current investment and improve informed decision making to guide ecosystem recovery.

As described in Action Agenda strategy E.3.1, and section 3.1.1 of the biennial science work plan, a priority near-term action of the Partnership is to develop a coordinated regional ecosystem monitoring program to allow the Partnership to evaluate progress toward ecosystem recovery and adapt management strategies. The specific monitoring and reporting activities to be carried out by this program are not yet designed, but the program will include efforts to evaluate and report on the status and trends of ecosystem conditions, the effectiveness of management actions, and cause-effect relationships among ecosystem components and management interventions.

The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium, a stakeholder group that has been meeting since 2007, has evaluated best practices for organizing a coordinated ecosystem monitoring program and has recommended that the Partnership adopt, by mid-2009, one of two models for governing Puget Sound ecosystem monitoring and then transition to the new program. The Leadership Council is planning to make this decision its May meeting.

Background: the Monitoring Consortium has made two formal presentations to the Science Panel (April 2008 and December 2008). The Science Panel declined to recommend one governance model over the other but advised the Leadership Council that either model could work if implemented well. The topic was briefly discussed at the last two Leadership Council meetings, and three Leadership Council members attended a Monitoring Consortium meeting in March to hear from individual stakeholders.

Analysis: The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium was established by the 2007 Legislature in recognition that a more coordinated approach to ecosystem monitoring would improve the focus, cost-effectiveness, and products of public and private investments in ecosystem monitoring. The Consortium researched examples from elsewhere in the U.S. of coordinated ecosystem monitoring programs that might accomplish the Legislature's interests. Evaluating these example approaches in the

context of the Puget Sound Partnership and existing monitoring arrangements in the region, the Consortium developed two models of governance for a coordinated monitoring program. The two models are described in the Consortium's December 2008 report to the Legislature, and are very briefly summarized in the attached executive summary of that report.

As the Partnership leads the transition to a coordinated regional monitoring program, new governance arrangements are needed to ensure the engagement and equitable contribution of all parties that invest in relevant ecosystem monitoring. Both of the models described by the Consortium will improve coordination among the entities that collect the data and provide for more cross-topic synthesis and analysis of environmental data. The models have the support of regional stakeholders, including local governments, state and federal agencies, tribes, business associations, and environmental groups.

The Consortium's report provides insights about governance models that the Partnership can use to evaluate and balance the implications of various governance arrangements on management-monitoring connections, the independence of scientific investigation and reporting, and the ability to leverage and coordinate monitoring investments from a diversity of entities.

Next Steps: ECB may recommend a governance model or otherwise advise the Leadership Council in preparation for the May meeting.

Attachments:

- Executive summary of the Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium's December 2008 report to the Legislature
- Proposed organizational structures – graphic from the Consortium's December 2008 report to the Legislature

PUGET SOUND MONITORING CONSORTIUM

OUR DIRECTIVE FROM THE LEGISLATURE

The Washington State Legislature in 2007 directed the Department of Ecology to “facilitate the development of an ongoing monitoring consortium similar to Chesapeake Bay or San Francisco Bay to institute coordination between local, state, and regional monitoring agencies. The goal is to integrate ongoing monitoring efforts for stormwater, water quality, watershed health, and other state indicators and enhance monitoring efforts in Puget Sound.”

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP AND THE WASHINGTON FORUM ON MONITORING SALMON RECOVERY AND WATERSHED HEALTH

During the same session, the Legislature created both the Puget Sound Partnership, with broad monitoring duties and responsibilities related to Puget Sound ecosystem recovery, and the Washington Forum on Monitoring, with statewide monitoring coordination and oversight duties. The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium has been providing recommendations and briefings to the Partnership, and briefing the Forum on its activities and recommendations.

OUR MEMBERS

The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium is a diverse group of motivated and engaged stakeholders representing approximately 40 local, state, federal, tribal, private and non-profit entities that share the common goal of coordinated, efficient data collection and efficient access to meaningful and credible environmental data for the Puget Sound basin. Our recommendations for, and our accomplishments toward, forming an integrated, coordinated monitoring and assessment program for the Puget Sound basin follow.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Consortium recommends the Legislature fully support and contribute to funding a coordinated, integrated regional monitoring and assessment program to more effectively and cost-efficiently achieve federal, state, and local environmental mandates and goals, including Puget Sound ecosystem recovery.

Our specific recommendations are:

1. Determine the organizational structure: Before June 30, 2009, the Partnership should formally review the Consortium’s governance recommendations, which include two possible organizational models, and decide what governance structure will house the ecosystem recovery monitoring program and the key functions to coordinate, integrate, and manage a regional monitoring and assessment program as an element of the Partnership’s regional science program.
2. Provide capacity and resources: For the 2009-2011 biennium and the long-term, to ensure the success and sustainability of the coordinated, integrated regional monitoring and assessment program, the Consortium specifically recommends:
 - For the 2009-2011 biennium the Legislature should contribute funding to adequately staff a successful transition to an integrated, coordinated regional monitoring and assessment program during the biennium. These staff will analyze science across topic areas from an ecosystem perspective and recommend meaningful prioritization and integration of ongoing monitoring and assessment efforts.
 - For the 2009-2011 biennium and the long-term, the Legislature should continue to provide ongoing funds to state agencies to support the basic monitoring and assessment activities that are the foundation of a regional program.

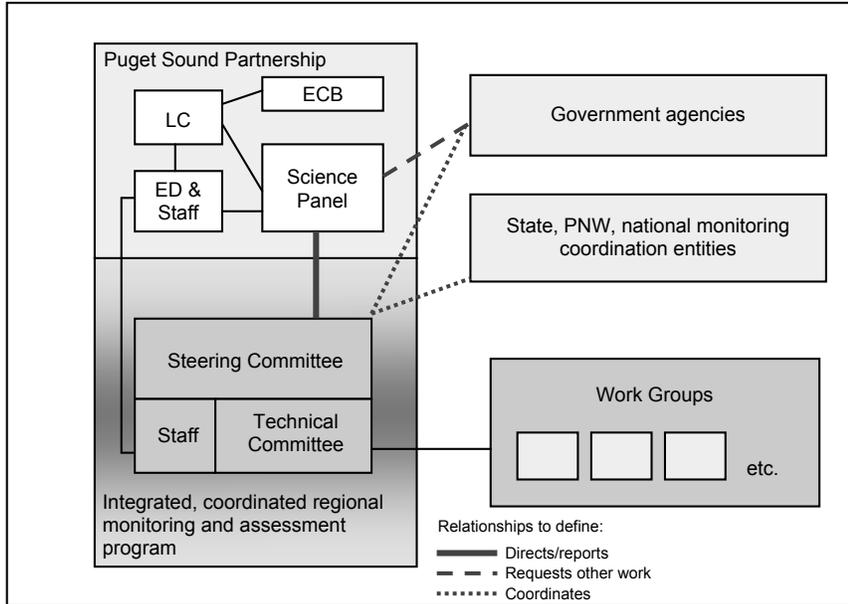
- In 2009-2011, the \$800,000 in state funds allocated for the Consortium's work should continue to support staff and projects related to ongoing Consortium activities, including the Stormwater Work Group and the Partnership's transition to and implementation of the integrated, coordinated monitoring and assessment program.
- The Partnership should initiate cost-sharing arrangements in 2009-2011 with local, state, federal, tribal, private, and non-profit groups to implement regional monitoring and assessment activities. The state's ongoing contribution will complement and enhance the contributions of other entities, and provide leadership to produce greater efficiencies as well as more meaningful data to support management decisions.

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

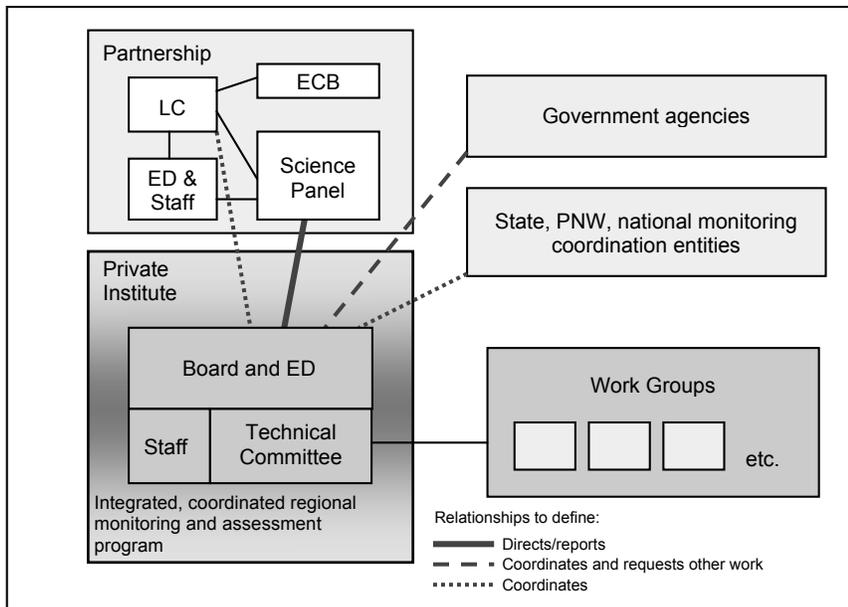
- Developed organizational models: The Consortium analyzed 17 programs from around the country and developed two organizational models. One model is a state agency-based structure housed at the Partnership; the other model is an independent private institute. Both proposals are built the same from the bottom up with topical work groups that are coordinated and integrated under an umbrella structure. Both models build on the existing Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program (PSAMP), with agencies continuing to collect and analyze data.
- Established a work group for stormwater: The Consortium established the Stormwater Work Group comprised of 26 representatives of local, state, federal, tribal, private, and non-profit entities. This work group has begun identifying and prioritizing objectives and will create a regional stormwater monitoring and assessment strategy by June 2010. The strategy will be integrated with other regional efforts, such as status and trends monitoring for the Chinook recovery plan, and will inform the next cycle of municipal stormwater National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. This work group will be an ongoing activity, implementing the recommendations of the advisory committee that preceded the Consortium.
- Began pilot projects: The Consortium launched four projects to meet pressing needs for coordination and improved credibility of the monitoring data that is routinely collected in the Puget Sound region:
 - Develop standard operating procedures for automated sampling of stormwater and subsequent analysis of the data. Local jurisdictions currently have different methods for using the samplers and performing subsequent calculations, resulting in data sets that are not comparable. This project brings jurisdictions together to agree to and document common methodologies.
 - Standardize reporting methods and expand a database for stream benthos information that can be populated by all entities in Puget Sound that collect this information. The effort will improve data use and comparability.
 - Conduct inter-laboratory calibration activities to improve comparability of data and ensure consistency among laboratories in analyzing environmental data.
 - Expand an effort to establish performance and maintenance requirements for in-line ditch treatment methodologies for open stormwater conveyances. Most of the currently approved treatment methods require property purchases and significant capital investment by local jurisdictions. These new methods may provide significant water quality benefits in rural areas at reasonable cost to local governments.
- Provided technical assistance: The Consortium continues to provide the Partnership with an effective means for engaging experts and capacity in diverse areas of science related to ecosystem recovery.

PUGET SOUND MONITORING CONSORTIUM

PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND RELATIONSHIPS FOR THE TWO GOVERNANCE MODELS



State Agency-Based Program Housed at the Partnership



Independent Private Institute

LC = Leadership Council; ECB = Ecosystem Coordination Board; ED = Executive Director; PNW = Pacific Northwest