

**Sections of the Action Agenda Related to Setting Priorities
Prepared for July 30-31 Ecosystem Coordination Board Meeting**

Guiding principles for ecosystem management in Puget Sound

Input from the topic forums and action area meetings in 2008 led to the development of the following principles for ecosystem management. The principles, refined by the Leadership Council, Science Panel, and Ecosystem Coordination Board, were used to develop the strategic priorities and actions.

- a. Address threats and choose opportunities with the highest potential magnitude of impact.
- b. Address threats with the highest level of urgency. (How imminent is the threat; will it result in an irreversible loss; how resilient are the resources that are affected?)
- c. Use strategies that have a reasonable certainty of effectiveness and reflect a balanced precautionary and adaptive approach.
 - Actions should have a realistic expectation that they will be effective in addressing the identified threat.
 - Actions and decisions about the use of resources should err on the side of caution to avoid irreversible ecological consequences.
 - Actions should be designed so they can be measured, monitored, and adapted.
- d. Use scientific input – about the importance, urgency, and reversibility of threats; opportunities for management impact; effectiveness of actions; and monitoring and adaptation – in designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies.
- e. Use strategies that are cost effective in making efficient use of funding, personnel, and resources with realistic expectations of achieving results.
- f. Address the processes that form and sustain ecosystems and increase ecosystem resiliency rather than focus narrowly on fixing individual sites. Consider the Salish Sea ecosystem perspective.
- g. Attempt to address threats at their origin instead of reacting after the damage has been done. Anticipate and prevent problems before they occur, and plan for extreme events. (With more people coming to the region and a changing climate, a proactive strategy is increasingly important.)
- h. Consider the linkages and interactions among strategies.
 - Address multiple threats and their interactions with strategies that work together. We cannot afford to look at problems or develop solutions in isolation.
 - Watch out for unintended consequences. Evaluate strategies so actions to address one problem do not cause harm to other ecosystem processes, functions, and structure, as well as social and economic considerations.
 - Integrate salmon recovery actions with ecosystem management actions.
- i. Account for the variations in ecosystem conditions and processes in different geographic areas of Puget Sound. Some parts of Puget Sound are fairly intact while others are severely degraded, and rebuilding strategies need flexibility to encompass regional differences. Ensure that no region or economic sector bears the entire brunt of the responsibility for implementing solutions.

Our strategic priorities are to:

Priority A: Protect the intact ecosystem processes, structures, and functions that sustain Puget Sound. Avoiding problems before they occur is the best and most cost-effective approach to ecosystem health.

The Action Agenda identifies a comprehensive protection strategy for Puget Sound ecosystems that reflects five primary objectives:

- A.1 Focus growth away from ecologically important and sensitive areas by encouraging dense, compact cities, vital rural communities, and protected areas that support the ecosystem Soundwide.*
- A.2 Permanently protect the intact areas of the Puget Sound ecosystem that still function well.*
- A.3 Protect and conserve freshwater resources to increase and sustain water availability for instream and human uses.*
- A.4 Support long-term protection and stewardship of working farms, forests, and shellfish farms to help maintain ecosystem function, sustain quality of life, and improve the viability of rural communities.*
- A.5 Prevent and rapidly respond to the introduction of invasive species.*

Priority B: Restore the ecosystem processes, structures, and functions that sustain Puget Sound. Protecting what we have left is not sufficient, and significant effort at an unprecedented scale is needed to undo past damage.

The Action Agenda identifies a comprehensive restoration strategy for Puget Sound ecosystems that reflects three primary objectives:

- B.1 Implement and maintain priority ecosystem restoration projects for marine, marine nearshore, estuary, freshwater, riparian, and upland areas.*
- B.2 Revitalize waterfront communities while enhancing marine and freshwater shoreline ecosystem processes.*
- B.3 Support and implement stewardship incentive programs to increase the ability of private landowners to undertake and maintain restoration projects that improve ecosystem processes.*

Priority C: Prevent water pollution at its source. Many of our efforts have focused on cleaning up degraded waters and sediments, but insufficient resources have been devoted to stopping pollutants before they reach our rivers, beaches, and species.

The Action Agenda identifies a coordinated, regional approach to reducing the sources of water pollution in Puget Sound that reflects six primary objectives:

- C.1 Prevent pollutants from being introduced into the Puget Sound ecosystem to decrease the loadings from toxics, nutrients, and pathogens.*
- C.2 Use a comprehensive, integrated approach to managing urban stormwater and rural surface water runoff to reduce stormwater volumes and pollutant loadings.*
- C.3 Prioritize and complete upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities to reduce pollutant loading.*
- C.4 Establish and maintain locally coordinated, effective on-site sewage system management to reduce pollutant loading to vulnerable surface and ground waters.*
- C.5 Prioritize and continue to implement toxic cleanup programs for contaminated waterways and sediments.*
- C.6 Continue to monitor swimming beaches as well as conduct shellfish and fish advisory programs to reduce human exposure to health hazards.*

Priority D: Work together as a coordinated system to ensure that activities and funding are focused on the most urgent and important problems facing the region. Many of the programs and laws now used to regulate or support activities in Puget Sound were established on a piecemeal basis to address individual problems. Strategies that will help to address problems more effectively at an ecosystem scale include improved coordination of land use planning, water supply, ecosystem protection, transportation, and species recovery plans. The Action Agenda calls for the reform of environmental regulatory programs as well as improvements to the capacity of local partners to implement actions and compliance efforts across Puget Sound.

The Action Agenda identifies a comprehensive strategy to ensure we work together as a coordinated system for the Puget Sound region, reflecting five primary objectives:

- D.1 Conduct planning, implementation, and decision-making in an integrated way and with an ecosystem perspective.*
- D.2 Support, develop, and integrate climate change programs, including mitigation and adaptation strategies to improve local and regional readiness for anticipated changes.*
- D.3 Build and sustain long-term capacity of partners to effectively and efficiently implement the Action Agenda.*
- D.4 Reform the environmental regulatory system to protect habitat at an ecosystem scale.*
- D.5 Improve compliance with rules and regulations to increase the likelihood of achieving ecosystem outcomes.*

Table 4-1 Ranked near-term actions priorities A through C.

Rank	Near-Term Action Description	Action Number
Priority A: Protect intact ecosystem processes, structures, and functions		
1	Initiate or complete Action Agenda-based watershed assessments and related maps for each of the watersheds within the Puget Sound basin to identify sites and functions that are the most urgent and important for protection.	A.1 (3)
2	Provide funding and technical assistance to local jurisdictions to update local shoreline management programs by current deadlines, with all updates complete by 2013.	A.2 (5)
3	Protect high-value habitat and land at immediate risk of conversion as identified through existing processes such as the salmon recovery plans and others.	A.2 (1)
4	Convene a regional planning forum to create a coordinated vision for guiding growth at an ecosystem scale.	A.1 (1)
5	Continue to implement existing forest practice plans and regulations consistent with the Action Agenda, including the state trust lands HCP, state forest practices rules, and Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans as informed by the Forest and Fish Plan, and others.	A.4 (4)
6	Change Shoreline Management Act statutes and regulations to require a shoreline conditional use permit for: bulkheads and docks associated with all residential development; all new and replacement shoreline hardening; all seawall/bulkhead/revetment repair projects; and new docks and piers.	A.2 (7)
7	Purchase or transfer development rights or use conservation easements for working lands at immediate risk of conversion.	A.4 (1)
8	Support legislation that seeks to continue to direct growth away from rural and working resource lands and into cities.	A.1 (4)
9	Enhance state ballast water compliance program and support a federal/state and/or West Coast cooperative management approach.	A.5 (2)
10	Advocate for national or West Coast regional ballast water discharge standards.	A.5 (1)
11	Prepare a set of criteria to guide decisions for acquiring and protecting high-value, high-risk habitat.	A.1 (2)
12	Implement the recommendations from approved watershed plans prepared under the Watershed Planning Act (RCW 90.82) consistent with the Action Agenda and coordinated with other local restoration and protection efforts.	A.3 (4)
13	Develop a Puget Sound baseline and database of invasive species to guide control efforts.	A.5 (3)
14	Provide funding and technical assistance to local governments that have not yet completed their Critical Area Ordinance updates.	A.2 (8)
15	Support and implement recommendations from the CTED TDR Policy Advisory Committee.	A.2 (9)
16	Implement components of the Washington Department of Natural Resources Aquatic HCP that protect critical habitat.	A.4(6)
17	Enhance and target existing capacity to rapidly respond to immediate invasive species risks.	A.5 (4)
18	Support the Conservation Commission's efforts to protect productive agricultural areas consistent with the Action Agenda priorities.	A.4 (3)

Table 4-1 Ranked near-term actions priorities A through C.

Rank	Near-Term Action Description	Action Number
Priority A: Protect intact ecosystem processes, structures, and functions		
19	Provide local governments with guidance on how to achieve and measure no-net-loss of ecological function as required by the Shoreline Management Act and the Shoreline Master Program guidelines.	A.2 (6)
20	Support municipal water systems' implementation of Washington Department of Health's Water Use Efficiency Rule, including establishing water conservation goals, metering, and reporting from all municipal suppliers.	A.3 (7)
21	Set flow rules in watersheds that currently do not have instream flow rules, with priority given to critical basins or those with known significant problems meeting instream or out-of-stream demands.	A.3 (1)
22	Establish local water masters in each watershed to increase water code compliance and enforcement.	A.3 (6)
23	Adopt water reuse rules.	A.3 (9)
24	Develop and implement the comprehensive basin flow protection and enhancement programs called for in the recovery plans for Puget Sound Chinook and Hood Canal/Strait of Juan de Fuca summer chum.	A.3 (3)
25	Convene a task force to develop a funding mechanism to rapidly acquire properties with high ecological value and imminent risk of conversion.	A.2 (3)
26	Advocate for proposed Wilderness designations: a) support Alpine Lakes Wilderness addition; and b) Pratt River Wild and Scenic Designation.	A.2 (2)
27	Continue ongoing work to resolve conflicts between aquaculture and upland uses.	A.4 (5)
28	Update instream flow rules based on current science.	A.3 (2)
29	Work with the Marine Managed Areas Work Group chaired by DFW to develop recommendations to improve the effectiveness of MPAs by December 2009.	A.2 (4)
30	Coordinate with the SSB 5248 project by the Ruckelshaus Center that is working to resolve conflicts between agricultural activities and critical areas regulations.	A.4 (2)
31	Develop a grey water reuse rule by December 31, 2010.	A.3 (8)
32	Evaluate and implement solutions to exempt well issues.	A.3 (5)

Table 4-1 Ranked near-term actions priorities A through C.

Rank	Near-Term Action Description	Action Number
Priority B: Restore ecosystem processes, structures, and functions		
1	Implement restoration projects in the salmon recovery three-year work plans and the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program of the Nearshore Partnership.	B.1 (1)
2	Complete the Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership's General Investigation in a timely way to help identify and refine nearshore restoration opportunities and move toward implementation.	B.1 (5)
3	Complete large-scale restoration projects at the mouths of major river systems in Puget Sound where there is a high likelihood of re-creating ecosystem function.	B.1 (2)
4	Implement coordinated incentive and technical assistance programs for private landowners through the Conservation Commission, Conservation Districts, Department of Natural Resources, other state agencies, Washington State University Extension, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and others as appropriate.	B.3 (1)
5	Remove derelict fishing gear as proposed by the Northwest Straits Commission and local Marine Resource Committees in sites with known problems for species.	B.1 (6)
6	Continue Bellingham Bay Pilot Program to clean up Bellingham Bay in a coordinated way.	B.2 (2)
7	Fund a one year pilot program to develop a coordinated cleanup and restoration plan for the Port Angeles Harbor and waterfront.	B.2 (1)
8	Restore floodplain and river processes where there is a high likelihood of re-creating ecosystem function.	B.1 (3)
9	Remove significant blockages of ecosystem processes and provide access to habitat.	B.1 (4)
10	Continue to control pollutant sources and remediate toxics in Elliott Bay.	B.2 (3)

Table 4-1 Ranked near-term actions priorities A through C.

Rank	Near-Term Action Description	Action Number
Priority C: Reduce the sources of water pollution		
1	Implement immediate remediation actions to address Hood Canal's low dissolved oxygen concentrations through the Hood Canal Dissolved Oxygen Program.	C.1 (8)
2	Provide financial and technical assistance to cities and counties to implement NPDES Phase I and II permits, as well as Ecology for permit oversight and implementation.	C.2 (2)
3	Retrofit existing stormwater systems by: a) developing high-level criteria that can be used in 2009 to determine the highest priority areas around the Sound for stormwater retrofits; and b) implementing stormwater retrofit projects in the highest priority areas based upon these criteria to bring areas into compliance with current stormwater regulations.	C.2 (6)
4	Assist cities and counties in incorporating LID requirements for development and redevelopment into all stormwater codes.	C.2 (3)
5	Implement priority strategies and actions to address low dissolved oxygen in South Sound, targeted areas in the Whidbey Basin, and other vulnerable areas.	C.1 (9)
6	Assist the Department of Ecology in implementing its PBT program to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of all chemicals on the PBT list, and other programs to reduce toxins such as metals.	C.1 (2)
7	Develop and implement on-site sewage system management plans in each Puget Sound county.	C.4 (1)
8	Pursue stimulus package funding to implement priority upgrades of municipal and industrial wastewater facilities, especially in nutrient sensitive and recoverable and tribal shellfish areas of Puget Sound.	C.3 (2)
9	Permanently fund a rescue tug at Neah Bay.	C.1 (3)
10	Implement NPDES industrial permits and Washington State Department of Transportation permits, including Ecology for permit oversight and implementation.	C.2 (9)
11	Implement private property stewardship, incentive, and technical assistant programs (e.g. Conservation Districts, WSU Extension, Washington Sea Grant, local government programs) that focus on reducing sources of water pollution, from commercial and non-commercial farms and other nonpoint sources, particularly in priority areas.	C.2 (8)
12	Continue to implement road maintenance and abandonment programs for federal, state (including trustlands), and private timber lands.	C.2 (7)
13	Implement Shellfish Protection District plans, on-site sewage treatment plans in marine recovery areas, and related projects to restore water quality at commercial and recreational shellfish areas that are degraded or threatened.	C.1 (7)
14	Conduct a focused outreach campaign for the public and businesses to reduce pollutants identified in toxic loading and other studies that are priority threats to Puget Sound.	C.1 (1)
15	Revise the current on-site sewage treatment rule no later than June 30, 2011, so standards are established to address new on-site sewage treatment technologies.	C.4 (2)
16	Petition EPA to establish Puget Sound as a No Discharge Zone for commercial and/or recreational vessels to eliminate bacteria, nutrients, and pathogens from being discharged into Puget Sound.	C.1 (5)

Table 4-1 Ranked near-term actions priorities A through C.

Rank	Near-Term Action Description	Action Number
Priority C: Reduce the sources of water pollution		
17	Implement existing air management plans consistent with the Action Agenda.	C.1 (6)
18	Support federal and other facilities in reducing nutrient and pathogens, particularly in already impaired areas.	C.3 (3)
19	Continue to fund the shellfish and fish advisory monitoring and advisory programs.	C.6 (2)
20	Develop and implement LID incentives.	C.2 (4)
21	Continue to implement ongoing, high-priority remediation and cleanup projects.	C.5 (1)
22	Enhance and target on-site sewage treatment loan programs and grants to ensure programs are targeted to areas of with demonstrated loading issues and vulnerable waters.	C.4 (3)
23	Convene a group of regulating agencies, implementers with key funding responsibilities, and other stakeholders as appropriate to evaluate the technical and programmatic solutions for CSOs to meet overall program goals of improving water quality in fresh and marine water.	C.2 (5)
24	Continue to fund the swimming beach monitoring program.	C.6 (1)
25	Establish a regional coordinated monitoring program for stormwater, working with the Monitoring Consortium of the Stormwater Work Group.	C.2 (1)
26	Refine the Department of Ecology near-term prioritization criteria for site cleanups to be consistent with the Action Agenda and incorporate criteria into toxic cleanup grant programs.	C.5 (2)
27	Continue the Department of Ecology's oil spill inspection and prevention programs. Obtain delegated authority from the Coast Guard to expand and enhance the scope of authority of the Department of Ecology's vessel and facility inspections, marine incident investigations, and the agency's ability to augment Coast Guard prevention activities and review spill prevention and response plans on behalf of the Coast Guard.	C.1 (4)
28	Use advanced wastewater treatment where needed in nutrient sensitive and recoverable and tribal shellfish areas, such as Hood Canal, South Sound, and the Whidbey Basin.	C.3 (1)