

EPA NEP Funding: Toxics and Nutrients Prevention, Reduction, and Control

Context

In October 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) solicited a Request for Proposals (RFP) to implement priority work consistent with the 2020 Action Agenda for the protection and restoration of Puget Sound. The RFP solicited proposals from applicants that would serve as a Lead Organization (LO) for one of four areas of emphasis. The period of effort for the RFP was for six-years. EPA selected Washington State agencies as LOs to coordinate six-year efforts to develop and implement strategies in the four areas of emphasis:

- Marine and nearshore protection and restoration (LO - Departments of Fish & Wildlife and Natural Resources);
- Watershed protection and restoration (LOs - Departments of Ecology and Commerce);
- Toxics and nutrients prevention, reduction and control (LO - Department of Ecology); and
- Pathogen prevention, reduction, and control (LOs - Departments of Health and Ecology).

For the first year of the LO strategies, EPA allocated \$12 million divided equally among the LOs along with a State match of \$12 million. The total funds over the six-year period could be up to \$192 million plus the required State match. The level of funding after the first year is in part dependent on demonstration by the selected LOs to EPA and Congress that funds can be expeditiously and appropriately expended with significant measureable results. A dollar-for-dollar nonfederal match is a condition of each grant, but match by local entities for sub-awards is not expected at this time. Full text of proposals for each area of emphasis can be found on the Puget Sound Partnership website: http://www.psp.wa.gov/EPA_funding_FY10.php. The LO's are coordinating work with the EPA and the PSP and will be an important part of the Action Agenda update process.

In addition, both the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) have cooperative agreements with EPA. PSP funding is focused on regional engagement and Action Agenda management. NWIFC funding is to provide sub-awards to 19 Federally-recognized Indian Tribes located within the greater Puget Sound Basin and any authorized consortium of these eligible Tribes to implement high priority projects identified in the PSP's Action Agenda, or other existing recovery plans or which will contribute directly to the restoration and protection of Puget Sound.

Overall Strategy

The goal of the toxics and nutrients strategy is to improve both human and environmental health in the Puget Sound ecosystem by preventing, reducing and controlling toxics and nutrients from entering Puget Sound fresh and marine waters. Thousands of toxic chemicals are in use today. They are in the air, water, soil, animals, fish, and our bodies. Some toxic chemicals impair development, some affect reproduction, some disrupt body chemistry, and some cause cancer. Nutrients occur naturally in the marine and fresh waters of the Puget Sound ecosystem, but human contributions of excess nutrients can lead to lower levels of dissolved oxygen as algae blooms and other organic matter decompose.

As Lead Organization, Ecology will work with various partners at the federal, tribal, state, and local levels and non-governmental organizations, academia, and business to develop and implement projects in line with a strategic framework. To address toxics in the Puget Sound ecosystem we must reduce toxic

chemicals in products and prevent toxic chemicals in stormwater. The nutrients approach focuses on determining the extent that human sources of nutrients are affecting the Puget Sound ecosystem and how much reduction is necessary to meet water quality standards. Next, actions must be taken to reduce the loading of nutrients in a prioritized fashion. This strategic framework includes a multi-pronged approach to reduce toxics and nutrients from entering and impacting the Puget Sound ecosystem.

Scientific investigation of toxics and nutrients. One of the guiding principles of the Puget Sound Action Agenda is “to use scientific input in designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies.” Continued scientific work to better understand the sources, transport and fate of toxics and nutrients in the Puget Sound ecosystem will inform activities implemented under this framework.

Prevent substances from being used in the first place. In its Strategic Plan, the EPA identifies “preventing pollution before it is generated” as a key element of national environment policy. Prevention elements under this strategic framework seek ways to eliminate or dramatically reduce the use and generation of toxic substances in the first place as a key approach to preventing toxic “pollution from being introduced into the Puget Sound ecosystem” (Priority C.1 from the Action Agenda). Washington’s bans on phosphorus in detergent and copper in brake pads are examples of reducing nutrients and toxics through preventative approaches.

Limit or manage the amount of toxics and nutrients released into the environment. Both the Puget Sound Action Agenda and the EPA’s Strategic Plan call out actions to promote healthier communities and prevent releases of harmful substances. For example, Priority C.1 from the Action Agenda lists source control tactics such as education, pollution prevention, innovative technologies and technical assistance.

Clean up substances that have polluted air, land, or water. While prevention is the priority of the strategic framework for toxics, Ecology and its partners recognize the importance of removing substances from the environment to stop further exposures. The Action Agenda calls for prioritization of cleanup and remediation projects to reduce toxic loading into Puget Sound.

Measure program performance and use adaptive management to continuously improve programs. The Puget Sound Action Agenda Priority E calls for the creation of an accountability management system. Ecology and its partners will work together on developing indicators, targets and measurement systems to track progress towards desired ecosystem outcomes.

Proposed Budget

The proposed budget broken down by areas of investment is summarized below.

Areas of Investment	Funding for Round 1
Scientific Investigation	\$0
Prevention Activities	\$929,000
Management and Control Activities	\$1,482,000
Cleanup Activities	\$0
Effectiveness Monitoring, Performance Management, and Adaptive Management	\$48,000
10% Set-aside for cross-cutting projects.	\$300,000
Sub-Total for Sub-Awards	\$2,759,000
Administrative Costs	\$241,000

TOTAL	\$3,000,000
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Status

EPA notified Ecology in late January that we received the award. We are in the process of working with EPA to develop a detailed two-year work plan for the areas of investment outlined in our toxics and nutrients strategy.

Work plans included in the Lead Organizations' (LO) applications outline tasks and deliverables for decisions about initial investments. LOs (along with PSP, EPA and NWIFC) have been meeting frequently to discuss an overarching coordinated implementation strategy (such as development of a single portal application website and how to incorporate input from stakeholders in the process).

Next Steps

Ecology anticipates two types of subawards under the cooperative agreement with EPA. The first type is noncompetitive direct awards to an entity outside or within Ecology. The second type is a competitive subaward. Ecology is currently working with other LOs to define an application process and decision-making criteria for the competitive subawards. Requests for Proposal (RFPs) are expected to go out in May 2011.

Contracts for successful applicants to the RFP process are expected to be executed in July. The timing and amount of second round funds from EPA are still being debated in Congress, so the process needs to be flexible enough to respond to federal actions whenever they occur.

A related process coordinated by the Puget Sound Partnership to establish Ecosystem Targets and refine the Action Agenda will be going on in parallel with this grant process. Stakeholders may be asked for input into both processes since they are related. Both processes will feed into the LO objective of developing a detailed six-year strategy by the end of July. This six-year strategy will be an important component of the updated 2011 Action Agenda.