

DISCUSSION DRAFT

To: Entities engaged in Puget Sound NEP Management Conference

Fr: Puget Sound Lead Organizations (i.e., PSP, NWIFC, DOH, DFW, DNR, Commerce and Ecology)

Dt: January 25, 2011

Re: Proposed Approach for Puget Sound NEP Management Conference Interaction with Lead Organizations' Efforts to Develop and Implement Protection and Restoration Strategies

Context

On January 4, 2011, Washington State agencies submitted applications to EPA to coordinate six-year efforts to develop and implement strategies for:

- Marine and nearshore protection and restoration (Department of Fish & Wildlife and DNR)
- Watershed protection and restoration (Departments of Ecology and Commerce)
- Toxics and nutrients prevention, reduction and control (Department of Ecology)
- Pathogen prevention, reduction, and control (Departments of Health and Ecology)

These applications are anticipated to result in awards for six-year strategies, with awarded funds to be available beginning in February 2011. In addition, both the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission have cooperative agreements with EPA. PSP funding is focused on regional engagement and Action Agenda management. The purpose of the NWIFC funding is to provide sub-awards to 19 federally-recognized Indian Tribes located within the 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.

Work plans included in the four January 4 Lead Organizations' (LO) applications outline broad programs of work and decisions about initial investments. One common element of the LOs' applications is a coordinated effort with the PSP and EPA to gather strategic advice from various parts of the Puget Sound National Estuary Program (NEP) management conference.

EPA funds for the four areas of emphasis total \$12 million for the first year, and up to \$192 million over six years. The level of funding in subsequent years is in part dependent on demonstration by the LOs to EPA and Congress that funds can be expeditiously and appropriately expended with significant measureable results. 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

This document proposes a method to:

- Engage with implementing partners and other stakeholders throughout the Puget Sound basin;
- Review and align investments in scientific investigations with advice from the Partnership's Science Panel; and
- Obtain Leadership Council endorsement of six-year strategies and periodic investments to implement the strategies.

Key Objectives

- Ensure six-year strategies and investments are consistent with the highest priorities of the Action Agenda.
- Establish meaningful and timely input and guidance to the six-year strategies, including funding priorities.
- Ensure ongoing coordination among LOs, EPA, PSP, and the broader management conference.
- Design an engagement process to receive meaningful input from a broad range of stakeholders and governments, using existing structures and forums to the maximum extent possible.

Regional Engagement

There are various options to engage governments and stakeholders throughout the Puget Sound region. Following is a three-pronged approach involving:

- Ecosystem Coordination Board;
- Advisory committees/workgroups; and,
- Local input.

Ecosystem Coordination Board & Management Conference

Opportunities for LOs, EPA, and PSP to engage the management conference through the ECB and the implementing partners and stakeholders represented on the ECB include requests to:

- Obtain advice on the development and implementation of six-year strategies.
- Vet proposed investments, including the process and decision-making criteria for subawards, designed to implement strategies prior to their presentation to the Leadership Council.
- Play a central role in integrating and implementing the public awareness and engagement efforts.
- Evaluate progress in achieving outcomes as they align with Action Agenda benchmarks/indicators and across the four topics.

Topic-Specific Advisory Committees/Cross-Partnership Workgroups

In their January 4 applications to EPA, four LOs committed to “gather strategic advice from various parts of the management conference.” In addition to ECB consultation as outlined above, topic-specific advisory committees (workgroups) will be used to provide initial and ongoing guidance to the six-year strategies. Potential functions include the following:

- Identify priority strategies and actions that best advance the six-year strategy;
- Consult on direct sub awards;
- Consult on the process and decision-making criteria for competitive sub awards; and,
- Participate in adaptive management analysis and recommendations.

We propose to form two new advisory committees (i.e., combining Pathogens with Toxics/Nutrients and Watersheds with Marine/Nearshore). Implementing entities and stakeholders (or their caucuses as represented on the ECB) would be invited to participate on these committees based on their interests, expertise and capacity to engage. We propose that these committees be formed as cross-Partnership work groups, convened by LO staff, to engage representatives of the Leadership Council, ECB, and Science Panel.

Local Input

An important dynamic in the six-year strategies is effective engagement at a local scale, including Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs). Significant work through the LIOs and PSP's Ecosystem Recovery Coordinators is needed to foster alignment among the six-year strategies and local initiatives. Where LIOs are operational and represent broad-based environmental interests, those entities could facilitate such input; where that is not true, public meetings or workshops could be arranged at appropriate times. Potential functions for local input include:

- Provide a "local filter" for basin-wide priorities identified in the six-year strategy (i.e., are some basin-wide priorities more important than others within a single Action Area?);
- Provide a coordination point for stakeholders and potential project proponents; and,
- Play a central role in integrating and implementing the public awareness and engagement efforts.

Review and Alignment of Science Investments

PSP efforts to recover Puget Sound are supported by a Science Panel, which provides scientific advice, ensures scientific review of materials and programs, and facilitates science community engagement in adaptive management of Puget Sound recovery. PSP can facilitate interactions between LOs and the Science Panel in areas such as the following:

- Discussion of decision-critical uncertainties that the Science Panel might address in elements of biennial science work plans.
- Science Panel review of scientific work proposed to be funded by LOs. The Panel is to review proposed work for consistency with the biennial science work plan.
- Scientific review of products (e.g., reports of scientific investigations, documentation of strategies and adaptive management).

Leadership Council Decision on Action Agenda Consistency

LOs will work with EPA, PSP and regional interests and governments to ensure alignment of each six-year strategy with the Action Agenda. One way to affirm consistency with the Action Agenda is to have the Leadership Council affirm that LO funding priorities, as reflected in initial and subsequent rounds of strategic investments, advance the Action Agenda. There is precedent for this approach (i.e., the Leadership Council affirmation of ESRP processes).

Focus Questions for Ecosystem Coordination Board

- *What do you think of the proposed regional engagement process? If not this process, what would you recommend?*
- *If you support the general process, are there refinements to the suggested roles and processes? For example, should new advisory committees be formed or should existing groups be used to advise the six-year strategies? Should advisory committees be convened to address combinations of topics (as proposed) or individual topics?*
- *What do you think of the Leadership Council role of ensuring alignment of six-year strategies with the Action Agenda?*