

# PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## Agenda Item Briefing Sheet

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**Meeting Date:** July 26, 2007

**Agenda Item:** TAB 2: Action Area Delineation – Briefing

**Staff Contact:** Ron Shultz, Acting Executive Director

**Presenter(s):** Ron Shultz, Acting Executive Director  
Panel members will be introduced at the time of presentation.

**Action Requested:** Briefing, Discussion and Guidance

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### **Background:**

Under the statute creating the Puget Sound Partnership, the Leadership Council must identify seven “Action Areas” around Puget Sound for the purposes of assisting in the development and implementation of the 2020 Action Agenda. Furthermore, when establishing the Ecosystem Coordination Board, the Council must appoint one representative from each Action Area to the Board.

Recently, a request for public comment on possible Action Area delineation was distributed to various stakeholders across the Sound, and notice of this request was published in several newspapers. The request went out under a cover letter from Council Chair Bill Ruckelshaus, and included a background memo and several maps showing the various ways in which we currently divide the Sound for a variety of administrative and management purposes. You each received a copy of these materials previously. The letter and memo are attached for your reference.

### **Action Requested at Today’s Meeting:**

No action from you is requested at today’s meeting. However, staff would like guidance on the proposed process. The proposal is that comments from the public will be received until August 3. After that, Partnership staff will organize the comments in a format for your review, and will also develop alternative proposals for delineation of the Action Areas. These will be distributed to you for your review. They will also be distributed to the public for their review and comment. Then, at your meeting in late August, the proposed delineation maps will be presented to you for your review, public comment, and then final action by you.

# PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP

State of Washington

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July 16, 2007

To Partners in Our Work on Puget Sound:

In order for us to succeed in the recovery of Puget Sound by 2020, we need the energy, hard work, good will and good thinking of everyone around the Sound. To do this, we want to build upon the positive and successful work already underway. The Leadership Council wants to hear from you how best to organize to accomplish this task. We are therefore sending this communication to the recipients identified on the attached list.

The legislation creating the new Puget Sound Partnership directs the Partnership to use sub-regions, or Action Areas, for several purposes. The statute reads, in relevant part, that the Leadership Council will “define the geographic delineations of these Action Areas based upon the common issues and interests of the entities in these action areas, and upon the characteristics of the Sound's physical structure, and the water flows into and within the Sound.” Each sub-region will also have a representative on the Ecosystem Coordination Board. In addition, sub-regions will work together to identify what should be included in the 2020 Action Agenda.

To help the Leadership Council choose the most effective boundaries, we would like your opinion on how the sub-regional boundaries should be drawn. We recognize that all options may have some drawbacks and we want to choose the one that makes the most sense consistent with the statute creating the Puget Sound Partnership.

The attached memo has been developed by staff at the Partnership to assist you in considering the various ways we currently divide Puget Sound. The memo also includes a series of questions that I hope will help to stimulate thinking and discussion around how Action Areas should be delineated.

You may already work with others in your area on watershed planning or salmon recovery. You may also work within an area that you've defined in a way that works for you but is not represented on any of the maps. If so, we want to hear of that as well. A common approach coming from the various areas in Puget Sound would be most helpful to the Leadership Council. In other words, we are asking you to self organize.

We need to move quickly to accomplish our work. The statute directs us to produce the Action Agenda in one year. We will need to establish the Action Areas soon. Please provide your input to the Partnership by August 3, 2007.

The Leadership Council will consider all input and make a decision on delineation of the Areas at their meeting in late August. We will do the best we can within the short time frame allowed. We see this process as evolutionary. We are going to try and decide by August. If adjustments are needed after the decision, we can still make them. Please submit your

comments to Ron Shultz, Acting Executive Director, PS Partnership, at [Ron.Shultz@psp.wa.gov](mailto:Ron.Shultz@psp.wa.gov) and if you have questions, call Ron at (360) 725-5470.

Thank you for your hard work in the protection and restoration of Puget Sound. I look forward to our continued collaboration to achieve a healthy Puget Sound by 2020.

Sincerely,



Bill Ruckelshaus, Chair  
Leadership Council

**Attachment to Bill Ruckelshaus' Letter  
Regarding Delineation of Action Areas  
July 16, 2007**

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In order to ensure the Leadership Council receives as much input as possible, I recommend a broad distribution of the cover letter and memo. Partnership staff have identified a distribution list that includes the following:

- counties
- cities
- conservation districts
- salmon recovery groups
- lead entities
- watershed planning groups
- tribes, state and federal agencies
- the Puget Sound Council
- Marine Resources Committees (MRCs)
- shellfish protection districts
- business community
- environmental community
- recreation and fishing groups

The cover letter, memo and all maps will also be available on the Puget Sound Partnership web page, and comments can be submitted there.

The web page location: [www.psp.wa.gov](http://www.psp.wa.gov)

# **Request by the Puget Sound Partnership for Input on Delineating Action Areas in the Puget Sound Basin**

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The Leadership Council of the Puget Sound Partnership is soliciting input on how to divide the Puget Sound basin into Action Areas as required in state statute. To stimulate thinking about Action Area delineations, Partnership staff prepared a series of questions for your consideration. **Please provide your input to the Puget Sound Partnership no later than August 3, 2007 to ensure that your perspective can be shared with the Leadership Council before they consider this issue at their August meeting.**

A note on the process: Comments can be sent to the Puget Sound Partnership at [areacommments@psp.wa.gov](mailto:areacommments@psp.wa.gov). The Leadership Council will be briefed on the Action Areas at their July 26 meeting. After comments are received a draft proposal will be developed for consideration by the Leadership Council at their August meeting (yet to be scheduled). You will be able to comment on the proposal before the August meeting.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **New statute requires establishment of Action Areas in the Puget Sound basin**

The new state statute creating the Puget Sound Partnership directs the Leadership Council of the Partnership to define a strategic “Action Agenda” prioritizing necessary action, both basin-wide and within specific areas, and to build this Action Agenda in part on the foundation of existing watershed programs that address or contribute to the health of Puget Sound.

To develop the Action Agenda, the Partnership is directed to work with local watershed groups, tribes, cities, counties, special purpose districts, and the private sector in geographic “Action Areas” of Puget Sound. These Action Areas are to collectively encompass the entire Puget Sound basin and include the areas draining to the marine waters in these Action Areas.

The statute does not define the specific geographic delineations of these areas, but does list them as follows:

- (a) Strait of Juan de Fuca;
- (b) The San Juan Islands;
- (c) Whidbey Island;
- (d) North central Puget Sound;
- (e) South central Puget Sound;
- (f) South Puget Sound; and
- (g) Hood Canal.

According to the statute, the Leadership Council will “define the geographic delineations of these Action Areas based upon the common issues and interests of the entities in these action areas, and upon the characteristics of the Sound's physical structure, and the water flows into and within the Sound.”

The Partnership executive director will then invite appropriate tribes, local governments, and watershed groups to convene in each Action Area to identify the applicable local plan elements, projects, and programs for adoption into the action agenda.

This effort to develop Action Agenda elements at the scale of the Action Area will complement the Partnership’s work to compile and assess ecosystem scale management, restoration, and protection plans for the Puget Sound basin.

### **Importance and Implications of Action Areas**

Action Agenda. The Action Agenda is to be built, in part, on local plans, programs, and actions. These local elements will first be evaluated and incorporated into the Action Agenda at the local level through the Action Areas. Representatives of tribes, watershed groups, local governments, and private sector institutions will be asked to work together in each Action Area to consider scientific information on the ecosystem risks in their area, identify key actions to address these risks, evaluate existing programs and plans, and recommend area-specific actions, programs, and strategies for adoption in the Action Agenda. This information will then go to the Partnership’s Science Panel and Ecosystem Coordination Board for evaluation and inclusion into the draft Action Agenda for final consideration and approval by the Leadership Council.

Ecosystem Coordination Board. The Partnership’s Ecosystem Coordination Board will advise the Leadership Council on carrying out its responsibilities and is the primary venue for stakeholder representation for the Partnership. The Board will include representatives of business and environmental groups, tribes, and local, state and federal agencies. The Board will also include one representative from each Action Area who will be selected by the Leadership Council after soliciting nominations from, at a minimum, counties, cities, and watershed groups within the Area.

### **Statutory Criteria for the Action Areas**

During the legislative debate on the issue of delineating Action Areas, the legislature concluded that the Leadership Council should have flexibility in how they delineate the Areas. But the statute does provide a general framework for the Council. The statute indicates that the Council should delineate the Action Area geographic boundaries based on:

- Common issues and interests
- Characteristics of the Sound's physical structure, and
- How water flows into and within the Sound.

## Questions for Consideration

The next section of this memo presents, in a series of maps, some of the existing subdivisions of the Puget Sound basin that might help inform delineation of Action Areas. These maps are not exhaustive, and are offered to stimulate thinking on the following questions:

- What are the pros and cons of each option? We are interested in your opinion from scientific, political and social, and institutional perspectives, as well as where the region might build off of existing efforts and working relationships.
- Are there other sub-regional boundaries (existing or potential) that should be considered? This might include combining elements of existing sub-regional boundary delineations.
- What is your organization/interest's preference for a sub-regional boundary and why?
- What criteria do you think should we consider when evaluating sub-regional boundary options?

## EXISTING SUBDIVISIONS OF THE PUGET SOUND BASIN

### Maps describing selected existing subdivisions of the Puget Sound Basin

Maps 1 to 6 (attached) depict subdivisions of the Puget Sound basin that may help inform the Leadership Council's decisions about delineation of Action Areas.

Maps 1 and 2 are based on previously established approaches to subdividing the marine waters of the Puget Sound basin. Since the Partnership statute requires upland areas associated with marine waters to be included in the Action Area, maps 1 and 2 show a linkage between the marine waters and upland areas.

Maps 3 through 7 depict existing subdivision of the Puget Sound basin that are currently used for various administrative and policy purposes.

**NOTE:** The boundaries and delineations on the maps do not represent the only ways in which the Sound could be divided into Action Areas to meet the needs of the Partnership. Also, the maps do not represent any preferred option of the Partnership staff. The maps are presented merely to provide information as to some of the current subdivisions in that many individuals and organizations are familiar with.

Maps 1 through 6 present the geographic boundaries of the Hood Canal Rehabilitation Zone as the key subdivision around Hood Canal. Partnership staff chose to depict this delineation around Puget Sound because of the statutory direction of RCW 90.88.005(4) which states that the rehabilitation zone serves as the framework for programs directed at the recovery of Hood Canal.

### **Map 1: Marine Fishery Management Areas and Associated Uplands**

Description: This map divides the Puget Sound basin into ten regions based on Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) marine areas for fishery management. The marine portions of the geographic units shown in Map 1 are used for fishery management and are divided at shoreline features that are readily recognizable from a vessel on the marine waters of Puget Sound. Partnership staff delineated upland regions of each area based on drainage basins. The shoreline boundaries between marine areas 4 and 5 and areas 5 and 6 occur at river mouths. At each of these boundaries, Partnership staff arbitrarily assigned the entire river basin of the “boundary” river to one of the two marine areas.

Discussion: This delineation offers a means of closely matching the action areas named in statute (e.g., by grouping areas 4, 5, and 6 and by some combination of areas 9, 10, and 11). Marine boundaries do not reflect oceanographic basins. Map 1 boundaries in the upland portion of the basin are not consistent with existing jurisdictional boundaries. Boundaries in the vicinity of the marine shoreline diverge considerably from WRIA boundaries.

### **Map 2: Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program (PSAMP) Marine Basins and Associated Uplands**

Description: PSAMP’s Marine Basins were developed largely from Ebbesmeyer et al., 1984, and are based on the locations of sills in Puget Sound. In the early 2000s, the PSAMP Steering Committee used the Ebbesmeyer reference and other input from physical oceanographers (supplied by Jan Newton) to develop basin boundaries for the greater Puget Sound region, including the San Juan archipelago and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The PSAMP basin figure was drafted and drawn by Pete Dowty, the PSAMP Science Coordinator at the time. The marine portions of the geographic subdivisions in Map 2 reflect oceanographic circulation within basins. In Map 2, Partnership staff have combined two units that PSAMP had separated – San Juan and Georgia Straits – because the distinctions between these basins was not clear in the PSAMP delineations. Partnership staff made slight adjustments to the shoreline boundaries of these basins to keep shoreline units (of littoral drift) intact. Partnership staff also added the adjacent upland drainages to each of these basins so that the units subdivide the entire Puget Sound basin.

Discussion: Oceanographic circulation provides a technically credible basis for subdividing marine waters to address the management of marine water quality and marine resource issues that are affected by water circulation (e.g., protection and restoration of eelgrass, protection from low dissolved oxygen). Map 2 boundaries in the upland portion of the basin are not consistent with existing jurisdictional boundaries. Boundaries in the vicinity of the marine shoreline diverge considerably from WRIA boundaries.

### **Map 3: Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIsAs)**

Description: The state developed WRIsAs for the purpose of water quantity and water quality planning. WRIA delineations divide the upland portions of the Puget Sound basin into 19 drainage units, usually dominated by one or more major rivers. Some of the smaller WRIsAs are aggregations of smaller creeks that are somewhat arbitrarily separated from their adjoining basin. Marine boundaries between WRIsAs generally follow county boundaries.

Discussion: WRIsAs have proven to be very functional for creating a watershed approach to complex water management problems shared between political jurisdictions. Many longstanding natural resource management schemes have been successfully developed along WRIA boundaries (e.g., Shared Strategy's salmon recovery watersheds are based on WRIA boundaries). The political or arbitrary marine boundaries between WRIsAs do not correspond to any natural resource processes.

### **Map 4: Regions of Diversity & Risk for Puget Sound Chinook, Marine Sub-basins for Chinook Recovery, and Hood Canal Summer Chum ESU**

Description: This map illustrates a number of divisions of the Puget Sound basin developed for salmon recovery planning: five regions of diversity & risk for populations of Puget Sound Chinook; 11 marine sub-basins for nearshore recovery planning for Puget Sound Chinook; and the geographic region of the evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) of Hood Canal summer chum.

The Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team (TRT) developed five regions of diversity and risk for Puget Sound Chinook Salmon populations. Each of these regions includes the spawning river basins for two or more independent populations of Puget Sound Chinook. Planning and evaluation of recovery for the Puget Sound ESU relies on the viability of at least two populations in each of these five regions, including the protection and/or enhancement of conditions in each region to ensure that at least one population in each region has a low risk of extinction.

Marine sub-basins for Chinook recovery were adapted from the PSAMP marine basins (discussed above) and nest within the five regions of diversity and risk for Chinook populations. Delineation of these 11 marine sub-basins by a member of the Puget Sound

TRT considered the influences of upland drainages, especially large rivers and pocket estuaries, and juvenile salmon populations on shorelines. In this scheme three of the PSAMP basins are divided to distinguish areas (sub-basins) with large amounts of influence from natal populations of Chinook (e.g., Nisqually area of South Puget Sound) from those that lack influence from natal populations of Chinook (e.g., western inlets of South Puget Sound).

The geographic region of the Hood Canal summer chum ESU overlaps the Puget Sound Chinook ESU. This region extends beyond the mouth of Hood Canal to the eastern portion of the Olympic Peninsula along the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Discussion: The areas depicted on Map 4 can be viewed as ecological units that reflect information and understandings about the flow of energy, materials and organisms (especially out-migrant juvenile salmon) around the Puget Sound basin. Although these regions have been useful in developing and evaluating salmon recovery plans, they were not the primary units of analysis for recovery planning (except for Hood Canal summer chum) and have not been adopted for use in management.

### **Map 5: Shared Strategy's Watershed Salmon Recovery Planning Areas**

Background: This map divides the upland portion of the Puget Sound basin into the 14 watershed-based salmon recovery planning areas used by Shared Strategy for Puget Sound to develop the Salmon Recovery Plan. These 14 areas were created by adapting the WRIA boundaries to emerging regional salmon recovery groups based on natal populations of Chinook salmon. The boundaries and groupings of WRIsAs were negotiated through the course of recovery planning to facilitate collaboration between political jurisdictions that shared a salmon resource.

Discussion: The boundaries of the 14 areas follow existing WRIA boundaries sufficiently closely that upland water management issues could easily be integrated with salmon recovery projects. However, the recovery boundaries do not subdivide marine waters.

### **Map 6: RFEG Boundaries**

Description: This map divides the Puget Sound basin into seven regions based on the boundaries of Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEGs). Partnership staff have not researched the basis for RFEG boundaries but present this map as an example of an existing approach to subdividing the Puget Sound basin for purposes of community-based management of natural resources.

Discussion: RFEG regions do not align with WRIA or salmon recovery planning boundaries. Consequently, RFEGs do not always have a single point of contact or coordination for collaborations within their geographic area.

### **Map 7: Counties and County Groups**

Description: This map depicts the 12 counties that comprise the Puget Sound basin and a selection of the institutional arrangements them that may be relevant to the work of the Puget Sound Partnership. Partnership staff elected to illustrate five existing institutional arrangements on this map:

- Northwest Straits Initiative
- Hood Canal Coordinating Council
- Puget Sound Regional Council
- Tri-county ESA response planning
- Regional water supply planning

These multi-county institutions represent ongoing or recent efforts that address one or more of the goals or objectives of the Partnership.

Discussion: Comprehensive planning under the Growth Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act is coordinated at the county level. Other political jurisdictions (cities, ports, other special purpose districts)also have considerable responsibilities for growth management, shoreline management, and other issues of relevance to the Partnership. As discussed above, many natural resource management schemes have been successfully developed along watershed (especially WRIA) boundaries; county boundaries in the Puget Sound basin do not typically follow watershed boundaries. But these administrative arrangements between the counties demonstrate that progress can be made on various issues by agreement between entities across political and ecological lines.