

To: Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council,

From: David Dicks –Director Puget Sound Partnership Agency

Date: December 17, 2007 meeting

The main deliverable for the Puget Sound Partnership and its Leadership Council (LC) in 2008 is the 2020 Action Agenda (Agenda). Our goal is to complete the Agenda by September 1, 2008 as directed by our governing statute. In order to make this deadline, it is vital that we immediately determine the deliverables that will be contained in the Action Agenda.

This memo outlines what the Action Agenda will contain and how we intend complete the task before us.

- 1) *What is a healthy Puget Sound?*
- 2) *What is the current status of Puget Sound's health and what are the biggest threats to it?*
- 3) *What actions must be taken ~~to~~ will move us from where we are today to a healthy Puget Sound by 2020?*
- 4) *Where should we start?*

1) How will we define a healthy Puget Sound?

The first step in creating the Action Agenda is to define the desired end state of a healthy Puget Sound. In short, what does a healthy Puget Sound look like? The legislation directs that: “[b]y 2020, the action agenda shall strive to achieve the following goals:

- (a) A healthy human population supported by a healthy Puget Sound that is not threatened by changes in the ecosystem;
- (b) A quality of human life that is sustained by a functioning Puget Sound ecosystem;
- (c) Healthy and sustaining populations of native species in Puget Sound, including a robust food web;
- (d) A healthy Puget Sound where freshwater, estuary, nearshore, marine, and upland habitats are protected, restored, and sustained;

(e) An ecosystem that is supported by ground water levels as well as river and stream flow levels sufficient to sustain people, fish, and wildlife, and the natural functions of the environment;

(f) Fresh and marine waters and sediments of a sufficient quality so that the waters in the region are safe for drinking, swimming, shellfish harvest and consumption, and other human uses and enjoyment, and are not harmful to the native marine mammals, fish, birds, and shellfish of the region.”

We will use these goals because, although they are broad, our scientists believe they suffice as a working definition of a healthy Sound. Other goals can be added if needed.

2) How will we determine the current health of the Sound and the key threats to it?

Another step in the process will be to determine the current baseline condition of the Sound. This work is necessary so that we can tell if we are making progress against our current state. Although the question is fundamental, answering it is not an easy task. To date there has not been a complete “roll up” of the various studies and data leading to a clear and agreed upon conclusion about the current status of Puget Sound and the magnitude of threats.

The in-progress risk analysis includes a synthesis of existing assessments. This will tell us the status of each goal identified in the statute, as well as the most significant threats to Puget Sound and where they exist.

A few examples of the assessments being integrated include:

- Puget Sound Update 2007
- State of the Sound 2007
- Salmon Recovery Plan
- The Nature Conservancy Eco-Regional Assessment

3) How will we determine what actions must be taken to move us from where we are today to a healthy Puget Sound by 2020?

Our legislative statute and the earlier Partnership’s work provide the suite of core activities that need to occur to produce a healthy Sound. These include:

- A) Protect existing habitat and prevent further losses
- B) Restore habitat functions and values.
- C) Significantly reduce toxics entering Puget Sound fresh and marine waters.
- D) Significantly reduce nutrients and pathogens entering Puget Sound fresh and marine waters.
- E) Improve water quality and habitat by managing storm water runoff.

- F) Provide water for people, fish and wildlife, and the environment.
- G) Protect ecosystem biodiversity and recover imperiled species.
- H) Build and sustain the capacity for action which could include:
 - *Determining what scientific studies are needed to refine the Action Agenda*
 - *Building a system wide monitoring program to track the progress and success of activities suggested in the Action Agenda*
 - *Developing a funding program to implement the Action Agenda*

J) Climate Change: Connections. ELO

Although the objectives above provide the ingredients necessary to recover the Sound, they do not provide a recipe for success. Much like baking a cake, a list of all of the ingredients provides a helpful but insufficient amount of information. *To bake a cake you also need to know how much of each ingredient is needed and in what order each one should be added.* Similarly, discerning how much of each of the above activities is needed and in what order they should occur is necessary if we are to succeed in recovering the Sound. It is our ability to answer these final questions - how much and when - that will distinguish the Action Agenda from all previous "plans"¹ and will allow us to meet our charge to "define a strategic action agenda prioritizing necessary actions, both basin-wide and within specific areas..." *RCW 90.71.200 (2)(a).*

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4) Where should we begin?

The most important result of the steps outlined above is they will provide us with a way to ensure that our initial activities are focused where they will do the most good. This effort will not be successful if we simply start acting without a rational basis. But the effort will also fail if we wait until we have perfect information. We believe that the approach we are proposing for developing the Action Agenda will lead to a good balance between analyses and short-term actions that provide the foundation for successfully restoring Puget Sound.

¹ As an example, the current 2007-2009 Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan states: "[the] Plan identified eight priorities as the most important for the next two years of work in the Puget Sound. The priorities are not ranked or in any order."