

Discussion Draft

The Puget Sound Partnership 2009 – 2012 Priorities

The Action Agenda identifies key activities needed to restore Puget Sound by 2020. The recovery task is ambitious, the players are many, the actions are daunting and the necessary investment is significant.

To stimulate our conversation about identifying strategic priorities at your May meeting, staff developed this example of suggested priorities for discussion purposes. A key outcome for the meeting is to get your guidance and feedback on selecting near term priorities that would form the basis for our work plan for the next two to four years.

Initial priorities were based on the following initial criteria:

- Action has regional or ecosystem impact
- No entity is currently leading work or more support is needed to advance it
- Action will likely not happen if not advanced by the Partnership
- Action lays the foundation for future investment or activities

A. Protection Strategy: Natural Areas

We cannot afford to lose key natural areas in Puget Sound. We must protect wetlands, shorelines, working forests and farms, and critical freshwater sources.

Priorities

1. Land Conservation
 - a. Identify high priority lands – by geography, function and vulnerability/risk.
 - b. Develop mechanisms for effective acquisition/protection of these lands, including fee-in-lieu mitigation, conservation easements and a Land Conservation Revolving Loan Fund.
2. Ensure and Enhance Basic Protections
 - a. Assist jurisdictions in completion of SMPs and CAOs that incorporate key protections related to the Action Agenda.
 - b. Amend the Shoreline Management Act to require permits for all new shoreline hardening or over-water structures. Provide funding and technical support to jurisdictions to draft and implement this change.
 - c. Support/pilot innovative approaches to advance integrated, local, protection strategies.

B. Restoration Strategy: Ecosystem Processes, Structure, and Function

Integrate restoration efforts, procure resources and improve potential for implementation. Advance key, large-scale projects around the Sound.

Priorities

1. Support Salmon Recovery, and Other Action Agenda Restoration Priorities
 - a. Sustain existing commitment to salmon recovery, and integrate these efforts with other Action Agenda priorities.

- b. Support local integration and implementation functions.
 - c. Provide strong conduit between the Partnership and local implementing groups and entities.
 - d. Advance key projects in Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plans; help procure funding and remove barriers to implementation.
 - e. Develop processes to streamline permitting.
2. Undertake System-Scale Projects
- a. Procure resources to implement several regional scale projects that restore estuaries, nearshore, and river ecosystems, such as:
 - i. Smith Island Project (Snohomish River Estuary)
 - ii. Dungeness River Floodplain
 - iii. Skokomish
 - iv. Others?
3. Support Bay-Scale Toxic Clean-up Projects
- a. Target high priority toxic clean-up sites.
 - i. Conduct One –Year Port Angeles Bay Pilot Restoration
 - ii. Continue Bellingham Bay Restoration

C. Water Quality Strategy: Reduce pollution

Most direct industrial wastewater discharges are under permit and their impacts have been curbed. Sanitary sewer systems have been expanded and improved. However stormwater continues to be the leading threat to Puget Sound and lacks leadership and a regional, unified strategy.

Priorities

1. Regional Stormwater Strategy
- a. Prioritize and Fund Stormwater Retrofits in Urban Areas.
 - b. Provide Incentives and Technical Assistance for Low Impact Development (LID).
 - c. Enhance Flexibility under Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Program Requirements.
 - i. Explore ways to modify DOE standards so that some of the capital resources targeting CSOs could be re-directed to address critical stormwater management opportunities, yielding a bigger benefit to the sound.
 - d. Advance Regional Non-Point Pollution Strategy.
 - i. Seek to ban harmful pesticides and fertilizers where a suitable not toxic alternative exists.
 - ii. Target residential Best Management Practices via outreach/social marketing strategies in conjunction with STORM (STormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities) and others.
 - iii. Others?
2. Provide State Assistance Grants to Modernize Wastewater Treatment
- a. Many existing treatment plants lack advanced treatment technologies that remove nutrients and dangerous bacteria. Provide funding and technical assistance to modernize wastewater treatment plants in communities in nutrient sensitive areas.

3. Provide State Assistance Grants/Technical Assistance for On-Site Septic Systems
 - a. Failed septic systems, particularly in the South Sound and Hood Canal, contribute nutrients and dangerous bacteria to Puget Sound.
 - b. Create septic utilities in sensitive drainages, with authority over existing systems. Enhance funding for existing septic loan programs and ensure that funding is targeted at high priority areas.

D. Systems Strategy: Build Strong, Comprehensive Framework for Program Alignment, Accountability, Science and Communications

Priorities

1. Reform and Align Regulations
 - a. Align federal, state and local regulatory programs so that they are consistent with the Action Agenda.
 - b. Identify key changes needed and advance through an annual legislative agenda, in conjunction with partners.
 - c. Clean Water Act/Permits?
 - d. National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits?
 - e. State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA)?
 - f. Army Corp of Engineers levee maintenance standards?
2. Consolidate Monitoring
 - a. Consolidate/establish a Sound-wide monitoring program.
 - b. Maintain a coordinated and comprehensive system for monitoring the health of the sound, sharing data, and informing and evaluating Sound recovery efforts.
3. Manage Performance Management System
 - a. The Partnership will develop and implement a strong, integrated performance management system to track progress, evaluate implementation strategies and guide work of the Action Agenda.
 - b. Establish and implement a “Partner” designation process.
4. Science Program
 - a. Priority #1
 - b. Priority #2
 - c. Implement Biennial Science Work Plan.
 - d. Collaborate with UW Research Institute to analyze key issues related to Puget Sound recovery efforts.
5. Comprehensive Regional Social Engagement Strategy
 - a. Public engagement and a broad shift in public behavior is critical and central to achieving Puget Sound’s recovery, as it is ultimately a social challenge. Virtually every impact and recovery strategy is rooted in the interaction between the Sound’s natural resources and its 4 million human residents.
 - a. Integrate social science into well-founded targets, strategies and evaluation mechanisms.

- b. Employ regional strategies to significantly increase public understanding of the issues facing the Sound, their roles and impacts and their engagement in the solutions.
- c. Cultivate broad-scale behavior change in residents to reduce degradation and advance beneficial practices relevant to recovery efforts, particularly in the area of non-point pollution.

E. Funding

Current resource investment is far below that necessary to achieve the 2020 restoration goal. A comprehensive funding strategy is required to ensure the resources necessary to fulfill the goals and strategies of the Action Agenda - both for the Partnership and our regional partners.

Priorities:

- a. Evaluate and align existing investments
 - a. Identify opportunities to better align state, federal, county, and local funding with the Action Agenda priorities.
 - b. Expand existing state loan/grant programs to fund Action Agenda priorities; incorporate incentives for “Partner” designees.
 - c. Implement a targeted procurement plan for the largest state environmental grant programs (e.g. Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, and Conservation Commission)
- b. Establish comprehensive strategy to secure necessary funding to implement Action Agenda
 - a. Federal Funding Strategy
 - b. State Funding Strategy
 - c. Local Funding Strategy
 - d. Private Funding Strategy
- c. Establish prioritization and funding processes to guide investments to highest priorities under the Action Agenda.

F. Legislation

Work with regional partners to develop and advocate for a unified Puget Sound legislative agenda linked to Action Agenda priorities.

To be determined.