



Photo by Jeff Hogan, 2009

**Puget Sound Partnership  
Leadership Council Meeting – July 17, 2009**

# Today's Presentation

1. Project Status Update.
2. Report on Issues and Views about Floodplain Use.
3. Hear Comments/Feedback on Issues Presented.
4. Come back in September with Proposed Actions.

# What is the Urgency with Floodplains Issues?



Photo : FEMA

Chehalis Flood - 2007

# NMFS Biological Opinion on FEMA NFIP ESA – Section 7

NMFS Concludes:

*National Flood Insurance  
Program Jeopardizes the  
Continued Existence of  
Salmon and Orca Whales  
in Puget Sound*

✓ Changes to Local  
Regulations Required!



Photo: Monika Weiland

# Army Corps Levee Vegetation Standards

Salmon need mature vegetation such as trees, shrubs for habitat.

Army Corps focus:  
Safety First!  
Structural Integrity  
of levees is top  
priority.



Photos: US Army Corps of Engineers

# Recent News Headlines

- “Leaky Green River dam abutment boosts flood risk” - Seattle Times, June 30, 2009
- “FEMA: Monroe mobile homes in floodplain must go.” Seattle Times, June 30, 2009

# Climate Change



Photo: AP Puyallup River 2008

- Increasing severity and frequency of floods
- Changing the location of floodplains

# Floodplain Project

- Go Get the Facts!
- Interview Stakeholders
- Summarize the Issues
- Prepare White Paper
- Propose Options for PSP Roles and Actions



Photo: Allison Aurand

# Who did we talk to?

- Steve Landino, NMFS
- Matt Longenbaugh, NMFS
- Ken Berg, USFWS
- Mona Thomason, US Army Corps
- Jennifer Richman, US Army Corps
- Steve Fink, U.S. Army Corps
- Ken Brunner, U.S. Army Corps
- Dan Katz, U.S. Army Corps
- Mark Carey, FEMA Region 10
- Mark Eberlein, FEMA Region 10
- Larry Wasserman, Swinomish Tribe
- Jim Weber, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
- Allison Butcher, Master Builders Assn.
- Chris McCabe, Assn of Wash. Business
- Megan White, WSDOT
- Tom Clingman, DOE
- Doug Peters, CTED
- Carol Smith, WA Conservation Cmssn
- Jan Hasselman, Earthjustice
- Darcy Nonemacher, American Rivers
- Dan Siemann, Nat'l Wildlife Foundation
- Patty Glick, Nat'l Wildlife Foundation
- Cyrilla Cook, People for Puget Sound
- Jeff Pavey, Cascade Land Conservancy
- James Schroeder, The Nature Conservancy
- Paul Roberts, City of Everett
- Dave Williams, AWC
- Neil Aaland, WASAC
- Randall Lewis, City of Tacoma

# Issues in Floodplains

## **ECOLOGICAL VIEW**

- Vital for flood storage and salmon habitat
- Recreation opportunities lost by dikes.

## **USER VIEW**

- Control flood waters to protect life, property and businesses.
- Restoration projects pose risks to boaters, swimmers.

# Issues in Floodplains

## **ECOLOGICAL VIEW**

- Filter water pollution from upstream.
- Summer river recharge keeps fish alive.

## **USER VIEW**

- Floodplains are farmland.
- No net loss of farm acres for habitat restoration.

# Issues in Floodplains

## ECOLOGICAL VIEW

- We aren't doing enough to protect and restore habitat in floodplains.
- Salmon recovery is urgent! Tribal treaty rights are impaired by harvest restrictions.

## USER VIEW

- Can't take private property without compensation.
- We already have enough regulation. We are doing plenty of restoration.

# Issues in Floodplains

## What's Out there? Infrastructure

- Entire Cities and Towns
- Roads and Bridges
- Water, Gas Pipes and Electric Transmission lines
- Railroads
- Ports
- Docks, Moorage, Houseboats
- Sewage Treatment Plants
- Farm Manure Lagoons



# Infrastructure in the floodplain



# Electrical Transmission Lines in the floodplain



# New barns flooded to roof tops January, 2009



## *Unintended Consequences:*

Expansion of Infrastructure can sometimes drive demand for development in Floodplains



South End – New Light Rail



Everett – Sewage Treatment in Estuary

Are we encouraging more development in floodplains?



# Problems Observed with the Way we Manage Floodplains

- No state policy that guides protection and restoration.
- Patch quilt of regulations and regulators.
- Not talking about the cycle of repetitive loss and its true costs.



Photo: Shared Strategy for Puget Sound

# Problems Observed in the Way we Manage Floodplains, cont.

- With so many actors and laws, it's tough to address cumulative impacts.
- Not adequately addressing Climate Change Impacts



# Problems Observed in the Way we Manage Floodplains, cont.

- INCENTIVES: No “silver bullet” Tool that fixes it all:

## Incentive Tools:

Conservation Easements  
Transfer Development Rights  
Purchase Development Rights  
Flooding Easements  
Tax Classifications

# Problems Observed in the Way we Manage Floodplains, cont.

## Federal Agencies Say.....

- No federal agency has authority to regulate all floodplain issues.
- Local government is the best place for regulation of land use that alters floodplains.

## Response from Others....

- FEMA's NFIP is the best legal tool .
- Don't have enough money, staff or expertise to do this.
- Local gov't = Wrong Scale.

## Problems Observed in the Way we Manage Floodplains, cont.

**No such thing as a perfect regulation.**

- Exemptions and variances from standards allowed.
- Federal laws can trump protective local controls.
- Regulate at site scale; but need system protection.

# What can we do?

“The PSP should lead in finding solutions to floodplain issues!”

“We want the Action Agenda to be successful.”

“It’s urgent that we solve the FEMA NFIP program right now or it will be too late.....”

“The Army Corps of Engineers is about to be sued for its levee maintenance standards under the ESA. There is a window of opportunity to act....”

# Next Steps

## Creating White Paper with Proposed Actions

### Range of Options: (Bold to Limited?)

- Legislative/Policy actions to protect floodplains
- Outreach actions (e.g., Washington D.C.)
- Creating information for floodplain managers

## Get Stakeholder Feedback

## Present at next Leadership Council meeting

# Questions or Comments?

