

Puget Sound Partnership

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Progress on Local Integration Agenda Item #10

Prepared and Presented by: Joe Ryan

Proposed Action: Conversation and Direction

Summary: At its July meeting, the Leadership Council heard an update on local integration and was presented with a draft approach to local integration and local implementation of the Action Agenda. A copy of that draft approach, which the Leadership Council has already seen, accompanies this update. Below is a summary of activity to advance local integration. On September 3, the Leadership Council will have the opportunity to hear presentations from, and have a conversation with, representatives from the following Action Areas: Hood Canal, South Central, and Whatcom.

Hood Canal Action Area

The Hood Canal Coordinating Council is the entity identified to be the local integration group for the Hood Canal Action Area. This is based on both a letter sent to the Partnership in the Fall of 2008, as well as a re-affirmation by the group in the Summer of 2009. In order to advance the local integration effort, the Coordinating Council has formed a sub-committee to work on a proposal to the Leadership Council and will be discussing their process with the Leadership Council in September. The Coordinating Council Board currently consists of three counties and two tribes and works on topics ranging from two salmon recovery processes (Summer Chum and Chinook) to dissolved oxygen issues.

South Central Action Area

Caucus group development: The South Central Action Area contains well-functioning, coordinated efforts to restore habitat, protect habitat, and reduce water pollution. To build on and support the work of existing groups and to improve action area communication, coordination, and integration among these different efforts to recover Puget Sound, a small, broadly representative caucus group will be identified to help refine and confirm action area priorities using input from constituents. The caucus group will operate transparently and represent the broad constituent interests in the South Central Action Area.

Caucus group representatives: The caucus group will consist of a mixture of elected officials and staff from key stakeholder groups, including local jurisdictions, tribes, business community, and non-governmental organizations. Stakeholder groups will be invited to identify representatives to participate on the caucus group. Theresa Jennings, Director, King County Department of Natural Resources and action area representative to the Ecosystem Coordination Board, will lead the caucus group with support from Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz, the Partnership's Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator for the South Central Action Area.

Current status: Initial discussions and meetings are being held with key stakeholders, to gain input on the proposed approach and a better understanding of the scale of actions needed, the responsible parties, and what are near-term vs. long-term actions. This will be complete by early

to mid September. Key stakeholder groups will be asked to consider appointing a representative to the caucus group, which will have its first meeting in early to mid October. The caucus group will meet at least quarterly, a week prior to Ecosystem Coordination Board meetings. An interested parties email distribution list will be created to inform and seek input from action area constituencies regarding caucus group discussions, topics of interest, and recommendations made to the Puget Sound Partnership

To date there has been general support for the caucus group approach. Some stakeholders expressed the need for the Partnership to provide additional, stronger guidance and direction to specifically identify the highest priorities for recovering Puget Sound in the South Central Action Area. With this guidance, the caucus group can then discuss the priorities to affirm or recommend changes to them, communicate priorities to constituencies across the action area, and coordinate and integrate local efforts to achieve priorities in a manner that makes sense locally.

Whatcom County – WRIA 1

The current governance structure for implementing WRIA 1 programs includes a formal partnership between the WRIA 1 Joint Policy Board and the WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board. They are currently exploring an alternative organization structure to advance their program implementation. This will not require changes to the existing Memorandum of Agreements that established the policy board. The current members include tribal representatives, local elected officials, waters system and diking district representatives. There is also active involvement from the State Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Ecology.

The current focus of discussion is maximizing available resources and improving efficiencies, increasing stakeholder involvement, and advancing implementation of the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan and Salmon Recovery Plan through coordination and integration. In discussions with local leaders the Joint Policy Board was identified as the potential Local Integrating Organization. A meeting with Bill Ruckelshaus, key Partnership staff, and local leaders is currently being scheduled for late September or early October to discuss the LIO concept.

San Juan County – WRIA 2

The San Juan County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) has served as an integrating organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of marine resources for over a decade. It is a citizen advisory committee that receives funding and support through the Northwest Straits Commission and the County. The members are selected by the San Juan County Council and represent local government, tribal government, and the scientific, economic, recreational and conservation communities.

They have recently completed an action plan for the San Juan County Marine Stewardship Area (MSA), which was adopted by the County Council. They currently serve as the citizen advisory group for the salmon recovery lead entity, and were recently chosen as the coordinating entity for the local ECO Network. Other programs and activities include bottomfish recovery, forage fish protection, and transborder marine protected area initiatives. This group is highly respected within the community and was identified by several local leaders as the likely candidate for the Local Integrating Organization.

On September 16th, 1:00 PM, Bill Ruckelshaus, David Dicks, and key Partnership staff will meet with San Juan County leaders to discuss the Local Integrating Organization concept. Bill and staff will also meet with the MRC in the morning on this day to explain and discuss this concept.

South Sound Action Area

Local integration group development: There is general support for benefiting from the membership of the South Sound Core Group, as a foundation for developing the local integration group. The purpose of the integration group will be to identify and prioritize issues, steer the implementation of the action agenda as it pertains to South Sound in the near-term, and to enhance regional collaboration for management of the South Sound ecosystem for the longer term. These tasks are aligned with the purpose and direction of the Core Group.

Local integration group representatives: The integration group will be developed by a consultation led by local governments and the tribes, and will include members from ports, watershed councils, the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group, citizens and conservation groups, military bases, the Department of Ecology, and others.

Current status: A new PSP Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator for the South Sound area was hired in August. She is currently meeting with stakeholders individually to discuss the Partnership's draft proposed approach to local integration and to gather input on priorities for implementation. The South Sound Core Group will meet over the next couple of months to discuss the process for local integration group formation and next steps for moving forward.

Strait of Juan de Fuca Action Area

The Strait of Juan de Fuca Ecosystem Recovery Network and Clallam and Jefferson Work Groups, an new informal set of integrated ecosystem recovery organizations for the Strait of Juan de Fuca Action Area, will meet for the first time on September 11, 2009. An operating framework for these integrated organizations was developed earlier this year by the Strait of Juan de Fuca Work Group at the request of Commissioners Steve Tharinger (Clallam County) and John Austin (Jefferson County), the representative and alternate, respectively, on the Ecosystem Coordination Board for the Strait. Last year, the broadly represented "ad hoc" Strait Work Group was instrumental in helping to develop the Action Area Profile for the Strait of Juan de Fuca Action Area. They continued to meet in early 2009 to develop the operating framework for these integrated organizations. While all three of these integrated organizations working along the Strait share a common goal, set of objectives, and many members, their focus is on implementing different sets of strategies and actions within the Action Agenda that transcend political boundaries or are more geographically specific. Membership on these integrated organizations, while still in the formative stage, will ultimately include a diverse set of leaders from local and tribal governments, agencies, organizations, and business groups from across the Strait Action Area or within each county's geography.

Next steps in the development of these integrated organizations will be for the Partnership's Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator to check in with each of the participating local and tribal governments on their continued support for these efforts, and to discuss with the broader membership how best to advance the Partnership's efforts to implement the Action Agenda and integrate within the Strait Action Area.

Whidbey Basin Action Area

Local Integration Group Development: The Whidbey Basin contains well-functioning efforts to restore habitat, protect habitat, and reduce water pollution within the four counties. The local integration effort will build on and support the work of existing groups, as well as to improve the communication, integration, and coordination within each county and across the action area. At this time, each of the tribes and counties is focused on accomplishing specific tasks (e.g. resolving Samish Bay water quality, funding Smith Island, and preparing for Shoreline Master Program Updates). The next step toward an integrated approach is two-prong: 1) support each entity in a coordinated manner to accomplish priority actions identified in the Action Agenda; and 2) flesh out the common goals and needs among the diversity of entities and build a framework from those commonalities.

Whidbey Basin Action Area Core Team: The Core Team was established to build the Whidbey Basin Action Area profile and support Action Agenda development. The majority of participants in the Core Team strongly value the cross-basin coordination and communication established through the Core Team. The Core Team will meet September 1st to discuss the Partnership's draft local integration approach and next steps for the group.

Skagit County Integration Development: Conversations are still at the beginning stages within Skagit County regarding integration. Currently, the Skagit Alternative Futures project provides an important opportunity to advance integration of efforts, priorities, and resources through a high level consensus of the vision for Skagit County. The next steps include working with steering committee members and project managers to support the effort, including outreach efforts and technical assistance.

Island County Integration Development: Conversations are still at the beginning stages within Island County regarding integration. The Water Resources Advisory Group (WRAC), which holds the watershed planning and the salmon recovery activities for Island County, appears to be a strong entity to build around for integration. Next steps include continued conversations within the Island County area with key stakeholders to further assess the feasibility of expanding the function of this group or identifying another that may serve as an integrating body.

Snohomish County Integration Development: Snohomish County has a large and diverse representation of activities and interests for implementing the Action Agenda. Work has begun with stakeholders to investigate the appropriate scale and process for developing an integrating organization. Multiple ideas have arisen including integration at the watershed, county and larger scale.

King County Integration Development: King County represents a small area within the Whidbey Action Area. This geography is closely coordinated with the Snohomish Watershed and is championed by the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum. This forum integrates water quality and salmon recovery efforts in the Snoqualmie basin of the Snohomish Watershed. Continued strengthening of the relationship between King and Snohomish will help to increase cross county as well as topical integration.