

Floodplain Management Agenda Item #03

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Proposed Action: Briefing and Direction

Summary: The desired outcomes for this agenda item include establishing a shared understanding of major issues influencing the management of floodplains in alignment with Puget Sound recovery and getting feedback from the Leadership Council on actions to achieve the necessary alignment.

Floodplains play key roles in the Puget Sound ecosystem. For thousands of years they have been dynamic contributors to the human communities that have called Puget Sound home as well as the home of diverse communities of native fauna and flora. They provide food and fresh water, regulate fundamental processes like flooding and water filtration, support the production of valued ecosystem elements through soil and habitat formation, and enrich local culture by supporting and maintaining economic, historical and spiritual aspects of the community. There is a close relationship between the management of floodplains and the achievement of the six goals for the recovery of Puget Sound, which encompass human health and well-being, water quantity and quality, habitat, and native species and food webs. The effective management of floodplains is essential to achieving these goals.

The Action Agenda includes a short list of actions that specifically address the management of floodplains. These actions include engaging in current decision-making processes directly related to floodplain management, including the response of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the National Marine Fisheries Service's Biological Opinion on the National Flood Insurance Program and the Army Corps' proposal to reinstate the national standard for the management of vegetation on certain levees. The Action Agenda does not, however, define how floodplains need to function in a recovered Puget Sound or set out the path to make that vision a reality. Lacking this vision and path, the Action Agenda only generally guides the prioritization of resources and the ongoing use of programmatic and policy tools in ways that shape floodplains in alignment with Puget Sound recovery.

The Partnership has been working to refine our understanding of the major policy drivers of floodplain conditions and the issues they present in the context of strategies to recover Puget Sound. A significant initial product of this work is the report that will be presented to the Leadership Council on July 29. This report provides a concise description of the issues that floodplain management practitioners view as most influential in their work, and then poses a set of options for advancing the alignment of floodplain management with Puget Sound recovery. This report will inform choices about additional work by the Partnership on these issues and the adaptation or augmentation of Action Agenda strategies related to floodplains.

Background: The Leadership Council was briefed in spring/summer 2009 at the initiation of this project. The ECB was briefed on the completed report and recommendations at their July 15 meeting. There was general support for the summary report as a description of the key management issues. There was support for several of the recommended actions including continuing engagement on the FEMA and Corps rule-making processes. There was interest in the task to develop a Puget Sound floodplain management policy statement. ECB members are interested in helping prioritize the list of potential actions from the report.

The Salmon Recovery Council has also received the issues report and is forming a sub-group to advance their floodplain work in support of salmon recovery. This may entail acting on several of the recommendations in the report

Analysis: Partnership staff are significantly advancing work on two of the actions recommended in the report: working with FEMA and other partners on floodplain development issues and working with the Corps and others to resolve the levee vegetation management issue. These actions coincide with actions called for in the Action Agenda. The Partnership is developing an approach to crafting a floodplain management policy statement for Puget Sound, but this work is at an early stage. The balance of the actions recommended in the report are not being advanced now, pending discussion with the Leadership Council, ECB, and others about the urgency and priority of individual actions on that list.

Staff Recommendation: Continue engaging on the FEMA and Corps issues, develop the floodplain policy statement concept, get feedback from the Leadership Council and others on additional critical actions, and initiate new work as resources allow.

Next Steps: Using feedback from the Leadership Council and others, prioritize the recommended actions and tee up additional floodplain work as resources allow.

Attachments:

- White Paper Issue Summary with Recommendations for Action

