

## Regional Stormwater Monitoring Program Agenda Item #09a

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**Proposed Action:** Briefing

### **Summary:**

The Stormwater Work Group (SWG) submitted their final report entitled “2010 Stormwater Monitoring and Assessment Strategy for the Puget Sound region” to the Puget Sound Partnership and the Department of Ecology on July 1, 2010. The stormwater monitoring strategy is the result of many hours of collaborative and detailed work towards the goal of improving the efficacy of stormwater monitoring, a common understanding of the local and regional impacts of stormwater and ultimately improving decisions about how best to manage stormwater. The strategy will require engagement from various organizations to implement a program estimated to cost \$14.9M annually.

### **Background:**

The SWG has been working since October 2008 to develop a regional stormwater monitoring and assessment strategy for Puget Sound. The effort was launched at the Partnership’s and Ecology’s requests for recommendations by June 30, 2010. The SWG has twice presented draft versions of a stormwater monitoring strategy for Puget Sound to the Science Panel, in November 2009 and June 2010. The Washington Forum on Monitoring also was briefed in June 2010. The work of the Stormwater Work Group was briefly mentioned at the Leadership Council meeting in June 2010. A high-level summary was included in the stormwater session at the July ECB meeting (presented by Chris Townsend). The SWG provided broad public feedback opportunities through a series of public workshops and two comment periods. The first draft of the scientific framework underwent a robust peer review by five nationally recognized experts in stormwater and/or regional monitoring programs. The SWG worked diligently to respond to the recommendations provided. Support for the overall approach is broad.

The SWG proposes a regional stormwater monitoring program that (1) assesses stormwater impacts to biological endpoints in small streams and nearshore areas, (2) diagnoses sources of both localized and regional problems, and (3) evaluates effectiveness of stormwater management programs and practices. The initial starting point for implementing the program is through (1) NPDES municipal stormwater permittees through permit requirements and (2) state and federal agencies, tribes and other organizations through continuation and strategic expansion of ongoing programs. The SWG recommends creating a “pay-in” mechanism to be administered by an

independent entity for permittees and others to fund and implement the monitoring plan. Ecology supports creating an independent entity to serve in this role if the SWG can meet an October deadline.

The recommended program is estimated to cost about \$14.9M annually. Current estimates of expenditures for stormwater monitoring vary, but the SWG has determined that the proposed increase in cost is sustainable, considering that:

- Current NPDES Phase I municipal stormwater permit-related monitoring (the 5 largest jurisdictions and 2 ports in Puget Sound) expenditures exceed \$6M/yr (bearing in mind, these funds might not be entirely redirected to the new regional monitoring effort).
- At least \$1.7M in key ongoing programs is already in state and federal budgets.
- Another 80 smaller NPDES Phase II jurisdictions will be participating in the program.
- Other permittees and programs are envisioned to participate in the future.

The SWG is the first work group in the broader Puget Sound Coordinated Ecosystem Monitoring program and will link to the overall strategy to monitoring strategy for Puget Sound.

**Analysis:**

The SWG has provided 55 consensus recommendations for guiding the development of a regional stormwater monitoring program that, while requiring further detail be developed prior to implementation, provide a sound foundation appropriate for including in a regional ecosystem monitoring program.

The Stormwater Work Group has developed an innovative approach for monitoring a problem as complex as stormwater by: focusing on biological impacts of stormwater, monitoring a range of ecological and physical indicators in two broad habitat types (nearshore and streams), by designing a regional plan that coordinates monitoring of multiple jurisdictions, by working collaboratively across a range of organizations, and by proposing a creative funding and cost-sharing solution with the “pay-in” mechanism.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The Leadership Council should support the Stormwater Work Group, recognize it as a key component of the Coordinated Ecosystem Monitoring program, highlight the work group as a model to build on for the Launch Committee, and consult with the group and group products as key sources of information for the overall management and legislative strategy for solving the stormwater problem.

**Next Steps:**

The SWG is refining and prioritizing the costs and allocation of funding responsibilities for the proposed monitoring and will ask the Partnership to advocate for state and federal cost-shares to implement the program. The SWG plans to continue work this summer to create an administrative mechanism to facilitate cost-sharing for local jurisdictions.

The Puget Sound Partnership will work with Ecology and EPA to ensure that the SWG has the necessary staffing and support to continue its efforts into the next biennium.

**Attachments:**

- *Key Recommendations: 2010 Stormwater Monitoring and Assessment Strategy for the Puget Sound Region*, and cover letter

The full report, appendices, and cover letter can be found here:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/psmonitoring/swworkgroup.html>