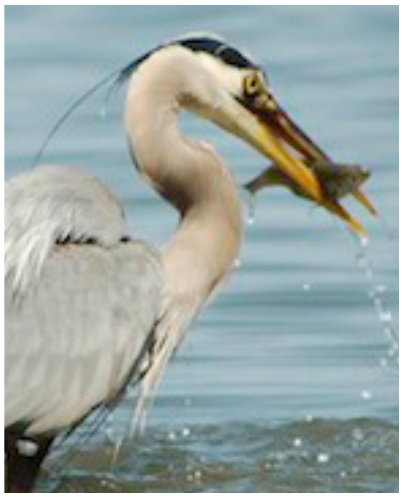

2007-2012 Legacy and Lessons Learned

PugetSoundPartnership

LEADING PUGET SOUND RECOVERY

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PugetSoundPartnership

LEADING PUGET SOUND RECOVERY

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Bipartisan beginnings

In 2007, Governor Gregoire proposed legislation to create the Puget Sound Partnership. The Legislature passed SSB 5372 with large bipartisan majorities.

This action was taken in response to growing awareness that Puget Sound was in serious trouble – trouble that threatened both the environment and the economy of the Puget Sound basin. As the intent section of the legislation noted, "Puget Sound is in serious decline, and Hood Canal is in a serious crisis. This decline is indicated by loss of and damage to critical habitat, rapid decline in species populations, increases in aquatic nuisance species, numerous sites contaminated by toxics, urbanization and attendant stormwater drainage, closure of beaches to shellfish harvest due to disease risks, low-dissolved oxygen levels causing death of marine life, and other phenomena. If left unchecked, these conditions will worsen."

To counter what many people called "random acts of restoration," the Legislature noted that "Puget Sound must be restored and protected in a more coherent and effective manner. The current system is highly fragmented."

The Governor and the Legislature recognized that to succeed – and to sustain support – the Partnership would need to provide "leadership, accountability, government transparency, thoughtful and responsible spending of public funds, and public involvement," along with clear accountability for results.

When the Legislature created the Partnership, its mandate was to coordinate and lead the effort to restore and protect Puget Sound, to create a strategic, prioritized, science-based Action Agenda "that addresses all of the complex connections among the land, water, web of species, and human needs." The Action Agenda was to set clear, measurable goals for the recovery of Puget Sound by 2020.

The Legislature clearly stated that the Partnership has no regulatory authority; its role is to lead and coordinate the efforts of "all governmental entities, including federal and state agencies, tribes, cities, counties, ports, and special purpose districts," as well as scientists, businesses, citizen organizations, and the public at large.

A high-stakes mission

Puget Sound is sick, and in some places, it is dying. The entire Puget Sound shoreline from Everett to Tacoma is closed to commercial shellfish harvest because of pollution. Hundreds of tons of toxic organic chemicals and metals end up in Puget Sound each year from cars, roofs, wood treatments, wood burning, boat paint, household pesticide use, consumer products, pharmaceuticals and air emissions.

"Puget Sound is the cornerstone of the region's quality of life and vibrant economy. This notion is at the heart of this first-in-class, updated Action Agenda, the region's road map to recovery by 2020."

Martha Kongsgaard, Kongsgaard Foundation
Chair, Puget Sound Leadership Council

Even places that have been hailed as cleanup successes, like the Thea Foss Waterway in Tacoma, are being re-contaminated with pollution from phthalates—chemicals found in household products like adhesives, detergents, nail polish, hair spray, shampoo, toys and food packaging. Shellfish beds and swimming beaches are often closed because the water is too contaminated with fecal bacteria. Puget Sound Resident Orcas are among the most contaminated mammals on the planet. Salmon populations are 10 percent of historic levels. Degradation of the Sound's freshwater habitat works against the survival of Chinook as they journey from their natal streams to the ocean. More and more shorelines are being lined with concrete and other hardened structures, which jeopardize the natural habitat essential for the seafood we eat.

All our work to repair the damage we've done – and to stop the damage being done now – is in a race against population growth. Today, 4.5 million people live in the Puget Sound Basin. By 2040 a population of 7 million is projected, the equivalent of adding a city the size of Portland to our watershed.

Already, about 70 percent of all jobs and 77 percent of total income in the state come from the Puget Sound basin. Many of these jobs are completely dependent on the Sound –

THE PUGET SOUND WATERSHED

Carved by glaciers and fed by 10,000 rivers and streams, Puget Sound is an ecosystem defined by the movement of water.

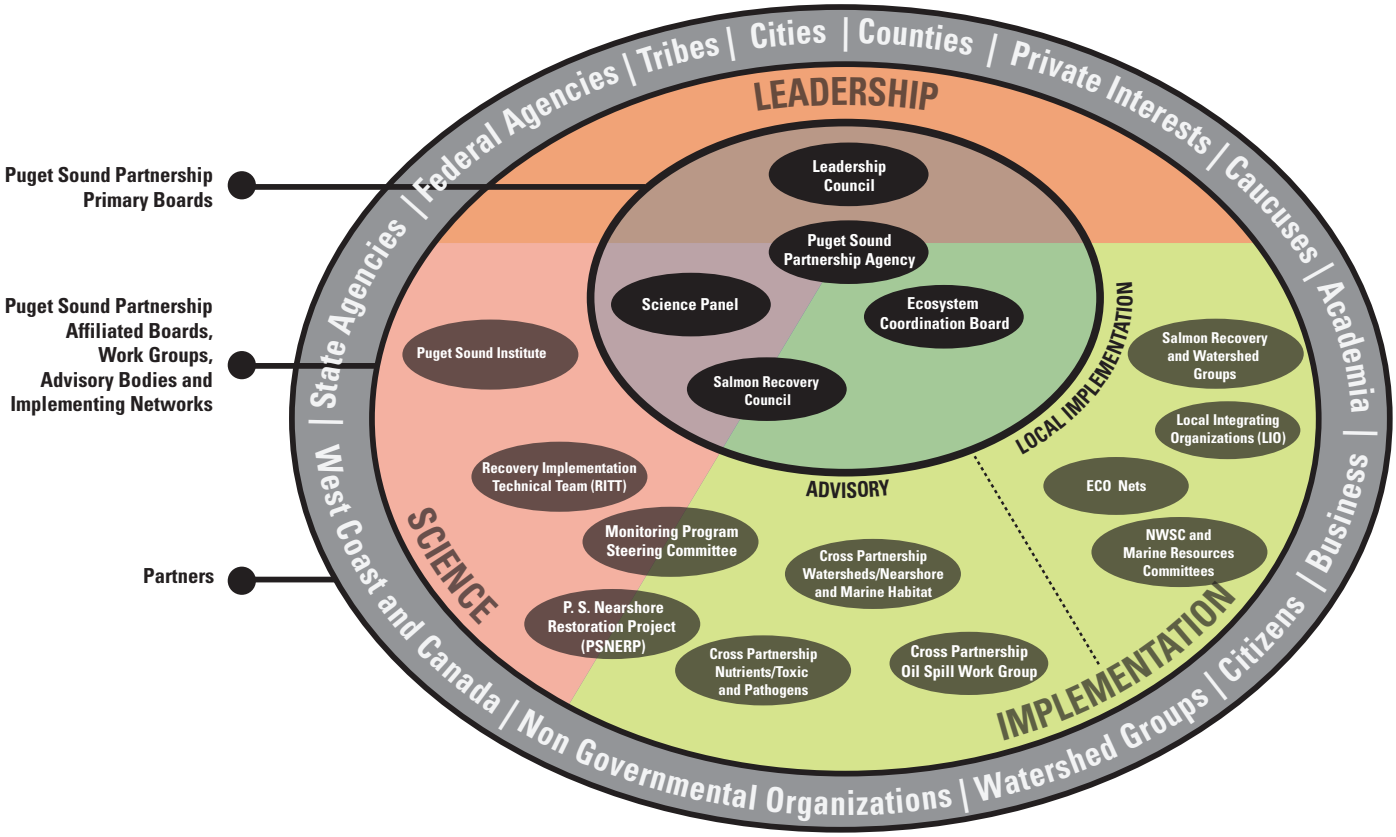
Beginning as snow in the Cascades and Olympics, fresh water flows down from these mountain ranges through streams and fertile river valleys into the Sound, connecting to a complex network of salt marshes, wetlands, smaller estuaries, bluffs, beaches and bays.

Puget Sound is a vast and beautiful estuary—a semi-enclosed, glacial fjord—where salt water from the Pacific Ocean mixes with fresh water draining from the surrounding watersheds.

Puget Sound is the second-largest estuary in the Unites States. From the Canadian border south to Olympia and west to the Pacific Ocean, the Puget Sound basin comprises 2,800 square miles of inland marine waters and 2,500 miles of shoreline.

Nearly 85 percent of the Sound basin's annual surface water runoff comes from 10 major river systems: the Nooksack, Skagit, Snohomish, Stillaguamish, Cedar/Lake Washington Canal, Green/Duwamish, Puyallup, Nisqually, Skokomish and Elwha.

Puget Sound Partnership Organization & Partner Structure



international trade and shipping, tourism, fishing, commercial shellfish harvesting, and marine industries, for example. A vibrant economy is not sustainable without a sustainable Puget Sound.

But economics aren't the only reason to save the Sound. Common sense, spiritual values, treaty rights, and our deep need for connection to the natural world each play an important part in motivating us to restore and protect Puget Sound.

There is another implicit challenge in our mandate, and that is figuring out how to cope with the uncertainty about how climate change will affect the Puget Sound basin. This is a topic that grows in urgency and importance with each passing year, and one that will test the limits of our scientific knowledge and understanding of the natural world. Whatever climate change may bring, though, what's needed now is to build resilience – that is, to restore Puget Sound's health so that it can adapt to change and still support a diverse and productive food web that sustains humans and other living creatures and plant life.

BEAUTIFUL ON THE SURFACE, HARD TRUTHS DIFFICULT TO IGNORE

- Puget Sound orca whales are among the most toxic mammals on earth.
- Chinook salmon populations are so low that recreational fishing days have been reduced by more than 75 percent.
- One-quarter of Puget Sound shorelines—almost 800 miles—has been hardened by bulkheads that reduce fish and wildlife habitats.

WHAT THE PARTNERSHIP HAS DONE

The Partnership brought everyone together.

The Partnership's mission, which is "to coordinate and lead the effort to restore Puget Sound," seems perfectly straightforward. But it is fiendishly complex. The Partnership is called on to coordinate a dizzying array of federal and state agencies, tribes, counties and cities, special purpose districts, nonprofit organizations, and citizen groups. Puget Sound recovery depends on a myriad of funding streams, and many stakeholders compete with each other for these funds.

We are engaged in an effort that relies on science as a guide. This is problematic, because no matter how advanced it is, our scientific knowledge often seems insufficient. It is also evolving constantly, and subject to endless controversy and interpretation.

If that weren't complex enough, there is also the challenge to engage the public and motivate people to change lifelong habits in ways that protect Puget Sound.

Then there is the complexity of the Puget Sound ecosystem. It isn't just about the water we see in the Sound; it's about where that water comes from. The challenge starts at the Cascade and Olympic peaks, where rivers that flow into the Sound begin. To save the Sound, we have to address the whole Puget Sound basin – that is, all the land that ultimately drains into the Sound.

The organizational structures spelled out in the legislation that created the Partnership reflect all this complexity. At the top is a Governor-appointed Leadership Council. The Council oversees a policy body called the Ecosystem Coordinating Board, a Science Panel, the Salmon Recovery Council, an Oil Spill Workgroup, and the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program, which supports numerous work groups.

It's working, but not as fast as anyone wants.

In the five years of its existence, the Partnership made progress in dismantling the silos, and built in their place an infrastructure for coordination and collaboration.

People and organizations initially came to the recovery effort with varying levels of trust and mutual respect, histories of conflict, and in some cases, cynicism about change. They also came with varying levels of commitment to the mission, and with vastly different motivations. For tribes, the degradation of Puget Sound and the rivers that feed into it is an existential threat to their sovereignty and culture, not to mention a violation of their treaty rights. For municipalities, the Sound's health competes with public safety, road maintenance, and many other issues for time on the agenda.

It is no wonder that building trust, creating workable structures, and establishing a culture

of cooperation took time. The dynamic tension between taking the time to create organizational structures required for success and the urgency of getting restoration work done has been a palpable undercurrent.

While many of us are still impatient with the pace of progress, there is a growing consensus that our organizational structures are working, and that we have succeeded in creating the foundation and the culture for faster progress in the years ahead. Specifically, we're confident that the Partnership is built to promote big-picture thinking, fuller use of science as a guide, accountability for results, transparency, and an unprecedented depth of collaboration.

Puget Sound is poised for recovery.
The Puget Sound region is coming together under a single plan, and we are seeing results.

In 2010 alone, our region completed 565 restoration projects, supporting nearly 7,476 jobs. By combining efforts and focusing on priorities, more than 2,440 acres of habitat have been protected, and 70 miles of streams and rivers have been restored.

We can cite many examples of specific, local improvements in stream health, water quality,

The Powel family, Bainbridge Island Land Trust, and the Partnership broke ground on a historic restoration of more than a quarter-mile of privately owned natural shoreline in Port Madison. "Puget Sound is going to be healthy again because of people like the Powel family, the Land Trust, and regulatory entities all working together," said Anthony Wright, Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership.

POWEL SHORELINE RESTORATION

Construction to restore more than a quarter-mile of privately owned Bainbridge Island shoreline by removing bulkheads and enhancing intertidal, salt marsh and riparian habitats began in August of 2012. Managed by the Bainbridge Island Land Trust, the project is largely funded by the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration fund, a critical source of state funding to advance science-based, locally prioritized projects in support of salmon recovery goals. Protection and restoration of nearshore habitat is the highest priority for salmon recovery in the West Sound Watersheds area.

"We are all pulling together, and recognizing the connectedness of each stream, each tributary, and each action to the health of the whole Puget Sound region. The more we deepen our commitment to action, the closer we come to honoring the tribal tradition of focusing on the needs of future generations."

David Troutt, Natural Resources Director for the Nisqually Tribe
Chair, Salmon Recovery Council

and fish survival. But when we look at the full range of indicators of the Sound's health, the picture is decidedly mixed.

The Partnership's legislative mandate is to address six recovery goals: human health, human quality of life, species and food webs, habitat, water quantity, and water quality. A total of 21 "vital signs" were chosen by the Partnership. This dashboard of activities is a significant step forward in the Partnership's effort to create tangible road posts to help track the progress of Puget Sound recovery.

The sad truth is, there are fewer Chinook salmon, fewer orcas, and more shoreline armoring than when we started. In other areas of measurement, it's still too soon after the establishment of a baseline to see a trend. In still others, even setting a baseline is so complicated it's not complete yet. For instance, how do we measure improvements in human quality of life, or bird life?

In every case we come up against daunting challenges to find, verify, collect and analyze data. In many cases, the data didn't exist, wasn't reliable, or hadn't been collected for long enough to show a trend. However, by working together, all of this is now possible. We can overcome all of these things.

Trends in recovery are often slow, and almost always uneven. Gains in one location may be countered by losses in another. And there is an

WORKING TOGETHER, MOVING FORWARD

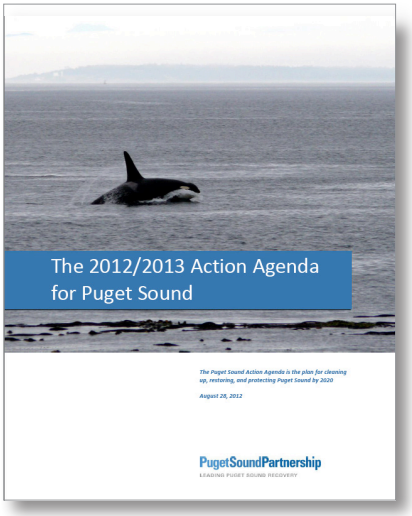
The 2012 Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda outlines the region's priorities and actions to address the foundational elements of a healthy Puget Sound: our economy, environment, human health, and quality of life.

The 2012 Action Agenda is the region's blueprint for restoring the health of Puget Sound by 2020. The plan emphasizes three regional priorities:

- Prevent pollution from urban stormwater runoff.
- Protect and restore shorelines and salmon habitat.
- Restore and re-open shellfish beds.

This plan is the result of a coordinated regional effort through the Puget Sound Partnership, which involved working closely with tribes, local governments, businesses, conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, and educational institutions. The Action Agenda, originally published in December 2008, is regularly updated to reflect progress, lessons learned and emerging scientific knowledge.

Find out more about the Action Agenda, go to http://1.usa.gov/OWdlai



inherent disconnect between what we know about the process of ecosystem recovery and our desire for faster progress. Ecosystems take many years – possibly many decades – to recover. And recovery spreads slowly from local restoration efforts to more widespread regional improvement.

It's not wrong for us to feel a sense of urgency about Puget Sound recovery. It is urgent. And it's not wrong to measure our progress or lack of it. We need to know if what we are doing is working. But we need to balance our sense of urgency with realism about how much we can accomplish, how fast.

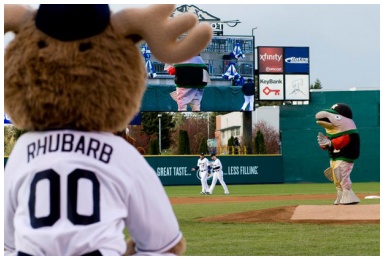
With the prospect of 2.5 million additional people in the Puget Sound basin in the next three decades it's clear that the restoration and protection of Puget Sound is a challenge that won't end in 2020.

PORT SUSAN

Construction of a levee setback at the Nature Conservancy's Port Susan Preserve will remove 7,350 feet of existing dike and create 5,000 feet of new dike to protect and enhance neighboring farmland. This project is near completion and will restore process to 150 acres of tidal marsh in the Stillaguamish River estuary while improving tidal flushing in thousands of acres of Port Susan Bay. The Nature Conservancy is managing this project. Funding for protection and restoration is from the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration, Estuarine & Salmon Restoration Program, Salmon Recovery Funding Board and federal NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

"Puget Sound's health is vital to Washington's economy as it is our area's greatest natural asset. We must continue investing to protect the thriving industries, abundant recreational opportunities, and quality of the ecosystem that depend on it. The national model of collaboration and more efficient use of resources is essential to sustaining momentum during this difficult economic period."

Sen. Steve Litzow, R-Mercer Island, 41st Legislative District
Ecosystem Coordination Board



A HOME RUN: STORM AND ECO NET MEMBERS TEAM UP

Baseball games: American as apple pie and one of those great equalizers that bring together people young and old, urban and rural, eco-activists and Hummer drivers.

In 2011, City of Tacoma and Pierce County stormwater professionals led the coordination of Puget Sound Starts Here Night at the Rainiers. They were joined by the Partnership, local governments and nonprofits for this unique outreach opportunity and were able to get clean water and pollution prevention messages in the game's program, on the big screen and over announcements.

The Puget Sound Starts Here booth was a big draw at the concourse with the ever-popular poop toss game that had kids and grownups all coming back again and again to prove their poop-tossing prowess.

One of the biggest "lessons learned" at this event: It's amazing how much attention you get when you put a costume on. Two Pierce County employees donned Bert the Salmon and Scoopy Doo costumes to throw out the first pitch, dance with the Rainiers' mascot and mingle with the crowd. Young and old alike were excited to give the mascots hugs and pose for photos with Puget Sound Starts Here stickers.

It definitely got people talking, and thinking.

Partners repeated the Rainiers event in 2012, and STORM and ECO Net members also brought the idea to a bigger audience with Puget Sound Starts Here Night at the Mariners to kick of Puget Sound Starts Here Month activities.

Through our partners, our message and our mission is amplified — a definite home run for Puget Sound.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS

"Restoring a large and complex ecosystem is not easy. If it were, it would have already been done. Fortunately, the convergence of science and policy-making happening through the Partnership is the most promising path to clean up Puget Sound. The Science Panel has helped to synthesize what we know about the ecosystem, identify areas where more research is needed and show how science can contribute to a successful team effort."

Joe Gaydos, Chief Scientist of the SeaDoc Society
Chair, Puget Sound Partnership Science Panel

It's not about us.

The Partnership was given its name for a reason. Our work is to bring other organizations together, to find common ground, and to create an exponentially bigger impact together than could be achieved separately. Most people understood that this was needed. Still, the Partnership had to earn the trust and support of those who had been working on restoration for many years, and who wanted coordination but feared more bureaucracy.

But as a new state agency, the Partnership had to compete for funding, for sustained legislative support, and for credibility. A certain amount of agency bragging is a venerable Olympia tradition, and we followed it. (And, truthfully, we'd be disingenuous not to acknowledge that we're pretty proud of what the Partnership has accomplished.)

Bringing people together and being the connector is important. Guiding efficiencies, helping our partners find funding, offering training, and looking at science and programs from a regional perspective make a critical impact on the pace of restoration.

The strong partnerships formed since 2007 are truly amazing. Cities and counties, tribes, state agencies, businesses, academia, nonprofits and citizens from across Puget Sound's 12 counties are coming together with a common purpose, and the movement is strengthening every day. We're pulling together instead of apart. And we're getting better at telling the whole story.

We have learned to take satisfaction in our partners' successes, because we know that when they succeed, so do we. We serve their success in many significant, but often invisible ways, and that is as it should be.

We've learned that in the long run, our agency's reputation depends more on what others say about us than what we say about ourselves. When our partners acknowledge that we are doing a competent job, it creates more political

San Juan County http://1.usa.gov/O67gCh

South Sound http://1.usa.gov/OMlTgj

Strait of Juan de Fuca http://1.usa.gov/JhVCAO

PUGET SOUND CHAMPIONS

The Partnership created the Puget Sound Champion awards to recognize outstanding local partners for their contributions to the ecosystem recovery effort through projects that protect or restore habitat, clean up polluted waters and engage the community.

For more information on other Puget Sound Champions, visit http://1.usa.gov/SrE49m

capital for the Partnership than any fact sheet or op-ed article we could ever produce.

And the truth is, it is our partners who do the important work of restoration and pollution prevention. There are a lot of people who are cold and wet and wearing waders as they gather water samples, survey fish populations, and assess eelgrass beds. And there are still others who risk their elective offices to make positive changes for Puget Sound.

Now we give Puget Sound Champion awards to others for their contributions to ecosystem recovery. Public recognition means a lot to people who work hard to restore and protect Puget Sound, and they deserve to be held up as role models. Public recognition is also an important way to encourage local engagement and foster the ability of communities, organizations and individuals to see their own part in this vital work.

In the years ahead, we know the success of the Partnership will lie in our ability to support, encourage and celebrate our partners.

Organizational architecture matters.

There is both art and science in the creation of organizational structures that maximize collaboration and accountability for results. The Governor and the Legislature did a good job of creating the basic structure of the Partnership, and that has made much of our progress possible. The Leadership Council has attracted the high level of talent and commitment needed to guide a daunting and complex task. The Science Panel continues to serve as navigational radar that brings clarity to what in the Sound is improving and what is not, as well as reminding us of all

we simply do not yet know about this complex ecosystem. The Ecosystem Coordinating Board, the workhorse policy development group, the Salmon Recovery Council, and the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program are all functional and productive parts of our system.

What's been challenging for us is balancing necessary organizational complexity with the need to avoid process overload. It's taken a while for people to learn which meetings to attend, and which to skip. In every corner of the Partnership and its constituency, there was a long learning curve about how and where people needed to plug in to be the most productive, and to get the most value for their time.

What's clear is that the Partnership and its many councils, committees, boards, programs and work groups have produced a sea of change. In the place of fragmented efforts, there is an unprecedented level of collaboration, a clear common purpose shared by hundreds of partners, and growing momentum toward achieving clearly defined goals.

Watersheds are the basic units of restoration.

If we ran the world, local jurisdictions would be defined by the boundaries of watersheds rather than arbitrary lines on maps.

Why? Because each watershed – that is, all the land that drains into a river that drains into Puget Sound – is the natural world's way of organizing itself. Each watershed is a discrete challenge, and each requires a unique, tailored plan for protection or restoration.

Everyone knows what town and/or county they live in. We organize our lives around the lines we've drawn on maps for the last couple of hundred years. But to restore Puget Sound, we need to create a civic identity for each watershed. Everyone should know as much about their watershed as they do about their town.

"Having a clean and healthy Puget Sound is a critical part of our region's overall quality of life, and continued progress toward Sound recovery is vital as we work to accommodate our projected population growth and ensure economic prosperity throughout the region."

Sam Anderson, Executive Officer, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties
Vice Chair, Ecosystem Coordination Board

"Collaboration is truly the key. When tribes, businesses, scientists, conservation organizations, local governments and state and federal agencies work together, we accelerate our progress and leverage the value of each others' work."

Dave Somers, Snohomish County Council member
Chair, Ecosystem Coordination Board

REGIONAL HOOD CANAL STORMWATER RETROFIT PLAN

The objective of this project is to establish regional collaboration and coordination between Mason County, Kitsap County, Jefferson County, the Skokomish Tribe and the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe regarding needed stormwater retrofits. A consultant is developing a stormwater retrofit plan to identify, prioritize and plan for retrofit of high-priority stormwater infrastructure as a way to reduce existing stormwater runoff discharges and pollution of surface waters. The retrofit plan will also address ways to increase infiltration, storage and reuse of rainwater in the Hood Canal watershed.

Jurisdictions defined by watershed boundaries would make it easier for local governments to make coherent, effective land use policies, development regulations, growth management plans and restoration priorities.

The Partnership has created watershed-based work groups that strive to overcome the fragmentation of multiple jurisdictions and coordinate recovery efforts. This is both necessary and very cumbersome.

Recovery cannot be achieved without citizen engagement.

Public support, engagement, and behavior change are critical to achieving Puget Sound recovery. Recovery is ultimately a social challenge, with virtually every impact and recovery strategy rooted in the interaction between the Sound's natural resources and its 4.5 million human residents. The cumulative effect of citizen choices is immense. How and where we live, what we value, how we care for our homes, gardens and livestock, how we drive, how we recreate, and what we buy all profoundly affect the ecosystem around us. To put it plainly, if we can't change citizen behavior, we can't save Puget Sound.

For decades, groups around the Sound have operated education, volunteer and outreach programs to engage the public in environmental issues. However, much of this work was fragmented, inconsistent, and didn't always achieve its intended goals. By itself, education rarely results in predictable behavior change. Prior to 2007, especially at the regional level, little emphasis was placed on analyzing and addressing underlying actions or targeting motivations and barriers necessary to reduce the public's cumulative damage to the Sound. There was little or no measurement of whether efforts achieved their intended outcomes. Local organizations active in this work were also not well connected with state and federal agencies.

So, the Partnership did three things:

1. We pulled together more than 500 Puget Sound environmental outreach organizations into a collaborative network call ECO Net (Education, Communication and Outreach Network), to support members through training, collaboration and shared resources.

2. We helped launch a shared, open-source brand for a regional awareness campaign – Puget Sound Starts Here. Hundreds of organizations can promote their

Photo courtesy of Amy Georgeson

OAKLAND BAY SHELLFISH GROWING AREA UPGRADE

On Sept. 5, 2012, Washington State Department of Health upgraded 750 acres of Oakland Bay from "Conditionally Approved" to "Approved" in response to marine water quality improvements around prime commercial and recreational shellfish beds. The upgrade is largely the result of two actions – improvements to Shelton's wastewater treatment plant and the correction of nonpoint pollution problems surrounding the bay. The Oakland Bay Clean Water District – including participants from Mason County, the City of Shelton, the Squaxin Island Tribe, Taylor Shellfish, private property owners, and state and federal agencies – provided critical leadership in helping to achieve this significant upgrade.

"Change doesn't happen in a vacuum. The 2012 Action Agenda combines science with regional coordination, local action, and accountability for results—which helps solve complex issues across geographical, political and ideological boundaries."

Rep. Steve Tharinger, 24th legislative district (D-Dungeness)
Ecosystem Coordination Board

HITTING THE BRAKES ON COPPER BRAKE PADS

Washington became the first state in the nation to phase out copper brake pads when Gov. Chris Gregoire signed a bipartisan-supported bill reducing the amount of copper in brake pads on March 19, 2010.

Copper in vehicle brake pad dust is toxic to aquatic life, including salmon. Rainwater runoff washes brake pad dust from roads into streams and rivers that flow into Puget Sound.

This legislation, introduced by the Puget Sound Partnership and state Department of Ecology, makes Washington a model for the rest of the nation to reduce toxins currently flowing into our streams, lakes, rivers and marine environments.

This law was a collaborative effort, working with a variety of stakeholders including domestic and international automobile manufactures, brake pad manufactures, the trucking industry, auto parts retailers, environmental advocates, federal agencies and others.

The bill received strong bipartisan support, including Sens. Ranker, Brandland and Swecker, Reps. Chase and Upthegrove, People for Puget Sound, the Association of Washington Business, and many others.

respective programs. It is the largest campaign of its kind in the state and has achieved 26 percent awareness in its first two years – deemed "very strong" by marketing standards. The campaign has been a successful collaboration of the Partnership, the state Department of Ecology, EPA and hundreds of partner organizations.

3. We strategically focused on actions that the average citizen can participate in, targeting behavior change to reduce pressures on Puget Sound. While dissolved oxygen and riparian work may not mean much to the average Puget Sound resident, talking about the effect of pet waste and car wash water in the waterways they play in is a tangible concept they can act on. Work has been productive both regionally and locally.

In all communications efforts, the Partnership uses data and research to inform program design, and measures results, just as we do in our restoration efforts.

We have far more to do to reach the majority of Puget Sound residents, who are still not engaged in the recovery effort. This will be a key priority. Public changes in behavior, and public support for taxpayer investments such as improved stormwater treatment won't happen if the majority of our citizens don't understand and share our commitment to a healthy and sustainable Puget Sound basin.

Science can't be rushed.

We frustrate scientists when we expect fast action and fast results. As the Science Panel noted in its critique of the Partnership's first Action Agenda, "the original high priority placed on developing the Action Agenda within one year of creating the Partnership precluded developing a reasoned and focused scientific assessment to identify and rank hazards and threats to the ecosystem, limited the ability to establish a baseline monitoring program to inform adaptive learning from ongoing restoration, and lessened the ability to scientifically prioritize needed actions." Scientists believe the 2012 update of the Action Agenda is much better, but still not entirely grounded in a scientific assessment that identifies and ranks hazards and threats.

Science takes time – and funding – and there is not enough of either. And most of the data collected in the past about the Sound's health was collected to set fish harvest levels, to monitor compliance with the Clean Water Act, or for other purposes. Sifting through this data, much of which is not representative of the whole Sound, is a patchwork process. It also requires sharing data and research among scientists who work in many government agencies, in academia, and in the private sector.

Scientists are also frustrated by the expectation that we can turn things around fast. They remind us frequently that the Sound's current condition developed over a century or more, and that expecting quick, system-wide restoration results is sure to cause disappointment. They remind us that results will show up at the local level first, in response to focused local efforts, and spread slowly to regional results.

Bill Dewey from Taylor Shellfish explains to journalists from the Puget Sound Institute for Journalism & Natural Resources how water polluted by fecal coliform harms the food we eat and drink every day, and the important nexus between environmental and economic health.

REDUCING FECAL COLIFORM IN THE SAMISH WATERSHED

The Samish watershed has had problems with bacteria pollution for a couple of decades. Bacteria in the river, other streams and the bay frequently reach levels too high for safe shellfish harvest (and eating) and safe family recreation. In addition, farmers, especially those who irrigate from surface waters, are concerned about water quality. To address this issue, more than 20 governmental, business and nonprofit organizations have come together to work on improving water quality in the Samish watershed and Samish Bay. The work is being funded through the Environmental Protection Agency and Skagit County assessment fees.

They also remind us of how much we don't know, and how important it is to find reliable funding to sustain the level of inquiry, data collection and monitoring that make tracking results accurate and meaningful.

Over the course of the last four years, the Partnership has had to balance the public's and the Legislature's sense of urgency with the scientific community's insistence on taking the time to ensure that we do this work right.

Collaboration is key to doing more with less.

One organization alone is not going to save Puget Sound. Hundreds of organizations working by themselves are not going to save Puget Sound. But hundreds of organizations and thousands of citizens working together? That has a chance. The fight for clean water is not new. The Clean Water Act turned 40 this year, and the number of groups concerned about restoring and protecting the Sound by reducing pollution is legion. Different organizations were trying to accomplish the same things, with similar programs, going through the same steps to learn the same lessons. But as the need for action accelerated, the economy began to decline. The need for coordination and efficiency became both apparent and urgent.

Efficiencies were found by sharing knowledge and costs, and it wasn't long before it was obvious that a regional effort supporting sub-regional outreach efforts and local programs could get the job done faster, cheaper and better. We became better stewards of funds as well as better stewards of our watersheds.

The Puget Sound Partnership helped create some of the partnership structures that cropped up during this era, and provided a regional foundation for others. It has provided support through shared resources and collaborative implementation. All this allows us to do more with less.

ECO Net and the Puget Sound Starts Here campaign are great examples of the economies of scale that collaboration produces. The Puget Sound Starts Here campaign allows for small jurisdictions and nonprofits to harness the branding power of a campaign that they'll see on television, the web, stickers, billboards, at baseball games, in the newspaper, on local pamphlets. By working together, by sharing a brand and sharing materials, our partners have elevated each others' effectiveness.

STORM (Stormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities) is another example of the power of collaboration to improve efficiency and save money. It is a regional group of stormwater professionals from Puget Sound basin cities

"This work requires patience, persistence, and a culture of cooperation and mutual respect. The Partnership is building that culture and making a big difference coordinating the success of Puget Sound restoration efforts."

Sen. Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, 23rd Legislative District
Ecosystem Coordination Board

and counties. It was created to help local jurisdictions manage new permit requirements from the Department of Ecology. Members share brochures, posters, research, and other materials, and mentor smaller jurisdictions and newer members. Local jurisdictions no longer have to learn in isolation; now they benefit from sharing experiences and innovations that accelerate progress and save time.

As government budgets have been cut and cut again, collaboration has been our most effective method for making progress and achieving results.

Sharing data, collaborating on research and priority-setting, and creating a protocol for peer review have all made limited funding and staff stretch further. They have also accelerated the creation of an accessible, open and growing body of knowledge about the state of the Sound and what's needed to restore it.

In just five years, the Partnership's constituents have learned more, done more, and achieved more than they ever could have done without the infrastructure of collaboration and shared decision-making. And they have done it through the worst recession since the Great Depression. We all hope for better times, and resources that match the scale of the challenge. We hope for an acceleration of economic recovery so that we can scale up the scientific inquiry and the field work that so urgently need to be done.

But hard times have produced a lean, efficient, and creative system for sharing the scarce resources we do have, and a regional learning network with a thriving tradition of innovation, flexibility, and single-minded focus on results.

"The era of random acts of restoration and prevention are over – the era of spending money, adding them all up and calling that 'the plan' is over. The era of not knowing what all the spending by all of the siloed agencies and NGOs adds up to is over. That's the promise of the partnership and it's needed now more than ever.

"We are focused on results – and our performance management system is going to drive the region to the end goal. This is new to the region, having a 'neutral' agency whose job it is to describe the goal, hold the priorities for the region and then hold the implementers and ourselves accountable for results."

Martha Kongsgaard, Kongsgaard Foundation
Chair, Puget Sound Leadership Council

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