

Update on the Integrated, Coordinated Monitoring and Assessment Program for the Puget Sound Region

Recent developments

The Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) has hired Nathalie Hamel, Ph.D., to lead the development and implementation of the Integrated, Coordinated Monitoring and Assessment Program. Nathalie officially joined the PSP on February 1, 2010. She obtained her Ph.D. at the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences at the University of Washington in 2009. Her studies focused on the vulnerability of seabirds to bycatch in Washington and British Columbia fisheries. Nathalie spent the past year as a Marc Hershman Marine Policy Fellow at the Washington Department of Ecology, reviewing the policies of the Coastal Zone Management Program.

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Background

The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium, in its [2008 report to the Washington State Legislature](#), recognized the need for a “coordinated, integrated regional monitoring and assessment program to more effectively and cost-efficiently achieve federal, state, and local environmental mandates and goals, including Puget Sound ecosystem recovery.”

In its report to the Legislature, the Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium envisioned three primary goals of the coordinated, integrated regional monitoring and assessment program (monitoring program):

- Assemble key scientists and technical leaders from government agencies, universities, businesses, private organizations, and citizen groups to optimize and collaborate on sampling designs, data collection methods, data management and quality assurance procedures.
- Expand the focus to include monitoring and assessment activities that are directed at key ecosystem indicators and other information required to track the success and effectiveness of new management initiatives and improve the way the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Growth Management Act, and other key laws are implemented in Puget Sound.
- Achieve greater results with existing public and private funds by reducing duplication of effort and eliminating other inefficiencies. The new program will still require additional funding to be able to achieve its vital and urgent goals.

The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium identified two organizational structures that could work for the monitoring program. In May 2009, the Leadership Council decided to

house the monitoring program at the Puget Sound Partnership, based on recommendations of the Consortium and Partnership staff. The Leadership Council also approved hiring a new staff to shepherd the development of the program and hiring of additional staff as needed to develop the program.

The Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium also reported on their common interests in an integrated and coordinated monitoring program, described the qualities and functions of the monitoring program, and explained the role of the Steering Committee, Technical Committee and Work Groups proposed as components of the program.

In July 2009, a group of about 30 stakeholders met to discuss how to proceed with developing the program, review the monitoring framework, and discuss the mandate, representation, qualities and relationships of the Steering Committee. They recommended the first step of establishing a Steering Committee with advice from stakeholders, including the Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium (sunsetting in June 2009) and the Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program (PSAMP). For the proposed role and responsibilities of the Steering Committee, please see separate document.

In July 2009, the Puget Sound Partnership began recruiting for a monitoring program manager. Nathalie Hamel came onboard on February 1, 2010 to lead the development and implementation of the monitoring program.

Purpose and Objectives of the Monitoring Program

Entities throughout the Puget Sound region recognize the need for credible and usable information to inform scientists, managers, policy makers and the public about the health of Puget Sound and whether Puget Sound is on the path to recovery. Monitoring information is needed to support the adaptive management framework as well as decisions about the best course of action to protect and restore ecosystem functions and processes. Finally, stakeholders recognize that by sharing information and leveraging monitoring efforts, they may more cost-effectively achieve local, state, federal environmental mandates.

The Action Agenda has as a priority to develop a monitoring program that will report on:

- (a) Status and trends of ecosystem conditions, impacts to important ecosystem goods and services, and factors that affect ecosystem conditions;
- (b) Effectiveness of strategies, programs, and projects;
- (c) Cause and effect linkages for issues involving high risks and difficult tradeoffs.

The goals, structure and relationships of the monitoring program were presented in the Monitoring Consortium's 2008 Report to the Legislature. Objectives for the monitoring

program are also described in the Action Agenda, the Biennial Science Work Plan, the Strategic Science Plan and July 2009 Stakeholder Advice (for a synthesis of the descriptions of the monitoring program, see separate document). One of the tasks ahead is to better define the structure and relationships of the monitoring program and to firmly establish objectives of the program. Indeed, one of the recommendations of the Monitoring Consortium was to “define the decision-making process, reporting relationships, and flows of information for the regional monitoring and assessment program”.

A good tool to use as we resume the discussion about the structure and relationships of the program is a visual representation of the proposed organizational structure of the monitoring program, as proposed by the Monitoring Consortium (Figure 1).

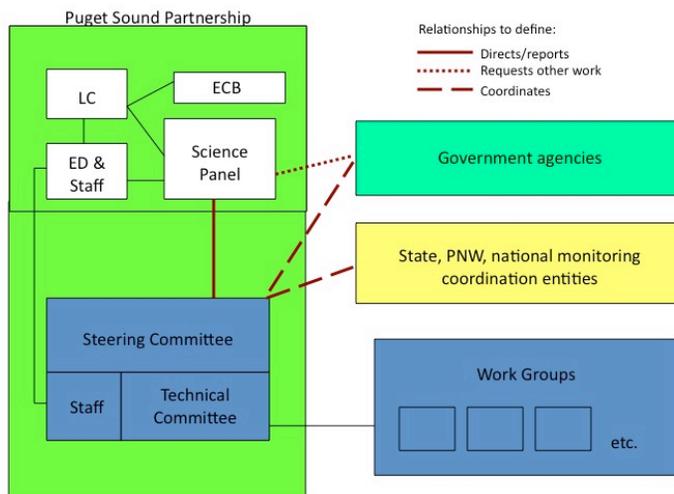


Figure 1. Monitoring Consortium proposed organizational framework for the monitoring program.

The illustration in Figure 1 is a very good organizational model. Building on the Monitoring Consortium model, Figures 2 and 3 add a few components and relationships and questions, to better capture the current state of the monitoring program and illustrate the links to various groups. The differences with the Monitoring Consortium illustration in Figure 1 include:

1. A representation of the monitoring program housed in the Strategic Science Program at the Puget Sound Partnership.
2. In Figure 3, the monitoring program explicitly serves “clients” other than the Puget Sound Partnership.
3. Questions about relationships.

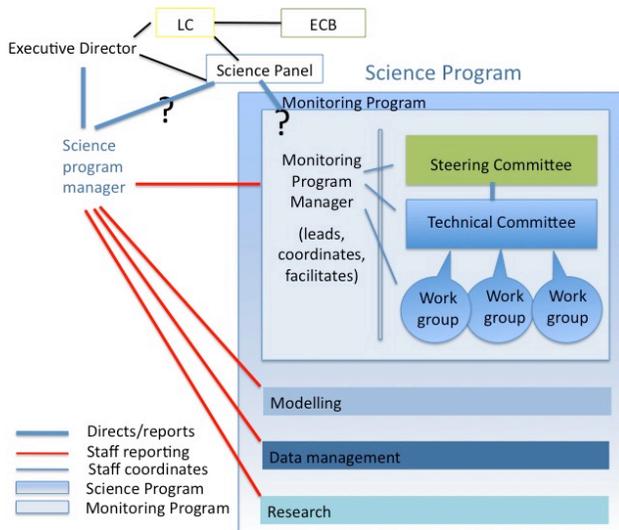


Figure 2. Draft of the organizational framework of the Strategic Science Program at the Puget Sound Partnership, with emphasis on the monitoring program.

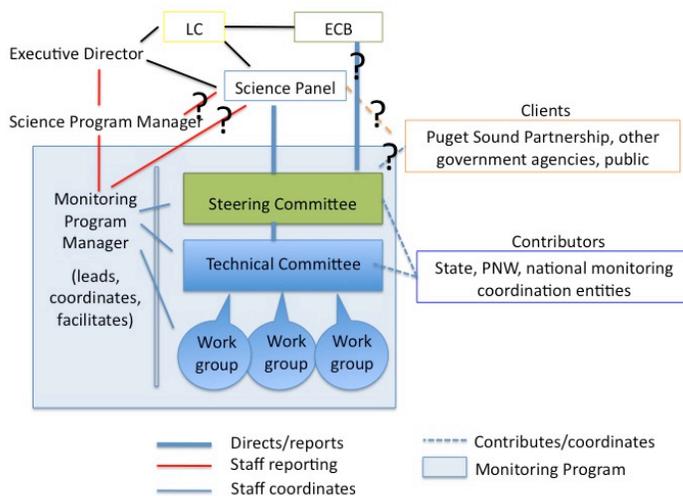


Figure 3. Draft organizational framework for the monitoring program, modified from the Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium 2008 Report to the Legislature.

Figures 2 and 3 are presented as possible depictions of the monitoring program to be discussed with the Science Panel. Nothing is set in stone and the illustrations will be further refined as the monitoring program takes shape.

Approach for initial phase of development

The Puget Sound Partnership and monitoring program manager will build on the work done by the Monitoring Consortium and on the existing monitoring and coordination

efforts of, and the lessons learned by, the Washington Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program (PSAMP), and others.

The following general approach is proposed for the initial phase of development of the monitoring program, in addition to generally getting up to speed with various things.

- Build relationships: meet with current and potential partners
- Build capacity: convene a Steering Committee that will direct program development, oversee the Technical Committee, initiate science-policy discussions and coordinate with others on statewide and regional data collection and management approaches.
- Spark conversations to refine the role, relationships and structure of the monitoring program and to define the initial steps of program development.

Questions for Science Panel

1. We provided a draft structure for the monitoring program (Figures 2 and 3), modified from the Consortium's proposed organizational framework, to illustrate the various components and relationships. Is it an adequate representation of the monitoring program? How can it be improved? Is this structure sufficient for now, with the idea of returning to it later, once the Steering Committee is formed?
2. We will be presenting options for forming a Steering Committee at the Science Panel meeting. We will have questions about the composition and selection of members.