

Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council
March 24, 2011, 10:00 – 2:30 | Tukwila Community Center

DRAFT Meeting Summary

Meeting Attendees

Recovery Council Members and Alternates

Elizabeth Babcock
Josh Baldi
Linda Berry-Maraist
Bill Blake
Alison Butcher
Alan Chapman
Scott Chase
Scott Chitwood
Ken Dahlstedt
Don Davidson
Richard Doenges
Jeanette Dorner
Dave Herrera
Randy Kinley
Sara LaBorde
Joan McGilton
Doug Osterman
Kathy Peters
Scott Powell
Barbara Rosenkotter
Dana Sarff
Shirley Solomon
Pat Stevenson
Jean White
Terry Williams
Terry Wright

Observers and Guests

Dan Berentson
Kirk Lakey
Lloyd Moody

Staff

Ken Currens
John Meyer
Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz
Gerry O'Keefe
Tristan Peter-Contesse
Rebecca Ponzio
Joe Ryan
Morgan Schneider

Representing

NOAA-NMFS
Ecology
West Sound Watersheds
Stillaguamish Watershed
Master Builders' Association
Lummi Natural Resources
Island Watershed
Dungeness/Elwha Watershed
Skagit Watershed
Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed
South Sound Watersheds
Nisqually Watershed
Skokomish Tribe
Lummi Nation
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Green-Duwamish Watershed
WRIA 9 Forum
West Sound Watersheds
Snohomish Watershed
San Juan Watershed
Makah Tribe
Skagit Watershed
Stillaguamish Tribe
WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
Tulalip Tribe
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Representing

Skagit County
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Governor's Salmon Recovery Office

Representing

Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership

David St. John
Scott Williamson
Laura Blackmore
Sidney Brown

Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Blackmore Consulting
Cascadia Consulting Group

Welcome and Review Meeting Summary

Joe Ryan welcomed Council members, guests, and staff and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Laura Blackmore reviewed the agenda. The January 27, 2011, meeting summary was accepted with no changes.

Director's Transition

In honor of Joe Ryan's last meeting as Salmon Program Director, the Council presented him with a signed picture and a book. Council members expressed their appreciation for Joe's contributions to salmon protection and restoration efforts in the Puget Sound region.

Recovery Council members expressed interest in playing an active role in the selection of Joe Ryan's replacement. Chair Steve Tharinger and Vice-Chair Dave Herrera will participate on the interview panel. Members identified the following characteristics that they would like the selection committee to consider when evaluating candidates:

- Does this candidate understand the **role that watersheds play in salmon recovery**?
- Will he or she support **funding for watershed-level** salmon recovery efforts?
- Does this candidate appreciate the **importance of bottom-up planning and project implementation**?
- Will this person lead the program in a **fiscally responsible** manner?
- Is he or she **passionate** about salmon recovery and **engaged** in related issues?
- Is this person going to **aggressively pursue the Recovery Council's goals** and **take action** rather than become mired in processes?
- Can this person effectively **address tribes' concerns** as they relate to salmon recovery efforts and bureaucratic processes?
- Does this person have the **courage to identify and address difficult and unpopular issues**?
- Is this person **mission-oriented, inspired, and inspiring**?
- Does this candidate demonstrate an **understanding of the regulatory framework** and a **willingness to integrate salmon recovery** into it?
- Will this person be able to **balance pragmatism and optimism**?
- Does this person **understand the technical aspects** of salmon recovery?

Additional thoughts on what should be included in the director's position should be sent to Laura Blackmore or individual Council members' Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator. In the meantime, Council members should let the Office of Financial Management know the importance of an exemption to the hiring freeze for this position.

Puget Sound Target Setting

Ken Currens opened this portion of the meeting with a brief review of the legislature's requirement of the Partnership to develop indicators and set benchmarks for Chinook recovery. In December 2010, the Partnership Leadership Council and Partnership Executive Director Gerry O'Keefe directed the Partnership to set 20 targets by June 2011. A high-level dashboard of indicators adopted by the Leadership Council in July 2010 provided a starting point for this process. These dashboard indicators are not intended for use as day-to-day indicators; rather, they provide a high-level metric and a starting point in this process. To create ecosystem targets, the Partnership is projecting its objectives to 2020. The Partnership would also like to set targets for pressure reduction measures, to include stormwater, wastewater, land development, and shoreline development.

The Recovery Implementation Technical Team (RITT) is involved in this process through its work to help watersheds with adaptive management and the establishment of watershed-level targets to help guide resource

management. The Partnership has also formed teams of experts to help develop options for these targets for 2020. A series of workshops in April and May 2011 will solicit stakeholder input on the feasibility of target options. The numerous venues where Council members can provide input to this process include the April 14th workshop on the Chinook salmon indicator and the May 26th Council meeting. The May 26th meeting will be the last discussion of targets before the list of targets moves to the Leadership Council in June.

Ken Currens asked for questions and comments from the Council.

- How interchangeable are the benchmarks and targets?
 - Benchmarks can be thought of as interim targets to see how a project is progressing along a trajectory. Members should note that this language may change in light of efforts to make this language consistent.
- What is the objective in establishing pressure reduction targets?
 - The objective for pressure reduction targets is still unclear. Teams with a range of expertise are assigned to develop the indicator or a set of indicators used to establish pressure reduction targets. Indicators for ecosystems are known, but not for pressure reduction measures.
- The teams assigned to these targets are being asked to focus on technical issues, rather than cost considerations. The Council's role is to address financial feasibility.
- How will targets be set? How will adaptive management happen?
- The dashboard indicator is wild salmon abundance, which does not include hatchery programs. It was pointed out that commercial harvest is an indicator of population wellbeing.
- It is important that the Partnership show its ability to both set and change targets. The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is important.
- It would be easy to become mired in this process. There is value in selecting a reasonable target quickly. Keep it simple.
- Should we attempt to simplify such a complex set of issues?
- Forestry, agriculture, and local governments' ability to make progress toward goals should be measures in these targets, not fish populations.
- These targets should also establish consequences for failure to make progress toward the targets.
- How can these targets be scaled down geographically? How can we use these targets locally?
- How will these targets interact with existing local targets and plans?
- Is there a need to create something new? Most organizations and jurisdictions already face limited resources and capacity.
- The Council should weigh in on all of these targets, not just the target related to Chinook salmon.

Partnership staff will consider creating a subcommittee to help think through how the Council can best address these issues at their May 26 meeting. Council members Scott Powell, Terry Williams, Alan Chapman, and the watershed leads volunteered to participate on this subcommittee if it is formed.

Projects of Regional Significance (PORS)

John Meyer provided the Council with an update on work related to Projects of Regional Significance (PORS). Thus far, watersheds have provided the Partnership with their list of projects of regional significance. This list is being reviewed by the Recovery Implementation Technical Team (RITT), which will determine how best to weigh in and ensure that the best regionally significant projects emerge from this process. Although this list contains less-traditional salmon recovery projects that span watersheds, many suggested projects remain watershed-focused. RITT is working to broaden these projects to a regional scale.

RITT is using three criteria to establish which projects offer a regional focus:

1. **Can the watershed solve this issue itself?** Is this more than a funding issue? Does this project need regulatory or political support that requires assistance beyond the watershed level?
2. **Would the project provide information that would help other watersheds throughout the region?**

3. Does this project address regional recovery criteria related to Technical Recovery Team delisting criteria?

Council members provided the following suggestions for consideration by RITT:

- We need to be sure these projects are clearly regionally significant projects to “sell” to USEPA and NOAA.
- RITT needs to evaluate VSP (Viable Salmonid Population) criteria and clearly define “regional.” Could include most important projects for a population that needs regional help.
- RITT should identify whether political or regulatory support from outside the watershed could allow this project to move forward.
- Future funding often relies on the efficient and appropriate spending of current funds. The Partnership should increase scrutiny on how money is being spent.
- Is a new list of prioritized projects and needs valuable or redundant?
- Take action! Having an established list of projects is valuable, but it is time to focus on a project or goal.

John Meyer will convene the subcommittee to discuss this topic. Alan Chapman volunteered to participate in the subgroup.

Proposal to Shift RITT from NOAA to the Partnership

Joe Ryan began this discussion with a review of the Recovery Implementation Technical Team’s (RITT) role as a driver of adaptive management, technical assistance, and projects of regional significance. In the past, NOAA has fully supported this group but will now transition the administrative and logistical support for RITT to the Partnership. Elizabeth Babcock emphasized that NOAA is in no way reducing its belief in, and support for, RITT; rather, NOAA no longer has the capacity to provide this group with logistical and administrative support. Northwest Regional Administrator Will Stelle is willing to address any challenges that arise with this new arrangement if needed.

During subsequent discussion, Council members raised wondered whether it is possible for the RITT to have a joint affiliation with NOAA and the Partnership. Multiple members expressed the value in having RITT affiliated with NOAA. This relationship with a federal agency gives RITT the ability to conduct an independent federal review.

Allocation Formula

Annually, the Partnership reviews and discusses the formula for funds allocated by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. For 2011, \$7.5 million has been allocated. None of this money is used to fund the Partnership. Rather, this funding goes directly to watersheds.

- WRIA 7, WRIA 8 and WRIA 9 are currently working together to develop a funding mechanism.
- This is an interim plan that has been adopted for several consecutive years.

Joan McGilton moved to approve the proposed allocation formula, and Jeanette Dorner seconded. Council members approved the motion.

Habitat Protection (Shoreline Management Plan Updates, Floodplains)

David St. John reviewed the Partnership’s floodplain work, specifically with respect to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ (Corps) decision-making process regarding levee vegetation and NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) on FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Floodplains. The Corps has always had a vegetation management plan for levees but has allowed for regional variances. The Partnership is working with the Corps to create an alternative management standard for Puget Sound. This technical project includes engineers and biologists who are creating techniques to assess risk failures to levees and assess appropriate vegetation options. Most levee failures are not vegetation-driven.

The Corps and Partnership plan to complete an initial boilerplate template and a completed variance application for the Green and Cedar River watersheds by June. Once a standard action has been established, the Corps expects levee sponsors to provide an outline for their chosen approach. To satisfy this request, sponsors will create a transition plan to outline how they will come into compliance with the national standard, or they will state their intention to apply for and execute a variance application.

The Corps and Partnership are concerned that sponsors misperceive that, to meet Corps standards, they must cut down trees. David emphasized that the existing Seattle variance is not the restrictive national standard. The Seattle District variance of trees with diameters between two and four inches (with room for engineers' discretion) is still in place, and the existing process will establish a new variance from the conservative national standard. The Corps does inspect levee owners' reports each year, which typically guides levee sponsors to cut trees. David and other representatives from the Partnership are working with the Corps to make sure their reports are not overly conservative. If Council members are aware of levee sponsors who feel that they are being told to remove trees, please let David know so he can facilitate conversations between the sponsors and the Corps. The Corps is receptive to this process, and levee sponsors may be able to receive site-specific guidance.

The deadline for the FEMA BiOp is September 22, 2011. Only one of 122 Puget Sound jurisdictions has come into compliance thus far. The Leadership Council passed a resolution in November 2010 in support of this timeline for compliance and approving assistance to communities to help them achieve this outcome. On March 1-2, 2011, between 150 and 200 people attended a workshop in Edmonds sponsored by the Partnership, FEMA, and NMFS with support from the Washington State Department of Ecology. This workshop was designed to increase participants' knowledge of the issues surrounding this process, their roles, how to communicate the importance of and benefits from this process to elected officials, how to compile the package of materials required by FEMA, and how these materials will be evaluated.

Workshop participants consistently indicated that their communities need technical support, particularly around ESA-driven environmental assessments in smaller jurisdictions. Communities also requested assistance communicating the importance and rationale behind the FEMA BiOp to elected officials and decision-makers. These individuals need to understand the decisions that need to be made and their ramifications.

FEMA, NMFS, Ecology, and Commerce are currently working on a proposal for several hundred thousand dollars for technical support for the jurisdictions. In the near term, NMFS and FEMA are committed to conducting up to four biological evaluation technical workshops. The FEMA Regional Director and representatives from tribal communities are meeting to address the need for consultation with tribes.

When asked what issues their watersheds are facing, Council members listed the following:

- A lack of coordination and communication between individuals working on flood issues and those working on salmon issues.
- Misunderstanding as to how the FEMA BiOp relates to nearshore habitats.
- Desire to see a technical workshop incorporate salmon habitat requirements and flood protection requirements. The hope is that one of the technical workshops can address how to integrate these topics in a meaningful and actionable way.
- There is a general need to educate both the public and elected officials on regulatory changes related to the FEMA BiOp.

If you have additional questions or comments, please contact David at 206-296-8003. Washington State Habitat Director Steve Landino is also available (360-753-6054) to provide NOAA's perspective.

Shoreline Master Programs (SMPs). Rebecca Ponzio and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz reminded Council members about a meeting list and talking points sent out after the January 2011 Council meeting. They asked Council members to comment on whether this information is useful, how they would like to receive communications related to legislation and meetings, whether Council members have participated in any of these meetings, and how the SMP process is going.

- A marine shorelines workbook would be useful, particularly if it included graphics and checklists. WRIA 8's *Green Shorelines* booklet (about Lake Washington) provides an excellent piece of information for local governments.
- Ecology is understaffed. Some of the difficulties experienced by jurisdictions are due to slow response time in comments from Ecology, not due to lack of effort by jurisdictions. Arlington's plan was submitted to Ecology two months ago and has yet to be opened.
- The Tulalip Tribe is trying to enter the local planning process with Snohomish County.

The Partnership can help jurisdictions, on a case-by-case basis, rally the pro-environment public to attend hearings.

Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) and Other Legislative Updates

John Meyer from the Partnership reminded Council members that the state's budget gap widened to \$5.3 billion. Budgets are expected by this weekend or early next week. Once budgets come out, hearings will be held, and there will be opportunities to provide input. The Watershed Leads and the Council have expressed interest to weigh in on PSAR; now is the time to do so. A handout was provided to Council members, which included a proposed representative list of projects.

The Partnership has been in Olympia supporting funding for PSAR, the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP), stormwater programs, and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) work. The WWRP had been focused on Puget Sound, but there is now effort to broaden to a statewide focus.

Update on the Population Recovery Approach

Elizabeth Babcock reported that NOAA received over 20 letters regarding the PRA. Despite the sensitive and sometimes frustrating nature of this issue, letters from the Council were constructive and focused on the technical components of the framework. Elizabeth will continue to participate in NOAA's deliberation over the next steps.

Elizabeth also reviewed the 4(d) harvest management plan, which will be reviewed under the adequacy and sufficiency section of the Endangered Species Act. NOAA anticipates announcing the determination goal on May 1, 2011. Ideally, the 4(d) and PRA timelines will be synchronized. Elizabeth will send an e-mail update on the 4(d) determination and PRA deliberations before the next Council meeting.

Director's Report

The Council said goodbye to Joe Ryan, who will be stepping down as Salmon Program Director in April. Gerry O'Keefe reiterated the Partnership's commitment to filling his position and recovering Puget Sound salmon.

Wrap up and Adjourn

Subsequent meetings will be as follows. All meetings begin at 10:00 a.m. unless otherwise specified:

- May 26 at Edmonds City Hall
- July 28 at Edmonds City Hall
- September 22 at Edmonds City Hall
- December 1 at Edmonds City Hall