

Draft For Discussion

October 13, 2005

Recovering Puget Sound Salmon— Democracy in Action

Prepared by Shared Strategy for Puget Sound

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to encourage consensus on the roles, functions and organizational structures needed to implement the *Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan—Volumes I and II* (the Plan). The ultimate goal of this paper is to gain commitment and agreement of the leaders and decision makers on how best to organize ourselves at local (watershed) and regional (Puget Sound) levels to build on the momentum generated by the watersheds and the Shared Strategy process to restore our salmon runs and the ecosystem that supports them as outlined in the Plan. This paper and continued discussions will be used to inform the Governor and other leaders as they consider a broader initiative for the overall health of Puget Sound.

What are we trying to achieve?

The participants in the 14 Puget Sound watersheds and many other contributors to the Plan hope that fifty years from now, their great-grandchildren will be able to say:

“Our elders got it right. They listened to what the salmon were telling them. Anticipating the region’s growth, the choices they made in the early 2000s and the hard work that followed, created the vibrant community we share today, where both people and nature thrive and the salmon are once again teeming in our rivers and streams.”

How will we achieve such a big and challenging vision—to accommodate the explosive growth coming to our region in ways that save not only salmon but our quality of life? The good news is we all developed a Plan that provides a path toward achieving this vision and that the Puget Sound region has a history of success when it comes to solving important natural resource issues. We know how to do this. The Shared Strategy¹ process which created the Plan, judged by many people as highly successful, is evidence that we know how to

¹ “Shared Strategy process or approach” in this document refers to the collective and individual efforts by watersheds and regional groups to write and deliver the Plan.

organize ourselves to achieve an action plan that when implemented will achieve our vision.

What were the keys to success for those hundreds of people engaged in the Shared Strategy that can also serve us well as we move forward to recover salmon and improve the overall health of Puget Sound? How can we create a social environment where people and organizations increasingly take responsibility and hold themselves accountable to achieve the vision for the region?

Democracy in Action

One way to characterize the Shared Strategy approach is as an experiment in democracy—how local communities and regional leaders stepped up to make public decisions about their future. It was an experiment to learn more about what we could accomplish together in the belief that we would make greater progress than if we tried to go it alone, as separate entities. In this experiment, the operating assumption was that as people participate in trying to solve problems that affect them, they will become more informed about the issues and about each other’s needs; this new knowledge leads to better and more durable solutions that will be supported by those involved, and success in working together will increase our communities’ capacity to solve increasingly more complex problems.

Actually, it is fair to say that each of the fourteen watersheds in Puget Sound was an individual experiment in how local communities work together for a common purpose. As part of a voluntary effort, each area approached recovery planning and wrote its local recovery chapter for Volume II in its own way. Some used fairly sophisticated collaborative processes involving a broad range of community members as well as decision-makers. Other watersheds used more traditional planning approaches where one or two organizations developed a plan and sought comments from other interests.

As the region prepares to enact the Plan, it helps to look back on these different watershed experiences to see what we can learn from them to help us take the next steps. There are some overarching elements that most people agree contributed to success.

First, local planners and scientists most familiar with their watershed wrote the plans for their areas. In many instances, their approach was **community-based**. Several of the local plans were developed by people who feel a close, emotional connection to

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their communities and the environment that surrounds them. As Billy Frank Jr. often says, "This is our home, we aren't leaving and we need it to be the home for all of us--- farmers, foresters, fishers, tribes and all citizens." These experiments in democracy proved that given a forum in which to participate, people who care about where they live and work will create bridges across their differences and build on their profound knowledge, experience and love of the place they call home. Their solutions are more reflective of the whole community and are thus more sound and durable because they garner a broader base of support. The process also taught us that it is important to **publicly recognize** individuals and groups and their innovative solutions.

Where there were collaborative watershed approaches with the support from tribes, federal and state agencies in the Shared Strategy helped people agree on a **common vision, specific results and to focus on actions not just process**. From there, local and regional participants stayed the course and gained credibility with each other and others by **delivering the Plan on time and on budget**.

Local planning efforts were **guided by science as well as state and federal laws**. Local watersheds clearly reside within a larger ecosystem and their plans had to reflect what they needed to do to address salmon and community needs within this larger context. This approach provided the parameters within which both local and regional planning occurred. **The Shared Strategy was therefore a hybrid involving community decision-making that responds to both local needs and to region-wide requirements for salmon recovery under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)**.

Shared Strategy participants recognized that no single entity can achieve the vision on its own; that their collective and coordinated efforts were necessary to build the support and commitments needed to achieve the results set forth in the Plan. A key tenet agreed to by all the parties in the Shared Strategy was that the private, public and tribal partners would **retain their legal authorities, rights and responsibilities**. Trust in this agreement meant that the various entities and government agencies at all levels (from local to state to federal), were willing to **use their authorities and influence to share resources and solutions on behalf of the larger effort**.

As trust increased, participants at both local and regional levels were open about what was working,

what wasn't, what they needed from each other, what holes needed to be filled, what issues were outside their control to fix, and how their efforts were helping or fit into a larger whole. Such **openness among Shared Strategy members and transparency about the process and its conclusions** expanded the trust and communication between local communities and the regional effort. As one Development Committee member put it, "This approach helped us do our job better (referring to her state agency) and let us know when we were on the right track."

Despite the Shared Strategy's demonstrable successes, the Plan and the process are not perfect. Significant issues and uncertainties remain to be resolved over time. These will need to be addressed through adaptive management and monitoring, and by increasing the public, community and political commitment to find and implement solutions for some of the more contentious issues such as habitat protection. The plan is a living document its success will depend on our continued commitment to learn and work together across Puget Sound.

From Planning to Action – Creating a Results-oriented Campaign

In the various discussions about the next phase for salmon recovery, almost everyone agrees that a key to success will be to broaden, deepen and sustain the public and political support needed to achieve the future vision. Many people participating in these discussions, especially elected officials, talked about the importance of seeing the implementation phase as a "campaign" or "strategic initiative." Of course doing projects is essential, but more is needed. Achieving the Plan goals in the long-term will require a concerted and strategic effort that achieves more actions on the ground, finds community solutions to competing needs and diverse interests, and matches project implementation and results tracking over time with funding, legislative support, and communications.

A campaign is an organized course of action to achieve a particular goal—it includes a clear description of outcomes, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. For long-term campaigns, such as this one, it also identifies milestones against which to measure progress, sponsors events to celebrate and recognize results along the way, and develops on-going, creative ways to communicate about the issues, progress and results.

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A well-structured campaign for the on-going salmon recovery effort should work to achieve the following desired results:

- A steady increase in the amount of voluntary activities and behaviors by individuals, farmers, foresters and other businesses that help salmon,
- A foundation of support that allows political leaders at all levels of government to make the programmatic and regulatory hard decisions that will be needed,
- Sufficient, on-going funding to implement the plan,
- Creative solutions for protecting and restoring salmon runs while accommodating a growing population;
- Expanded opportunities that advance both economic and environmental prosperity.

As with a political or charitable campaign there must be a role for everyone who is interested. Citizens, community groups, volunteer organizations, local, state, tribal and federal governments and their agencies, businesses, policy-makers--all must see a part for themselves. More than that, they need to see that everyone is doing their part and how the various pieces fit into the larger whole. As we create implementation structures we need to consider how to connect and coordinate with various individuals, groups and entities with a role to play in their local areas and in the region. Among other things, the structures should support people in communicating what they need from each other, what they themselves are committing to do and in solving problems together.

A Proposal for How We Organize

The Shared Strategy process created a plan for salmon recovery that is supported by many local communities and regional leaders. Based on the ingredients for success described above, the recommendations for the next phase have two main organizational components; watershed (local communities) and regional (Puget Sound wide).

Ideally, groups working on implementing the Plan at both local and regional scales will increase the trust of people who live and work here. They will provide forums for people to raise issues or concerns appropriate to the scale at which they need to be addressed. This is especially important for finding lasting solutions to some of the challenging, but critical issues to recover salmon such as the voluntary and regulatory habitat protection measures.

People will want to go to the established forums because they have (or will build) a track record of solving problems in a way that works for fish and people. The forums will ensure issues receive a fair hearing, involve affected groups, and use the best collaborative methods in a genuine attempt to resolve them. Collaborative processes with integrity at both local and regional scales are our best hope of bridging the often polarized and conflicting perspectives on this issue.

Watersheds

The first and most important element is to continue local community (watershed) efforts to recover salmon consistent with the community's broader goals. This is where the connection to place and local knowledge is most powerful.

As noted earlier, local watersheds are structured in a variety of ways and it isn't always clear to people outside the immediate planning effort where to go to address concerns or offer ideas, or indeed if they would be welcome. Experiences from the planning phase suggest that it is important to coordinate the various functions (e.g. all Hs—habitat, harvest and hatchery, Critical Area Ordinance updates) and programs (e.g. HB2514, HB2496) related to salmon recovery and Puget Sound health within each watershed so that people know where to bring their issues and concerns, and more importantly, to have a place to participate in generating mutually beneficial and durable solutions.

For example, it would help smooth the implementation process if local efforts bring together private and public sector interests (including local elected officials, other community leaders, and local tribal, state and federal government representatives) to set milestones and hold each other accountable to deliver the actions necessary for salmon and associated community needs. Since salmon recovery requires so many pieces working together, it is helpful for watershed groups to consider how to directly engage local decision-makers to ensure decisions are consistent with their local recovery plan, and respect the needs and interests of tribes, farmers, foresters, rural land owners and city people.

The best structure for how to organize themselves to fulfill the implementation functions listed below (whether as a single umbrella group or coordinated set of entities) is best determined at the local level, but it should fully reflect and represent a community's multiple interests and perspectives, and be linked to elected officials. Some watersheds are

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already providing many of the functions listed below, some are poised, and still others have more groundwork to lay to build the capacity to implement these functions and all need support to be successful.

Specific examples of local implementation functions include:

- Implement and adaptively manage the local plan;
- Participate in all-H integration efforts;
- Refine and foster a multi-year capital salmon projects program;
- Track results and ensure they are on schedule and achieving the improvements for salmon consistent with the community's interests;
- Provide a means for various, related programs and efforts to share data and learn from each other;
- Expand public understanding and coordinate educational efforts to build a growing awareness in each successive generation;
- Cultivate community and political leadership;
- Support volunteer organizations to provide opportunities for individuals to help;
- Coordinate with other watersheds and regional groups on fundraising, needed legislative changes, and addressing cross-watershed issues; and
- Maintain local scientific expertise to refine and implement actions as well as measure results and make adjustments where necessary.

Regional Structure

Individual watersheds can't do it alone; the state, tribal and federal governments and other regional leaders also have a role to play in achieving salmon recovery. For this reason, a coordinating and problem-solving body at the regional scale (regional leadership group) is recommended to support the watersheds, nearshore and marine efforts, tribal, state and federal groups as they implement their parts of the plan.

Several people and groups have indicated that a regional entity should not have regulatory authority, but should rather help the region create an environment in which existing authorities can fulfill their responsibilities. Indeed, this proposal recommends maintaining and honoring the agreement established at the start of the planning effort to retain existing regulatory authorities, rights and responsibilities of local, state, tribal and federal governments and other participating entities.

Unlike the current Shared Strategy Development Committee whose current mission is primarily to guide and support the planning process, this regional leadership group would be a forum in which participants hold each other accountable, agree on regional priorities, problem-solve, seek efficiencies, represent local communities and other interests on regional issues, and provide mutual support to one another.

This model relies on peer-accountability among elected officials, watershed decision-makers and coordinators, scientists, government agencies and other participants to ensure that agreed upon priorities and outcomes are achieved. A peer-accountability model requires clear and agreed upon measures and targets, clearly defined and fairly distributed responsibilities, and a reporting structure that gauges progress and shows how the various participants are contributing to the overall goals.

This model relies upon existing authorities and implementation commitments by the appropriate responsible parties at both local and regional scales. It enables each party to determine the best way to fulfill their responsibilities within an open process that allows everyone to see the progress and the potential stumbling blocks along the way. It should also provide recognition and incentives when individual entities or groups achieve their results. In this way, participants work toward their own interests and responsibilities while also contributing to regional needs and goals.

The regional leadership group would be responsible for overseeing the following specific functions:

- Maintain and strengthen strong relationships between local, state and federal government elected officials, tribes, state and federal agencies, watershed groups, businesses, agriculture, forestry, community organizations, and environmental and conservation groups;
- Help watersheds meet needs that are outside their scope such as integrating with certain state and federal programs, and access to technical guidance and expertise;
- Encourage local watersheds to provide clear measures against which to gauge progress toward achieving results;
- Provide policy guidance and resolve issues at the regional scale; serve as the region's "organizing intelligence" for salmon recovery and related issues—holding the big picture and the long-term vision and acting as the glue that holds the parts together, helping to work through issues when the going gets tough;

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- Sponsor cross-watershed, regional, and ad hoc forums and work groups on targeted topics/issues of interest and concern (some which may need to be explored outside jurisdictional constraints); resolve issues beyond scope of local efforts;
- Market salmon recovery efforts— facilitate development of “campaign” and coordinate its implementation; include recognition of individual or watershed successes; assist & coordinate with watersheds on outreach to people and groups outside watershed scope;
- Advocate for and coordinate fundraising efforts, development of a conservation bank, and legislation that may be needed to support plan implementation;
- Facilitate establishment of success measures; evaluate regional progress toward implementing ESA recovery plan; support adaptive management and monitoring (AMM) structures/processes;
- Seek efficiencies across watersheds (e.g. monitoring, data sharing, etc.) and facilitate cross-watershed communications and problem solving; support technical cross-watershed adaptive management and training;
- Connect and coordinate with related efforts and programs such as HB2514 watershed planning, forests and fish, and other environmental and conservation coalitions.

To fulfill the above named functions and create an effective peer-accountability process, the regional leadership group would include a representative from each of the fourteen watershed groups as well as representatives from the tribes, state and federal agencies, environmental organizations and the business community (especially from the fishing, forestry, agricultural and development sectors). There would likely be an executive committee and other on-going and ad hoc sub-committees to work on specific issues like water quantity and carry out specific functions such as fundraising.

There is also a need for an independent science team at the regional scale to monitor results and assist with adaptive management functions.

Conclusions and Questions

This paper is built on the premise that if we are to achieve our vision of creating a future in which both salmon and people co-exist and thrive in the context of explosive human population growth, we will need local and regional structures that broaden and deepen support and commitment over the long-term.

Once the Governor determines how to proceed with her initiative for the overall health of Puget Sound, these structures may need to change or become integrated into the larger initiative so as to avoid duplication and take advantage of obvious efficiencies and existing partnerships. In the meantime, this paper proposes moving forward with the recommended structures so as to capitalize on the positive energy and momentum from the planning phase and begin implementing the Plan. The above proposal attempts to build on the strengths of the planning phase and recommends organizational structures to ensure accountability (who does what by when to achieve specific outcomes), efficiency (using financial and human resources smartly to gain as much progress as possible with the least effort), and effectiveness (achieving outcomes and results).

Acknowledgements

The ideas in this paper have evolved and been refined over several months based on discussions with a variety of groups and individuals, starting with the February '05 workshop on adaptive management that included local Puget Sound watersheds, tribes, state and federal agencies, and scientists. A leadership group focused on the financing strategy, consisting of local elected officials, tribes and other regional leaders from across the Sound, added specifics on funding roles and functions.

Meanwhile, U.S. Representative Norm Dicks and Governor Gregoire initiated a broader dialogue about an initiative to save Puget Sound with salmon recovery as a key element, further adding to the ideas on the table.

Most recently, between July and October 2005, meetings with watershed planners, the Shared Strategy Development Committee, and the Tri-County group advanced the dialogue even further.