

Shared Strategy

for Salmon Recovery in Puget Sound

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is the Shared Strategy?

A: The Shared Strategy is a groundbreaking collaborative effort to protect and restore salmon runs across Puget Sound. The Shared Strategy engages local citizens, Tribes, technical experts and policy makers to build a practical, cost-effective recovery plan endorsed by the people living and working in the watersheds of Puget Sound.

The Shared Strategy is based on the conviction that;

- people in Puget Sound have the creativity, knowledge, and motivation to find lasting solutions to complex ecological, economic, and cultural challenges,
- watershed groups that represent diverse communities are essential to the success of salmon recovery,
- effective stewardship occurs only when all levels of government coordinate their efforts,
- the health and vitality of Puget Sound depends on timely planning for ecosystem health and strong local and regional economies, and
- the health of salmon are an indicator of the health of our region—salmon recovery will benefit both human and natural communities.

Q: Where is the leadership coming from for this effort?

A: The Shared Strategy harnesses the collective leadership from around the region. The state, tribes, federal government, and several local governments provided the initial impetus and leadership for this effort, along with the active involvement of representatives from watershed planning groups, salmon recovery planning entities, and large stakeholder groups working in the watersheds and on nearshore and marine issues. The regional recovery planning that is occurring through the Shared Strategy is overseen and managed by a newly created non-profit organization called the Puget Sound Salmon Forum. It is funded through state and federal contributions and represents the commitment by these governments to regional recovery planning.

Q: What are the desired outcomes of the Shared Strategy and how will they be accomplished?

A: The ultimate outcome will be recovery of the listed species and improved conditions for the entire ecosystem. This will be accomplished through a five-step process with a goal of creating a recovery plan that ensures all the collective efforts throughout the region will add up to recovery of the three listed fish species in Puget Sound (chinook, summer chum, and bull trout).

The five-step process is outlined in detail in the Shared Strategy document, available on the web site at www.sharedsalmonstrategy.org. In essence, the steps are:

1. Identify what should be in a recovery plan and assess how current efforts can support the plan
2. Identify recovery planning targets (fish) for each watershed
3. Identify actions needed to move towards meeting targets
4. Determine if actions identified in Step 3 add up to regional recovery. If not, identify needed adjustments.
5. Finalize recovery plan along with actions and commitments necessary for implementation

Q: What area will be covered by the recovery plan?

A: The recovery plan will include the whole Puget Sound basin including the land and waters from the Canadian border, south to Olympia, Hood Canal and the Straits of Juan de Fuca to the ocean. This area encompasses the whole Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) for Puget Sound chinook and Hood Canal summer chum, and a significant portion of the Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of Coastal-Puget Sound bull trout. An ESU and DPS are the geographic scale used by the listing agencies to distinguish salmon and bull trout populations, respectively, that share similar genetic, ecological, and life history traits, but differ in important ways from salmon/bull trout in other ESUs/DPSs.

Q: Why do we need a recovery plan?

A: When a species is officially “listed” (designated) as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the species and their habitats fall under special legal protections outlined in the ESA. The federal agencies involved in the listing have a responsibility to create a plan that addresses both how to prevent the species from going extinct, as well as steps needed to move the species to a recovered state. Previous recovery plans have not always included the full engagement of the communities responsible for implementing the actions outlined in the plan, thus making the plans feel like top down management. Participation in the Shared Strategy offers flexibility within and between watersheds to decide which types of actions are appropriate and most likely to achieve recovery.

Q: How is the Shared Strategy different from previous attempts to write recovery plans?

A: The Shared Strategy builds on existing efforts by local governments, watershed groups, and various entities already working on salmon recovery planning through a multitude of planning processes. The proposed outline of the recovery plan includes individual chapters for each watershed that will be the result of a consensus approach in that watershed about what actions are necessary and agreed upon by the people in the watershed and meets the legal, social, and cultural goals we have agreed to as a region. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS),

the federal agencies responsible for implementing the ESA, have endorsed the Shared Strategy and are active participants.

Q: Which species will this plan address?

A: Listed salmonid species in Puget Sound are the first priority. These include chinook, Hood Canal summer chum, and bull trout. Chinook and summer chum were listed as threatened by NMFS in March 1999 and bull trout was listed by USFWS in November 1999. While the plan will initially address these species, the goal of the Shared Strategy is to include recovery plans for all species and thus preempt potential future listings. Healthy salmon populations are at the heart of healthy ecosystems. By restoring salmon populations, we are also restoring ecosystems in general.

Q: How does this relate to what is already happening in my watershed?

A: The overlying premise of the Shared Strategy is that there is a great deal of work already occurring at the watershed level that addresses land and water resources. Through various planning processes (e.g., GMA, SMA, 2514 assessments), plans are already being written that could incorporate salmon recovery needs within their scope. Local differences in habitat, fish management, and other social interests will best be addressed – and respected – through a process that builds on efforts by local governments and watershed groups. The Shared Strategy hopes that local watershed groups will use the planning targets developed in Step 2 of the Strategy to assess what actions and costs are necessary to reach planning targets, then come to agreement with the state, tribes, local governments and other affected parties on a course of action.

Q: How can I participate?

A: If you are already involved in your local watershed group or salmon recovery planning group, you can help by supporting your watershed's involvement as a Shared Strategy participant. If you are not involved in watershed planning in your watershed, this is the place to start. The involvement of watershed groups is critical to the success of Step 3 of the Strategy.

Q: How are harvest and hatchery issues addressed in the recovery plan?

A: The Shared Strategy recovery planning process is occurring in concert with hatchery reform efforts that are designed to reduce conflicts between hatchery and wild stocks. Hatchery practices and production will be integrated into the recovery plan and will ensure management of hatcheries does not impede recovery. In some watersheds, hatcheries may be an important feature of a recovery plan.

State and tribal salmon harvest are developed and carried out to ensure that weak stocks are afforded maximum protection from unintended harvest through various restrictions (i.e., time, place, manner). Fisheries managers have strict guidelines for minimizing impacts on weak stocks and they have established a solid track record in achieving those protections. While harvest management by itself will not recover Puget Sound chinook, harvest will be

constrained to levels that will not impede the level of recovery that may occur as a result of habitat restoration and protection.