

Puget Sound Salmon Summit: Outcomes and Next Steps for the Regional Recovery Plan

“I want to give you a big fat thank you for all your hard work and dedication. You’ve done an enormous amount of work...It’s been our local citizens and leaders, working with our tribal partners, who are taking control and shaping the future of Washington State. You’re doing it voluntarily because you know, at the end of the day, it’s just the right thing to do.”

--Governor Christine Gregoire

Summit a Success

The 2005 Salmon Summit was a milestone event for the Puget Sound region’s efforts to bring salmon back. Over two days more than 600 officials and community leaders gathered in Tacoma to forge the region’s first-ever plan to protect and restore salmon runs.

Development of the Puget Sound salmon recovery plan will represent the first time in the history of the Endangered Species Act that local communities are joining together to develop plans to save a species from extinction.

The Summit confirmed that people care deeply about salmon and our quality of life. Elected leaders from local, state, tribal and federal levels also expressed their appreciation for this collaborative, community-based approach by people living and working in the watersheds. They also emphasized their commitment to support our efforts to achieve a future for both people and salmon.

“I’m very proud to be here as a part of this panel, to sign this pledge (a resolution), and to continue to work with all of you to do my part to make sure we continue to move in the right direction.”

--Senator Patty Murray

“We’ve got to continue to have the energy for this effort and show people that as region we are committed to this project...that we’re making a difference and that the money should continue to be funded by the federal government—to keep that \$100 million a year in the federal budget.”

--Representative Norm Dicks

“I’m seventy-three years old and it’s forums like this that make me stand up and keep going. Don’t let people divide us up. We need to talk to each other. We need to pull up to the table and have some coffee or tea, and sandwiches so we can better understand each other.”

--Billy Frank, Jr., Chairman, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

“We have to talk about the good things we’re doing because people don’t realize it. We have to focus not just on rewarding good behavior, but we also have to hold those who are not coming along accountable.”

-- Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon

“We (City of Bainbridge Island) are spending dollars, and we’re spending political capital on salmon recovery because we believe we have a role in the Puget Sound estuary to recovery salmon.”

--Mayor Darlene Kordonowy, City of Bainbridge Island

“I commit in the strongest possible words to use all our legal authorities to endorse and support your effort; to give comfort where comfort is due, and frankly as we discussed earlier, to give discomfort where discomfort is due.”

--Bob Lohn, Regional Administrator, NOAA

“People in this region want more fish and clean water. We will know that we have recovered salmon when you can smell them a mile away.”

-- Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg

“We in this room have an opportunity to do something extraordinary—to save a species from expiring, not only on our watch, but on the watch of our great grandchildren... We (King County) are going to move forward, and we’re looking at all of our shoreline habitat to see what kind of new rules we need, what kinds of investments we’ll need to make... We are an extraordinary generation. And we’re going to move so that we no longer have a degraded Puget Sound, and we are going to save those species.”

--King County Executive Ron Sims

What was accomplished at the Summit?

Now that the Summit is over, it’s important to take stock of what was accomplished to help move Puget Sound salmon recovery forward.

- Did we achieve our goals?
- What were the overarching and recurring themes?
- What progress was made and what are the next steps?

One measure of success is whether or not we achieved our goals. On that measure, the Summit was a resounding success.

- **Goal:** *Recognize and celebrate the many successes to date.*
 - Many successes and good works were celebrated and recognized—these were evidenced by the exhibitors, the artists and the dinner at which close to a hundred people were honored for their contributions. During other parts of the Summit, speaker after speaker highlighted specific examples of on-the-ground changes and acts of leadership in their respective jurisdictions and watersheds.
- **Goal:** *Hear about specific agreements and help refine commitments for the future.*
 - Regional and local leaders outlined their commitment to complete the plan and to take specific actions to recover salmon.
- **Goal:** *Discuss innovative projects and incentives that meet the needs of people and salmon.*
 - The five-part video presentation, exhibits, speeches and break-out sessions all highlighted innovative projects, ideas and incentives that showed the benefit of people working and learning together.
- **Goal:** *Help launch the next 10 years of actions to restore Puget Sound watersheds and salmon runs.*

- Participants gained a better sense of the regional issues we must all address and provided their ideas on how to significantly advance them in the final months of completing the recovery plan with the next ten years of actions.

The Summit also met or exceeded two unstated goals as well: to attract lots of people and to inspire all who came. Our hope was to reach out and broaden support for this work among individuals, leaders and groups who have an interest in salmon issues but have not been following them closely in recent years.

600 people came and many of them have told us they left the Summit feeling inspired and re-energized to continue to do the often difficult and challenging work to achieve our mutual goals.

“As with past (Shared Strategy conferences) I really enjoyed hearing the different perspectives from the watersheds and seeing how the work I do is part of the whole. The involvement of the elected officials was significant. You were successful in weaving together the shared interests we have in this process.”

--Sandra Kilroy, Snoqualmie Watershed Coordinator

“Good vibes, good messages and inspirational.”

--Chris Weller, Point No Point Treaty Council

“This was a very well planned function. This process has provided a new, better, more trusting, open, and transparent process for salmon recovery under ESA.”

--Jay Gordon, Dairy Federation

“The Governor’s speech was inspiring and showed her commitment. Good attendance helped create productive hallway conversations. Great sense of community developed around salmon recovery. Great atmosphere created by artwork. General and break-out sessions provided a good overview of the issues and built enthusiasm for the work.”

--Various comments from evaluation forms

What were the Common Themes from Participants?

In reviewing ideas, issues and feedback that emerged through discussions, break-out and general sessions, as well as from written comments, several themes emerged over and over again.

- Tell the compelling stories about what people are doing for salmon and the health of Puget Sound in a way that the general public can understand and appreciate.
- Reach out, listen to people’s interests and concerns, explain how their concerns and salmon recovery can work together, describe the positive future that we see; broaden the base of awareness and support. This will be important for all aspects of salmon recovery work from implementing restoration and protection actions to raising funds for implementation, and for creating readiness for people to come together to problem solve when needed.
- In developing the on-going governance systems and organizing for implementing recovery actions, build on the strengths of the community-based approach and integrate it with the actions needed across the whole region. Include local and regional stakeholders in determining implementation functions, roles and organizational structures.

- Maintain a commitment and focus on salmon recovery, but do it in the context of the health of the entire Puget Sound eco-system -- from the mountain tops to the bottom of the sea. Integrate or coordinate with other water related programs as appropriate to maximize efficiencies and increase the amount and pace of achieving improvements.
- Make sure funds are available to implement the priority items; demonstrate progress is being made in the next ten years; setting ten-year local and regional priorities is important to gain funding commitments along with ways to measure results and accountability; build and maintain broad-based support among constituency groups and the public to help funders allocate money.
- Give credit to people doing the “right things” whether being good land stewards or implementing recovery actions; provide incentives to help more people help salmon.
- Address the tensions inherent in the expressed desires of many to both provide certainty and stability with the recovery plan as well as the need to be flexible over time and across different parts of the region. This related to issues such as regulations, protection measures, site-specific and landowner needs, and adaptive management.

Advancing Key Issues

Following years of work, the separate plans for 14 local river basins plus the nearshore will come together as part of an overall salmon recovery plan for Puget Sound. The Summit brought together federal, state, local and tribal government officials, property owners, environmental, community and business leaders to advance key issues in the plan through small group sessions where they could hear from diverse perspectives and exchange ideas with others in their groups.

Below is a high level overview of the main outcomes from each session and the next steps people agreed should be taken to further advance the issues identified in them.

For detailed notes (taken during the sessions) and the facilitator power point summaries (presented on the morning of the second day), see the section on the Summit web page titled “Break-out Sessions.”

Financing Salmon Recovery: What Will It Take?

Main outcomes

- Participants generally supported the ideas and direction of the platform statement, particularly the need to prioritize at both watershed and regional levels; the need for all levels of government to share responsibility to pay for recovery; agreement to begin by maximizing existing funding sources; and to establish a broad-based leadership group to refine the funding strategy.
- Key suggestions included: identify economic and other benefits of recovery; develop a strategy for funding distribution; clarify who pays for what actions; create a compelling and bold message/story to build support for funding.

Next steps

- March—establish a broad-based leadership group consisting of the Development Committee, Puget Sound tribes, elected officials from each of the fourteen watersheds, business and environmental leaders (WEC).

- March to May—refine the financing strategy. Agree on: sources to meet local and regional priorities, fundraising strategy (what sources when, and who is responsible), and prioritization criteria for allocating portable funds across the region.
- May to June—incorporate funding strategy into recovery plan.

Federal Assurances under the Endangered Species Act

Main outcomes

- Participants felt the platform statement is a good starting point.
- Suggestions included: communicate the value of a regional recovery plan as it relates to assurances; recognize that if we don't move forward in salmon recovery now the federal mandates, costs and liability from third party lawsuits will increase, clarify the types of assurances; provide assurances at multiple levels (programs, watersheds, region); get credit for actions implemented under CWA and GMA; clarify risks and liabilities if we don't engage or achieve goals; consider other assurances besides from federal government.

Next steps

- Early March—platform statement re-written to reflect changes and deliver to watersheds
- March – Detailed assessment of an example watershed plan and the ability to provide tailored assurances at the watershed level.
- March – Provide summary of watershed specific assurances to watershed groups for comment and revision.
- April – Finalize initial approach for assurances.

What is the Role of Hatcheries in Salmon Recovery and in Maintaining Viable & Fishable Salmon Populations

Main outcomes

- Participants agreed that the platform statement is headed in the right direction. They agreed that the integration and segregation framework for hatchery and wild stocks is a useful conceptual tool when used to help identify decisions for stock goals.
- Key suggestions included: A continuum of actions, adjusted over time, should be considered based on stock goals, habitat improvement needs and harvest opportunities. Continue to emphasize the need to improve habitat; hatcheries are not a replacement for habitat. Fund hatchery reforms. Acknowledge that tactically hatcheries will be needed for some time to approach recovery goals in most watersheds.

Next Steps

- Short and long-term: Continue dialogue about coordinating the interactions between hatcheries and habitat improvements.
- Include both hatchery reform and habitat improvement investments in the financing strategy.

Protecting the Habitat We Have and the Habitat We Restore

Main Outcomes

- Participants agreed that protection is necessary and important. The main questions revolved around how do we accommodate population growth, respect property rights and protect existing habitat at the same time? How do we balance regulatory protection tools with voluntary, incentive-based tools?
- Suggestions included: increase amount of voluntary, incentive-based tools; establish standard definitions (e.g. stream types); build agreements on “best available science.”

Next Steps

- March—discuss issues raised at Summit with Development Committee and others.
- April-June-- develop game plan for addressing protection in regional plan.

Uncovering the Mysteries of the Nearshore

Main Outcomes

- Participants agreed that the nearshore plays an important role in salmon recovery and that the time is right to incorporate nearshore actions into the recovery plan. They agreed that the region needs to continue to work together on identifying protection, restoration and research actions. All agreed that protecting healthy habitat is important.
- Suggestions included: the region, inclusive of local governments, needs to decide what, where and when protection, restoration and research activities take place. Urban areas need to begin restoration projects now in addition to protecting healthy habitat, while rural areas need to focus immediately on protecting the habitat they have. Strategies for the nearshore should include a broad array of regulatory, enforcement, incentive and educational tools.

Next Steps

- March-June—complete the regional nearshore chapter for the recovery plan.
- On-going—determine how to prioritize and coordinate regional restoration, protection and research efforts.

Implementing the Recovery Plan—How We Organize Ourselves for Action

Main Outcomes

- Participants agreed with the need to address the issues raised in the platform statement, particularly with the need to build on existing strengths such as the existing relationships, community-based problem solving capability and regional plan integration and coordinated implementation.
- Key suggestions included: refine implementation functions and organize so that authority and responsibility match up. Build consensus on the governance structure(s) to ensure that leadership and coordination will be supported. Ensure salmon recovery is integrated into the larger context of improving the health of Puget Sound.

Next Steps

- April—form a group of trusted and recognized regional leaders (who are above the fray, widely respected, and knowledgeable about the Sound) to work with existing groups in assessing the strengths and needed improvements for implementation and develop options for how we should organize to achieve our goals over the next ten years.
- April-September- Assess current structures and needed functions and priority actions.

- September—Leadership group submits recommendations to appropriate parties.

The Upstream-Downstream Connection: Gaining Knowledge to Strengthen the Relationship (Forests and Fish and Salmon Recovery)

Main Outcomes

- Participants supported the ideas in the platform statement, particularly encouraging coordination of restoration actions such as passage barrier projects between forest lands and the rest of the watershed; helping to provide incentives to small forest landowners; and communicating about monitoring and research needs (who is doing what, where) and sharing lessons learned from those.
- Key suggestions included: build an on-going relationship between the Forests and Fish policy group and the regional salmon recovery implementation organization (TBD).

Next Steps

- Short-term: assist watersheds with language for their recovery chapters on how to incorporate the Forests and Fish rules and describe questions or issues and associated actions not addressed by the rules.
- Long-term: forge an on-going relationship between F&F and salmon recovery policy groups.

Saving Farms & Saving Fish: Creative Problem Solving and Incentive Programs

Main Outcomes

- Participants supported the platform statement's three initiatives: improving farming's bottom line, keeping farmland in farmland, and protecting and restoring fish habitat.
- Key suggestions included: Increase the scientific focus of the paper; make connection between helping farms while helping fish stronger; establish and agree on criteria to measure success; determine what to do about farmers unwilling to participate; and build political support.

Next Steps

- Short and long-term: capitalize on existing partnerships and relationships to develop strategies to implement the ideas in the platform statement.

The Water Quantity Opera: How Can We Write the Happy Ending?

Main Outcomes

- Participants generally supported the three-part strategy of the platform statement, particularly the need to develop a vision and specific goals to advance the science on what salmon need related to flows, to set flows and to improve current conditions.
- Key suggestions included: identify problem areas and prioritize actions to protect and restore flows most significant to fish; make sure tribal interests are addressed; involve salmon recovery planning groups in developing solutions to flow problems; and broaden solutions and incentives (e.g. create a market for reclaimed water).

Next Steps

- February – March – Develop more specific recommendations for connecting in-stream flow rules to salmon recovery and a more aggressive program to improve current flow conditions.
- March-June – Continue pilot effort in the Stillaguamish to identify flow problems.
- May -- raft regional chapter on water quantity strategy for the recovery plan.

“We’re gonna get a plan! And with this plan, you will be at the table...this is a plan for everyone to be happy that their watershed is coming together, that people are involved. I’m a farmer, a small land owner raising timber, whatever I might be, but I’m involved in this watershed.”

--Billy Frank, Jr.

“Certainly restoring salmon to this region is part emotion, part practicality, part politics, and as Mr. Stegner has said, part stubbornness. It is up to us to save the salmon and thus ourselves by working together toward that end. If we can do that, we will have created the ability to work together to be a productive, enriching part of our ecosystem. If that ability to work together can become permanent, then so can our progress toward our shared future.”

--Bill Ruckelshaus