Puget Sound Partnership
2008 Three Year Work Program Update
North Olympic Watersheds

Introduction

In April 2008, each of the fourteen watersheds submitted three-year work program updates on accomplishments, status of actions, and proposed actions that built on the 2006 and 2007 three-year work programs. These work programs are intended to provide a road map for implementation of the salmon recovery plans and to help establish a recovery trajectory for the first three years of implementation. The 2008 Three-Year Work Program Update is the last of the first three years for implementation since the Recovery Plan was finalized in 2005. As salmon recovery in the Puget Sound is now part of the Puget Sound Partnership's legislative responsibility, the Puget Sound Partnership will perform an assessment of the development and review of these work programs in order to be as effective as possible in the coming years.

The feedback below is intended to assist the watershed recovery plan implementation team as it continues to address actions and implementation of their salmon recovery plan. The feedback is also used by the Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team (RITT), the Recovery Council Work Group, and the Puget Sound Partnership to inform the continued development and implementation of the regional work program. This includes advancing on issues such as adaptive management and capacity within the watershed teams. The feedback will also stimulate further discussion of recovery objectives to determine what the best investments are for salmon recovery over the next three years.

<u>Guidance for the 2008 work program updates</u>

Factors to be considered by the Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team in performing its technical review of the Update:

a. Is the Update consistent with the recovery plan hypotheses and strategy for the watershed's work program?
b. Is the sequencing and timing of the action in your updated three-year work program appropriate?
c. Are there significant components missing from the work program? If so, what is missing and what can be done about them in the three-year work program update or at a regional scale?

Watersheds were also provided with the following seven questions, answers to which the Recovery Council Work Group and the Partnership salmon recovery watershed liaisons assessed in performing their policy review of the three-year work program

1. Is the work program consistent with the policy feedback and recommendations from the 2004 documents, Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Volume I, Watershed Profiles – Results section, NMFS Supplement, as well as the regional Nearshore Chapter, where applicable?

2. Is the work program tied to the identified three-year objectives and scheduled to proceed at a pace sufficient to achieve the watershed's ten-year goals?
3. Is the work program narrative tightly linked to individual projects and priorities?
4. Do programmatic actions address protection objectives?
5. To what extent are habitat, harvest and habitat actions integrated and included in the work program?
6. How is the capacity to implement the updated three-year work program addressed?
7. What are the three-year work program objectives and how well does the updated program address them? This includes:
    - Improves the level and certainty of protection of habitat and the 22 existing Chinook populations;
    - Preserves options for achieving the future role of this population in the ESU;
    - Ensures habitat protection and restoration and restores ecosystem processes for Chinook; and
    - Advances the coordinated/integrated management of habitat, harvest, and hatchery.

I. Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Technical Team Review

The RITT reviewed each of the fourteen individual watershed chapter's salmon recovery three-year work program updates in May and early June 2008. Three primary questions were addressed along with additional regional questions. The questions and the RITT's review comments are below.

North Olympic Watersheds

Intro

The North Olympic Peninsula Lead Entity has made considerable improvements from the previous years work plan. Most notably, as requested in previous reviews they provided a comprehensive work plan for WRIAs 17-19 and have developed a detailed and transparent system for prioritizing projects including capitol projects. They also provided additional detail on key instream flow projects and associated water savings. While we realize the integration of these plans and workgroups is a major challenge, a number of additional factors that were pointed out as shortcoming of previous plans still need to be addressed. We address these in our comments below.

1) Is the update consistent with the hypotheses and strategy for the watershed's Recovery Chapter?

The work plan generally appears to be consistent with the goals and strategies of the overall recovery plan, as well as the relevant chapters (Elwha and Dungeness), with an emphasis on upper Elwha Restoration, floodplain and nearshore habitat restoration, and instream flow issues in both Elwha and Dungeness basins. The consistency varies among the different WRIAs with the actions in WRIA 17 and 18 seeming more consistent with the general goals laid out in

Recovery Plan. Restoration actions identified in WRIA 19 appear less in line and focus largely on large woody debris additions rather than Recovery Plan priorities such as habitat protection and restoration of floodplain, riparian and nearshore habitats.

Complicating our review is the fact that the documentation for the actions is still in separate documents for each WRIA or basin. An important next step will be integrating these into an overall plan for the NOPLE region. In addition, the narrative of the three year plan should clearly restate the hypotheses and strategies for the watershed's Recovery Chapter and indicate how the three year plan addresses these.

2) Is the sequencing and timing of the actions in your updated three-year work program appropriate for this third year of implementation of the Puget Sound Recovery Plan?

As stated in previous reviews, this is difficult to judge given that the work plan update didn't include a list of actions that were completed. This information should be included in the work plan table to make it easier to track progress.

The NOPLE did provide a great deal of information about their methodology for prioritizing watersheds and habitat and capital projects. This method is transparent and better than more complex expert based systems such as EDT. However, some additional clarification as to what the different tiers mean and how this fits in or supersedes the numerical ranking is needed.

Given the overall goals of the recovery plan there appears to be a large emphasis on restoration that involves habitat improvement (i.e., LWD placement) rather than restoration of watershed processes in WRIA 18 and 19. This may be appropriate if other actions to restore processes and protect habitat were undertaken in previous years, but that information was not in the work plan update.

3) Are there significant components missing from the work program? If so, what are these and what can be done about them in the three-year work program update or at a regional scale?

There was little information on hatcheries and harvest and how these are being modified to achieve recovery goals. While there are protection measures identified in the plan, it is not clear if these are adequate or only what is currently possible. Also, there are many actions in the three year plan that appear to be fairly small (few kilometers of river) and it is not clear if they are a large enough. Moreover, it is not clear what type of research and monitoring are underway to see if 1) proposed actions are or will have desired effect, and 2) if actions are large enough to have desired change, and 3) if basic assumptions about habitat factors limiting Chinook production are presented. Finally, there appears to be no H integration or steps for adaptive management. Additional documentation of these factors is needed in the workplan.

Partnership Questions

- *Does the Update provide information on the improved level and certainty of protection for habitat and the 22 existing populations*

This is difficult to tell from information provided and, while an improvement over the 2007 Three Year Plan, it doesn't appear to address the level of uncertainty of habitat protection.

- *Does the Update provide information on preserving options for achieving the future role of this population in the ESU?*

This was not specifically addressed in the three year plan though if many of the actions in the plan were implemented it would likely preserve options for achieving recovery in the ESU.

- *Does the Update provide information on ensuring protection and restoration of ecosystem processes for Chinook salmon?*

Yes, though there is an the emphasis on structural treatments in some WRIAs, which does not address the restoration of processes impacted by roads and riparian

- *Does the Update provide a high level of protection and restoration for ecosystem processes for multi-species?*

Yes, though most emphasis on larger rivers which are inhabited by multiple species and structural treatments in smaller streams. However, the range of stream sizes found in the NOPLE area and the treatments across these basins will benefit not only Chinook, but many other species as well. Thus the plan will benefit multiple species, but the emphasis on structural treatments in some streams makes it less certain that processes that benefit multiple species will be protection in those basins.

- *Advance the integrated management of harvest, hatchery, and habitat*

No information on integration of these measures was provided in work plan.

II. Policy Review Comments

The Recovery Council Work Group, an interdisciplinary policy team, evaluated each of the fourteen watershed work plans. In addressing the questions identified above, the interdisciplinary team noted accomplishments and strengths as well as gaps and issues warranting special attention. The team assessed each of the watersheds' three-year work plans, as well as the general themes that applied across the region. The general comments addressing common accomplishments and opportunities for advancement are discussed below as well as specific comments for the Elwha and Dungeness watersheds.

General Comments for 2008 Three-Year Work Program Updates

The 2008 watershed three-year work program updates reflect advancement in terms of project and programmatic identification. Watersheds received capital and non-capital funding through the 2007 biennial budget process, providing a significant increase in resources relative to previous years. Despite these gains, both in funds and in work program, many of the watersheds continue to have gaps, to varying degrees, that were identified in the NOAA supplement as well as the 2006 and 2007 work program reviews. Regional assistance to the watershed planning and implementation teams will be needed to address how best to fill the needs identified below.

Work Plan Accomplishments, Status Updates, Sequencing and Prioritization: As identified in 2007, work program updates are a useful tool for defining progress toward recovery plan goals and ESU-wide recovery. Narratives should continue to be refined to provide a sharper focus on what each watershed expects to accomplish within the three-year period. These narratives should also document what projects have been successfully completed, what programmatic actions are underway, and how successful the watershed has been in implementing the previous year's work plan. This includes documenting how the funds of the previous year are being applied for both on-the-ground projects and capacity within the watersheds.

Work program updates can be strengthened by providing a more focused description of how needed recovery projects and actions are identified, developed, prioritized and sequenced. It is also important that the narrative provide sufficient information to enable watershed teams and regional reviewers to determine whether the pace of implementation is appropriate to achieve each watershed's ten- year goals and if not, to be able to identify the types of changes necessary to get them on pace. This can include information on adaptive management, status updates on actions, and monitoring data.

Integrated Management of Habitat, Harvest and Hatcheries: All Puget Sound watersheds' work programs would benefit from additional efforts and regional resources to achieve H-Integration. Several watersheds advanced their understanding and application of the six steps of H-Integration during 2007 through the strong support of co-manager resources. It is noteworthy that there is a strong connection between full co-manager engagement within the watershed context and significant progress toward salmon recovery implementation. By the end of 2008, it is anticipated all watersheds with Chinook populations will be engaged in actions that reflect an integrated management of habitat, harvest, and hatcheries for Chinook recovery. The Puget Sound Partnership and RITT liaisons will continue to assist those watersheds without independent Chinook populations to integrate management and capacity of the nearshore to sustain natural and hatchery-origin populations of all salmonids. As integration advances, it will be important for each watershed to document how their actions are integrated and advancing in the work programs.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management: At the end of 2007, Shared Strategy staff along with a work group of technical experts completed a regional draft monitoring and adaptive management plan. The completion of this draft plan included a workshop and a gathering of comments on the plan. Since the completion of this draft plan, the Puget Sound Partnership has officially assumed responsibility for completing a regional adaptive management and monitoring plan, including the

monitoring of fish populations and the tracking of implementation and effectiveness of actions identified in the Chinook Recovery Plan. At the regional scale, several actions have been initiated to advance adaptive management, including: 1) a pilot program directed at developing an implementation tracking system at both the watershed and regional scale; 2) a status and trends approach for Washington State, which includes directed resources for the Puget Sound; and 3) an accountability system to identify and hold responsible the appropriate entities at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.

Some watersheds have already begun developing their own monitoring and adaptive management frameworks and initial monitoring tasks. The regional team working on the diverse aspects of adaptive management will coordinate with those watersheds to ensure that the monitoring and adaptive management plans are consistent and complementary. During this transitional time, the Puget Sound Partnership staff, the work group, and the RITT acknowledge that they play an important role in providing assistance to all of the Puget Sound watersheds to advance in their development, refinement, and implementation of an adaptive management and monitoring approach. This is important in order to enable watersheds and the region to assess progress in reducing uncertainties in the population and ESU-wide recovery.

Protecting and restoring ecosystem processes for Chinook and other species by preserving options and addressing threats are critical components of recovery planning both at the local and regional scale. The Chinook Recovery Plan is predicated on the assumption that existing habitat will be protected. Regional work to assess this assumption and to strengthen the regulatory framework is underway through the San Juan Initiative and through the Action Agenda work of the Puget Sound Partnership. Initial findings and recommendations from the San Juan Initiative are expected by the end of 2008. The Action Agenda will be completed by December 2008.

Recovery actions are continuing to become more complex and expensive. All watersheds are challenged in terms of their capacity to acquire land in order to secure future options and to implement large-scale, multi-year projects. It will be important for watersheds to coordinate and partner with other groups, organizations, and agencies locally and regionally to increase capacity and enhance their ability to successfully identify and implement habitat acquisition and restoration efforts. Increased capacity for the key participants in watershed recovery efforts is essential to successfully implement their recovery chapters and protect and restore the ecosystem processes that Chinook and other species require. The Puget Sound Partnership staff and the work group members acknowledge that additional efforts will be needed at the regional scale to assist in securing on-going resources for the watershed groups to protect and restore ecosystem processes.

Water quality and Water quantity: Water quality and water quantity will continue to be important issues for the long-term recovery of all populations within the ESU.

Work on water quality issues is associated with both urban and rural sources. The authority to address these sources is within the purview of the Washington State Department of Ecology and is primarily being addressed through the NPDES permit program, the establishment of TMDLs under the Clean Water Act, and the Forest Practice Rules. It is important to apply these programs and resources in a manner that supports the watershed groups and advances the recovery of

salmon in their areas. It is recognized that emerging water quality threats to the health of Puget Sound (e.g. endocrine disruptors) are not adequately addressed under current regulatory regimes and significant new resources are needed to identify and resolve these threats. Watersheds continue to play an important role in ensuring that local jurisdictions implementing these permits adopt water quality programs that include actions and regulations that protect and enhance water quality in rivers and streams critical for salmon recovery.

Work on water quantity issues is also important at both the regional and local watershed scale. At the regional level, the Water Quantity Sub-Committee, coordinated by the Washington State Department of Ecology, is working on advancing the science on instream flows and viable salmon populations (VSP). In May of 2008, the Water Quantity Sub-Committee held an instream flow and VSP workshop to discuss the current state of instream flow/VSP science and flow assessment tools, and to identify and develop a future science agenda for instream flow/VSP work over the next five to 10 years. The workshop also focused on trying to determine the appropriate scale for flow assessment tools and VSP concepts. Additionally, the impacts of climate change will need to be assessed and integrated into salmon recovery planning on a regional scale.

Locally, watershed groups can help move these issues forward in a manner that reflects their priorities for salmon recovery. Each watershed should consider (1) advocating for appropriate instream flow rules in places where they are needed; and (2) working with the Department of Ecology to begin creating protection and enhancement programs (PEPs) in areas where instream flows hinder the recovery of fish populations.

The RITT and the Puget Sound Partnership liaisons will continue to assist watersheds in advancing water quantity and water quality actions.

Nearshore Habitats and Processes: There continues to be a need to advance our understanding of nearshore habitats and processes associated with Chinook recovery. Several nearshore fish presence assessments were funded through the 2007 biennial budget and SRFB round. These assessments are a crucial step in advancing our knowledge of salmonid use of the nearshore and nearshore processes. The Puget Sound Partnership and RITT liaisons recognize the need to support these watersheds in translating the assessments into protection and restoration projects. The Puget Sound Partnership and the work group also acknowledge that we need to increase the scientific certainty regarding sequencing and prioritizing which nearshore areas to protect across the Puget Sound. Finally, we need to develop a standardized framework to not only monitor nearshore fish presence, but to also assess fish utilization of those areas.

Multi-species planning: The Puget Sound Steelhead were listed in May 2007 and a NOAA-appointed Technical Review Team (TRT) is working to define the population and habitat criteria for the listing. This information is anticipated to be available in March 2009. The Puget Sound watersheds will play an instrumental role in sequencing and prioritizing actions across multiple species in order to gain the highest ecosystem benefit. NOAA, the co-managers, and the watersheds are currently discussing options for Puget Sound Steelhead recovery planning. It is expected that the planning process will be defined by the end of 2008. Resources are needed to support the watersheds in steelhead planning over the next several years.

North Olympic Watersheds-Specific Comments

The 2008 Work Program demonstrates a significant effort coordinated through the North Olympic Peninsula Lead Entity to update and refine the actions associated with implementation of the Recovery Plan.

Significant Advancements

- Advancement on prioritizing and sequencing works and tasks (including the Lower Dungeness Dikes Setback, the Lower Dungeness Channel Remeandering and Engineered Log Jams, and Elwha Engineered Log Jams);
- Clarification on non-capital needs;
- Coordination with the Hood Canal Coordinating Council for Summer Chum actions;
- Progress on projects in all priority areas (Dungeness, Elwha, nearshore);
- Significant effort to advance coordination across the watersheds, along with reporting and synthesis of work for the different geographic areas;
- Effort to advance multi-species projects that benefit Chinook as well as other salmonids;
- Clear project descriptions, including phasing and reasoning for project ranking;
- Continued refinement on protection actions, acquisition, regulatory, and stewardship actions.

Issues Needing Advancement

- Although significant work and advancement has occurred across the North Olympic Peninsula, continued effort is needed to coordinate among the different watersheds and strengthen the prioritization of actions across these watersheds.
- Continued need for funding and resources to advance implementation of recovery plan, including support for existing local, state, federal, and tribal entities to support NOPLE in implementation of recovery;
- Documentation of actions across the different components of the recovery plan.