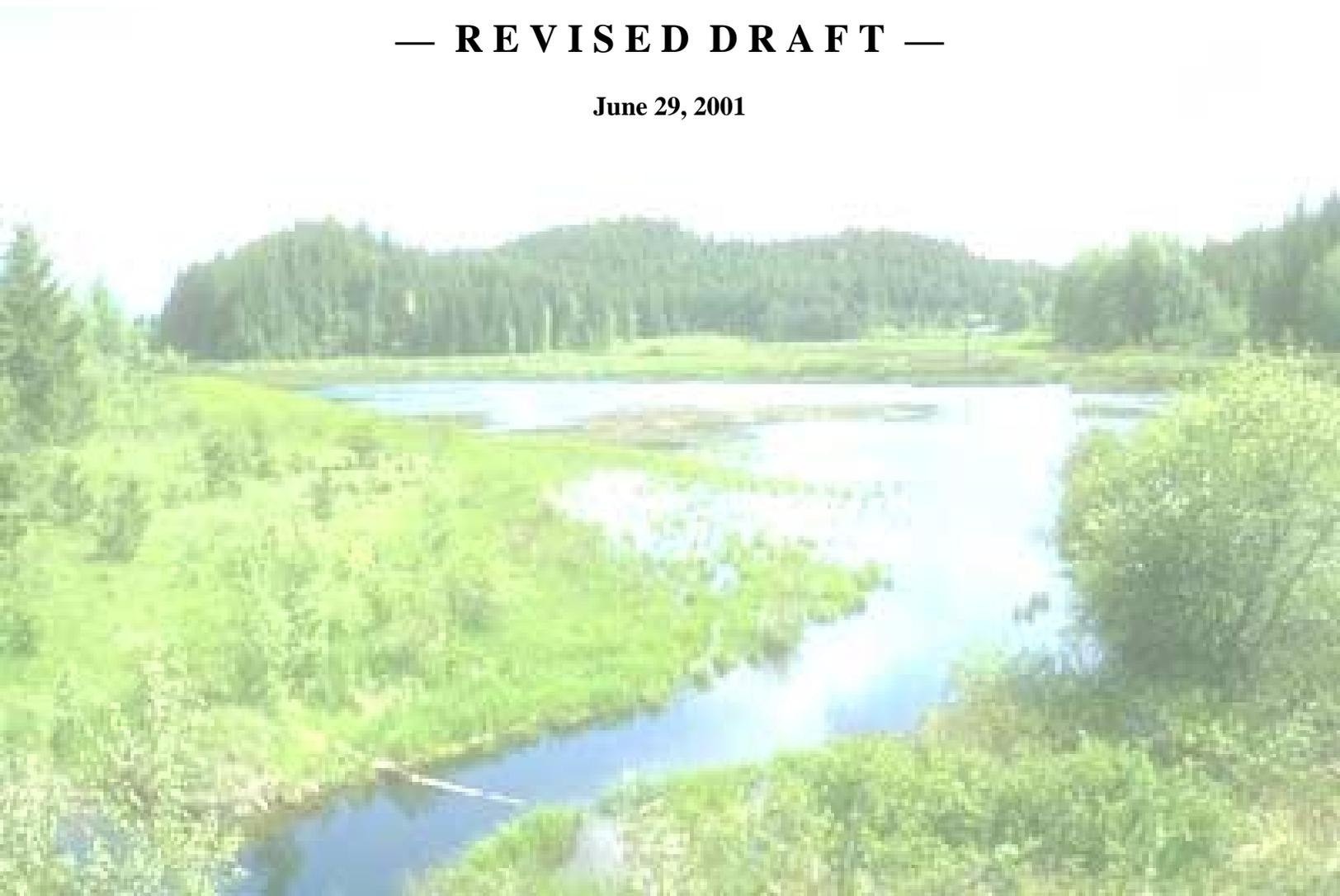


A Shared Strategy For Recovery of Salmon In Puget Sound

— REVISED DRAFT —

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GUIDE TO SHARED STRATEGY

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This “Shared Strategy” is a proposal to people working to save salmon in the Puget Sound region on how to combine our efforts and enhance our ability to be successful. It was developed following a meeting at Port Ludlow in the fall of 1999 of over 150 salmon leaders from throughout Puget Sound. At the Port Ludlow meeting a group representing tribes, federal, state, and local government agreed to develop this Shared Strategy to facilitate a coordinated regional approach to salmon recovery.

The proposed strategy is to:

- **Develop a collaborative Recovery Plan in two and one-half years that is guided by clear goals and meets our broad interests for salmon in Puget Sound.**
- **Establish an organizational structure to link recovery efforts, complete a recovery plan, and guide its implementation.**
- **Identify and support important ongoing near-term efforts to protect Puget Sound salmon.**

This Shared Strategy has been revised to address comments from various public and private organizations and individuals throughout Puget Sound. A second Port Ludlow gathering was held in January 2001. Over 200 people attended representing a broad diversity of interests. The Strategy was discussed in detail and the signers of this document were encouraged to move forward and initiate the Strategy. We view the Strategy as an iterative document rather than a rigid plan, and continue to invite suggestions for its improvement. In the end, of course, successful recovery means returning healthy levels of wild salmon to Puget Sound. Please help us develop and implement a Shared Strategy that best ensures our success. Your comments and questions should be directed to Gail Gatton at (206) 447-1805 or Jim Kramer at (206) 691-3370. You may also visit our website at <http://www.sharedsalmonstrategy.org>.

INTRODUCTION

Federal, tribal, state, and local leaders are not new to the salmon crisis. Over the past two decades, in response to dwindling populations and a commitment to sustainable fisheries, treaty Indian tribes and Washington state have worked together to reduce harvest of Puget Sound salmon by as much as 90 percent. Local governments have also made strides to protect salmon through land use, storm water, and growth management authorities. More recently, spurred by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings and new legal requirements, local governments have begun to work with other stakeholders in their watersheds to develop comprehensive strategies that meet the needs of people and salmon. Several large landowners and industry sectors are also stepping forward to pioneer better ways to achieve business objectives while protecting and restoring salmon habitat. But as the complexity and number of processes

increase, as more and more levels of government and private landowners launch salmon related initiatives, recovery efforts are missing important opportunities for collaboration and increased efficiency, risking redundancy, confusion, and erosion of public support.

Puget Sound salmon recovery leaders believe that a strategy is needed to link our individual efforts to protect and restore salmon runs. The growing list of salmon recovery efforts includes the development of new shoreline management guidelines, updates to Critical Areas Ordinances under the Growth Management Act, and the Tri-County effort. Efforts also include recovery efforts occurring in local watersheds or for listed stocks such as the Hood Canal - Strait of Juan de Fuca summer chum, hatchery reform activities, and comprehensive harvest management planning. The Shared Strategy is not designed to add to this list; rather, the Strategy is intended to connect these and other efforts through common goals and a clear plan for achieving them. The Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) and the Puget Sound tribes, as co-managers of salmon fisheries, are working to develop goals for all Puget Sound salmon. At the same time, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has initiated a process to set goals for those Puget Sound salmon runs currently listed under the Endangered Species Act. This Shared Strategy integrates federal, tribal, and state goal setting processes.

A successful Shared Strategy must also establish a collaborative process to identify the best means to achieve recovery goals once established. The Strategy does this by ensuring that local governments, watershed and marine waters groups, and private sector representatives work together with tribal, state, and federal agencies to develop a recovery plan for Puget Sound. While the Shared Strategy does not diminish federal agencies, tribes, and state authorities to establish recovery goals for the Puget Sound, it links local governments, watershed groups, and others to the critical process of identifying how to achieve these goals. By establishing a forum to discuss on-the-ground watershed and marine waters efforts and important policy initiatives, the Strategy helps move us together along the same road to recovery.

NMFS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are responsible for developing a recovery plan for ESA-listed Puget Sound salmon and bull trout, respectively. NMFS and USFWS also have a trust responsibility to the tribes. The Services believe the Shared Strategy is both an effective process for developing a recovery plan and an efficient means to involve those essential to its success. They are committed to participating as full partners so long as the ESA is satisfied and the process and its results are consistent with treaty rights and the federal trust responsibility to tribes. As co-managers, treaty Indian tribes are committed to the return of salmon stocks to a level that meets treaty rights.

The relationship between federal, tribal, and state resource managers is complex. So too is the relationship between Indian treaty rights and the state and federal laws designed to protect and recover salmon. The exact parameters of these relationships have not been clearly defined in all instances. Notwithstanding these areas of uncertainty, participating tribes, the state, the federal agencies and others in the Puget Sound region are committed to working together to protect and enhance salmon runs. At the same time, each participant in the Shared Strategy understands that this collaborative effort is not intended to diminish, expand, or define the rights of any participant. The tribes, as well as the other parties, reserve the right to seek different or additional measures viewed as necessary to carry out treaty promises and/or effect compliance with other state or federal laws.

The proposed Strategy focuses on the Puget Sound basin, including its marine waters and individual watersheds, and groups of Puget Sound fish whose genetic, ecological, and life histories distinguish them from other groups within their species. The initial goal setting process of the Strategy focuses on Puget Sound species listed under the Endangered Species Act: Puget Sound chinook, Hood Canal summer chum and bull trout. The Shared Strategy will not only work to promote the recovery of these species, it will also promote and protect the continued health of thriving stocks to avoid further ESA listings. It will

address broad biological needs by supporting an ecosystem-based approach to salmon recovery, an approach that addresses the needs of salmon through protections and improvements to the land and water they need to survive. The Strategy will provide predictability and consistency when applied across Puget Sound, and will address the social, economic, and cultural implications of recovery.

To achieve the region's overall goal of self-sustaining harvestable Puget Sound salmon, the Shared Strategy sets forth: (1) a step-by-step approach to establish recovery goals and identify actions to achieve those goals through a comprehensive recovery plan; (2) a means to help guide near term actions to protect salmon while the recovery plan is under development; and (3) an initial structure to organize and implement the Shared Strategy effort.

REGIONAL RECOVERY PLANNING: SETTING GOALS, IDENTIFYING ACTIONS, AND MAKING COMMITMENTS TO ACHIEVE THEM

The primary intent of the Shared Strategy is to establish a collaborative process for developing a recovery plan for Puget Sound salmon that achieves the following objectives:

- The recovery and maintenance of an abundance of naturally spawning salmon at self-sustaining, harvestable levels;
- The broad distribution of naturally spawning salmon across the Puget Sound region; and
- Genetic diversity of salmon at levels consistent with natural evolutionary patterns.

To be useful, these broad objectives must be translated into specific goals for each watershed and for the Puget Sound basin. In addition, we must gain a more complete understanding of how salmon interact with their habitats and the impact of humans on this relationship. This requires an ongoing scientific endeavor that will reduce – but not eliminate – uncertainty in planning for recovery. The recovery plan must be conservatively drawn in favor of protecting fish while embracing an adaptive management approach to ensure it improves with growing knowledge and experience.

Outlined below is a process to build and implement a recovery plan for Puget Sound salmon over the next two and one-half years. Each step includes a series of technical and policy issues that must be addressed along the way. Effective communication is essential, as each step in the process will require interaction between science and policy. The science underlying salmon recovery is rapidly evolving and requires a process that is both iterative and able to accommodate new information. Decision makers may need to alter existing policies and develop new ones as the necessary course of action becomes clearer through the Shared Strategy process.

New forums for dialogue must be created to support the work in the most efficient and effective manner. There is no single group or organization capable of achieving salmon recovery in Puget Sound. Rather, a regional effort guided by a Shared Strategy for developing and implementing a recovery plan is critical to restoring the fish back to healthy levels. Leadership for the effort must be shared, and the organization itself must contain the many groups and individuals that represent the broad diversity of interests working to save salmon in Puget Sound. The Shared Strategy's success depends upon commitments from key leaders to produce substantive outcomes on schedule. While all factors affecting the timeline cannot be known and slippage may occur due to unforeseen events, delays must be the exception rather than the rule; milestones are essential to move the process along and to ensure accountability and efficiency. The steps are linear, but they represent a continuum of activities that bridge across the steps and will

incrementally build the decisions necessary for the recovery plan. As the process unfolds, there must be continuous interplay between local watershed, marine, and Puget Sound-wide focus. Many activities for each step will continue into the future and will depend upon new information to improve the process.

Step 1: Identify the Contents of a Recovery Plan, Inventory Existing Efforts, and Determine Gaps.

The first step in developing a recovery plan for Puget Sound salmon is to outline the essential elements of the plan. For salmon, NMFS is required to develop a recovery plan under the ESA, a requirement that the Shared Strategy will meet while addressing the broader needs of ESA listed and non-listed salmon in Puget Sound. A group of technical and policy experts representing various ongoing activities is outlining the recovery plan. The group includes the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Washington, Puget Sound tribes, local governments, watershed councils, and marine groups. This work is underway and has produced a draft that was distributed for comment in January 2001. A revised draft will be distributed for comment in July 2001.

There are several important salmon-related planning activities occurring in the region, including watershed habitat planning, water resource planning, hatchery reform, harvest management, Tri-County ESA and Hood Canal Coordinating Council planning, Puget Sound Technical Review Team, and bull trout recovery. These and other planning, conservation, and restoration efforts must be identified and assessed to determine how and to what extent each effort contributes to the objectives of the comprehensive recovery plan. This process has begun and will continue throughout the development and implementation of the recovery plan.

Once we understand the essential elements of a recovery plan and the extent of ongoing efforts, it will be possible to identify components of recovery that require more attention. Identifying these gaps will allow for an opportunity to coordinate and direct the measures needed to fill the gaps, such as congressional funding requests or legislation. This task is ongoing throughout the Shared Strategy. An initial draft will be completed in late summer of 2001.

Deliverables and Schedule:

- Annotated table of contents for a recovery plan – July 2001.
- Matrix of existing efforts – August 2001.
- Analysis of gaps in recovery planning – September 2001.

Step 2: Identify Interim Recovery Goals for Each Watershed. The purpose of this step is to develop a single set of recovery goals for each watershed in Puget Sound, goals that will be “interim” in the sense that they will undergo refinement as the recovery planning and implementation processes are illuminated by more complete information. The scientific and policy justifications underlying recovery goals for each watershed will be clearly stated. The primary and complementary goal-setting efforts in the Puget Sound region — those being conducted by the state and tribes and those by the TRTs and the USFWS — will contribute to a single set of goals for each watershed. In this step, the state, tribes, and the Services will work together to ensure that the interim goals for each watershed are clearly explained and documented. Clearly documented interim goals will enable participants to provide input to the state, tribes, and the Services as goals and their bases are refined through Steps 3-5 in the Shared Strategy process.

This step also will involve developing a means by which watersheds can translate goals set at the population scale to those scales relevant to planning efforts within and across watersheds. The goal-setting exercise will involve a technical estimate of historic and current characteristics of salmon populations in Puget Sound watersheds, and of the abundance, productivity, diversity and spatial

distribution necessary to achieve self-sustaining, naturally spawning salmon. Interim recovery goals developed in Step 2 will be based in part on developing connections between habitat conditions and fish productivity, connections that will help us measure the individual and cumulative effects of our actions.

This step will result in a set of clearly documented, interim goals for some initial watersheds by October 2001, with the rest being produced by the end of the year. The goals and their bases will be reviewed and refined by the state, tribes, and the Services through the processes described in Steps 4 and 5. Scientific or policy concerns raised by interim goals will be addressed through Steps 3 and 4.

Deliverables and Schedule:

Documented interim goals for watersheds – October – December 2001.

Joint report from state, tribes, and TRT that merges information and presents goals – October 2001.

Step 3: Begin to Identify the Actions Necessary to Achieve Recovery Goals. The task of integrating habitat, harvest, and hatchery activities will require effective communication and interaction among the appropriate public and private sector representatives responsible for these activities in each watershed and the marine environment. Local governments, watershed groups, and marine groups must work with the state, tribes, and the Services to identify scientific or policy issues raised by the interim recovery goals and collaborate on the next three steps to identify the actions necessary to attain them.

Early understanding of what is needed and what is attainable will help identify the level of effort necessary to achieve goals for each watershed and for the entire Puget Sound. In each watershed, existing or newly formed groups will need to assess the implications of the goals and identify the actions necessary to achieve them. Considerations for the watersheds include, among other things, the biological needs of fish and the social, economic, and cultural implications of both attaining – and not attaining – goals for their recovery. One of the benefits of participation in the Shared Strategy will be a coordinated effort to develop a common approach to this task. The amount of work needed from each watershed will vary depending on the starting point in any given watershed. In watersheds where there is inadequate representation, federal agencies with mandated responsibilities will identify required actions.

As Step 3 proceeds, several options may surface that lead to restoration of individual watersheds' populations. Step 3 will conclude with an understanding of where the goals can be easily met and where it will be more difficult to achieve them. It will also improve our understanding of the relationships between numbers of fish and the ability of specific actions to support them through management of habitat, harvest, and hatcheries.

Deliverables and Schedule:

Meetings with existing watershed groups – April – October 2001.

Watershed guidelines for recovery plan – October 2001.

Complete watershed review of goals and actions – December 2002.

Step 4: Identify and Evaluate Regional Recovery Options. With Step 4, the work will broaden to a regional scale to determine which set of options in individual watersheds will add up to recovery at the regional scale, the scale at which chinook salmon and bull trout are listed under the ESA. To ensure regional-scale success and to implement efficiencies, we must determine the level of assistance the Puget Sound region is willing to provide individual watersheds to meet their specific goals.

As part of Step 4 work, participants in the process will evaluate, from a regional perspective, watershed options developed during Step 3 to determine where efficiencies can lead us to a regional-scale plan that meets not only the needs of fish at the watershed level, but also makes sense in a regional salmon population context. Also, Step 4 supports policy makers and scientists working in harvest, hatcheries, and habitat planning as they identify coordinated approaches that facilitate local and regional attainment of the goals. Consistent with treaty rights, this step will also address any conflicts between harvest, hatchery, and habitat management practices for meeting the goals. Watersheds, marine groups, and all governments will need a forum at which to exchange information, analyze options, link local recovery actions with recovery goals, and gain the support necessary to succeed – the Shared Strategy organization, outlined below, will provide such a forum by coordinating and facilitating that exchange. This step will result in regional consensus on the best means of supporting watershed, Puget Sound marine, and region-wide efforts to meet desired goals.

Deliverables and Schedule:

Draft Plan outlining all options to achieve recovery – March 2003.

Step 5: Commit to Watershed and Regional Recovery Goals and the Actions Necessary to Achieve Them, and Monitor Results. The objective of Step 5 is to choose a recovery strategy for Puget Sound from among the options developed in Step 4. Tribes, the state, NMFS, and USFWS will finalize an initial set of recovery goals for this stage of recovery planning, consistent with treaty rights and the ESA, through collaboration with local governments and watershed groups outlined in Steps 3 and 4. Goals will be finalized at the individual watershed level and across the Puget Sound. Achieving the combination of watershed and marine characteristics needed for recovery will involve difficult decisions about habitat, harvest, and hatchery actions. Technical support from the TRT, tribal fisheries experts, WDFW, and watershed groups will be necessary to evaluate the anticipated results of actions. Coordination of the scientific review and analysis will be a function of the Shared Strategy organization.

The goals and the actions necessary to achieve them will comprise the recovery plan that will guide the region's efforts. All parties responsible for implementing the plan must help define and commit to the actions they are responsible for implementing. Once the goals and actions to meet them have been established, we must ensure that we follow through on our commitments and produce the desired results. Adjustments will be made as we implement the recovery plan, an adaptive management approach that depends upon our capacity to monitor and evaluate the goals and efforts to achieve them at multiple levels of the effort. Monitoring and evaluation of programs is necessary to ensure that specific actions are implemented in the right manner and that they are achieving the right outcomes for fish. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems for each watershed, the marine areas, and the whole region are also required to ensure our collective efforts add up to recovery.

This step must result in a firm timeline for implementation and a final set of recommendations in a recovery plan that can be considered for formal adoption by all the necessary parties. When this step is completed, the Services will publish the results as a proposed Recovery Plan for listed stocks and proceed with its promulgation of public hearings.

Deliverables and Schedule:

Finalize interim recovery goals for all watersheds – December 2003.
Development of a monitoring and evaluation program – 2003.
An agreed-upon Recovery Plan – December 2003.

NEAR TERM ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND RECOVER FISH

While a recovery plan is critical to long-term planning and success, there is no reason to wait for its development to begin recovering Puget Sound salmon. Indeed, many actions are currently underway and others will be taken to reverse some of the more significant harmful impacts on fish. These actions are occurring (or need to occur) in five critical areas: (1) habitat protection and restoration, (2) improvements in harvest management practices, (3) hatchery reform, (4) enforcement, and (5) federal rules implementing the ESA. Over the next two years, actions in these areas must protect and improve the base level of wild populations that now exist and the habitat conditions on which they depend. The strongholds of key habitats and populations in Puget Sound must be immediately secured if we are to be successful in rebuilding salmon populations over the long-term.

A Shared Strategy can help the region in these five areas by identifying where common approaches would facilitate local actions. It can also help coordinate and provide policy and technical support for actions that need to occur across watersheds, and can establish a communications strategy to raise awareness, support, and increase individual and collective responsibility and stewardship. Resource managers must work across each element of recovery – habitat, harvest, and hatchery management – to ensure their actions are complementary. The Shared Strategy provides a forum to facilitate this coordination.

The Shared Strategy can provide a forum to discuss salmon recovery needs in each of these areas, including how practices could be improved to advance the recovery plan. Where there is common agreement, guidelines will be developed and supported by federal agencies in their implementation of the ESA.

Habitat Protection and Restoration. An impressive number of habitat protection and restoration actions have already been undertaken, and more are in the planning stages. Through a Shared Strategy, we can inform each other of these and other contemplated changes and develop a better sense of the cumulative results of policy decisions. We can also identify elements of land use better addressed in a comprehensive manner rather than jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction. This region-wide interaction should improve the overall results for fish and people, and will raise awareness of both the positive and negative impacts of land use activities on salmon habitat.

Land Use: Local governments are reviewing land use practices that govern impacts to salmon habitats in response to state initiatives to improve shoreline management guidelines and Growth Management implementation. In addition, many watersheds in Puget Sound have initiated water resource planning processes that have the potential to address critical salmon recovery issues.

Federal actions also encourage changes in land use regulations. The July 2000 rule issued by NMFS under section 4(d) of the ESA prohibits anyone from taking a listed salmon or steelhead, *except* in cases where the take is associated with an approved program. The 4(d) rule approves some specific existing state and local programs, and creates a means for NMFS to approve additional programs if they meet certain standards set out in the rule. Thus, the 4(d) rule impacts land use by encouraging development of conservation actions and criteria at the program level rather than on a case-by-case basis. In particular, with appropriate safeguards, municipal, residential, commercial and industrial (MRCI) development and redevelopment can be specifically tailored to minimize impacts on listed fish to the extent that additional federal protections would not be needed to conserve the listed ESU. Through limit 8 of the 4(d) rule, NMFS identifies a mechanism whereby cities, counties, and regional governments can ensure that MRCI development and redevelopment authorized within those areas are consistent with ESA

requirements. The many partners who make up the Tri-County ESA Response Effort and other local governments are working to develop recovery plans that demonstrate substantial commitment to protect and restore habitat for threatened species and also meet the conservation standards of the 4(d) rule.

Adequate water for fish: Fish need cool, clean water in adequate amounts and at the right time. Stream flows that are either too high or too low to sustain healthy production levels are among the many factors contributing to the poor status of fish stocks. There are eight watersheds in the Puget Sound region where the streams and rivers are suffering from over-appropriation conditions. This means that more water is being withdrawn from these watersheds, especially in late summer and early fall when flows are naturally low and when fish need water for migration, spawning, or rearing. In order to succeed at restoring and maintaining fish stocks, we need to provide adequate amounts of water to protect and restore fish habitat.

Clean water for fish: Within the Puget Sound Basin, water quality is having a detrimental effect on salmon populations and their habitat. Sources contributing to these water quality problems are diverse in terms of pollutant type and extent. Water quality degradation has been documented in numerous parts of the basin. Efforts are underway to address this current degradation, particularly at the local level. In addition, the Washington Department of Ecology is developing numerous Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) required by the federal Clean Water Act.

At the same time, degradation is expanding as a factor of population growth. Rapid urbanization is resulting in water quality degradation that is orders of magnitude greater than caused by other land uses such as forestry and agriculture. While there is an obvious need and great pressure to address currently degraded streams throughout the basin, the cost and complexity of restoring many of these systems is daunting. Conservation and protection of functioning systems should be a near term focus of salmon populations and their habitat.

Hydroelectric power dams and other major projects: The contribution that can be made to salmon recovery from hydroelectric dams and other major projects will need to be examined in the context of recovery planning. These include federal hydroelectric dams, major water supply and flood control dams, and all dams that are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). In Puget Sound, these include the Howard Hanson Dam, Mud Mountain Dam, and Ballard Locks and Dam, as well as the Goldsborough Dam, Landsburg Dam, and Tacoma's Pipeline 1 Dam.

Dams regulated by FERC undergo periodic license renewal, a process that occurs every 35 to 50 years and provides opportunities to improve conditions for fish. FERC is required to consider not only the power generation potential of a river, but also give equal consideration to energy conservation, protection of fish and wildlife, protection of recreational opportunities, and preservation of other aspects of environmental quality. (For a list of the projects scheduled for major review in the next 10 years in the Puget Sound region, please visit the Shared Strategy's website at www.sharedsalmonstrategy.org.)

The review mechanism on the federal, water supply, and flood control dams is less structured. There is no periodic re-license as there is for FERC projects, so changes in operations or mitigation requirements are opportunistically made when there is a major reconstruction or amendment to the project, or through agency, public, or political pressure.

The vast majority of dams in the Puget Sound region are not included in a FERC re-licensing or other major review processes. The salmon related impacts (bull trout included) of these smaller dams must be considered in context with the other factors affecting salmon recovery in each Puget Sound watershed.

Restoration Projects: Over the next three years, while the recovery plan is under development, several hundred projects will be undertaken to preserve and restore important habitats around Puget Sound. As we move through the Shared Strategy process and improve our knowledge of watersheds and the needs of the fish, there is more assurance that the projects we approve are the ones most likely to contribute to recovery. Regional and state funding organizations like the Salmon Recovery Funding Board should encourage and support watershed and regional priorities that lead to wise project investments throughout Puget Sound. The Shared Strategy can provide a forum for identifying where there is regional consensus on project funding priorities.

Harvest Management. Harvest practices have changed dramatically, and will continue to evolve and be implemented in a manner that is consistent with salmon and bull trout recovery. Plans for tribal and non-tribal harvest in Puget Sound and off the Washington coast are developed annually with NMFS, and submitted by the State and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to NMFS for formal consultation. Also, a long-term comprehensive plan for management of Puget Sound chinook salmon was submitted to NMFS in February 2001 for consideration under the 4(d) rule. Additional efforts should be undertaken to make harvest management decisions and processes more widely understood and accessible to the general public.

Hatchery Reform. There are over thirty-three artificial production programs for chinook salmon in Puget Sound, all of which play an important role in support of the sport and commercial fishing economy and in meeting tribal treaty harvest obligations, as well as supporting recovery efforts. A hatchery reform process is underway to better understand how the state's hatchery system can be improved to help recover and conserve naturally spawning populations and support sustainable fisheries. Also, in response to the NMFS 4(d) rule, thirty-three Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs) have been submitted by the state and tribes to NMFS, providing assessments of risk to wild Puget Sound chinook populations caused by hatchery operations. During the next two years, hatchery managers will develop plans for addressing risks identified in the HGMPs, and achieving the comprehensive objectives of the reform project.

Enforcement. There are many laws to protect salmon and salmon habitat in Puget Sound. It will be difficult to stimulate more actions from landowners and others unless current laws are implemented fairly and effectively. Enforcement must occur that supports common regional goals and strategies. In addition, there must be regional support for the institutional capacity and funding to do the job. Working together in a Shared Strategy we can identify important enforcement actions and provide support to step-up current efforts.

ESA Implementation. NMFS and USFWS have begun the implementation of ESA rules. These efforts will help focus recovery actions as they pass through the lens of federal law. The federal agencies must work with the region to establish effective and clear standards and support an orderly process that concentrates efforts on the most important issues. This concentration is especially critical during the next two years while we develop a regional recovery plan and public support for it. Working in partnership with others in the region, federal agencies can improve their implementation of the ESA by finding ways to facilitate actions that are beneficial to fish and fish habitat.

IMPLEMENTING THE SHARED STRATEGY: STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Goal

Create an organization capable of coordinating and supporting ongoing implementation of the regional recovery effort advocated through the Shared Strategy.

The Shared Strategy represents an ambitious effort on an aggressive timeline. To succeed, we need strong leadership, broad-based support, and adequate funding for those watershed-based, marine, and regional efforts needed to support the Strategy. An ad hoc steering committee, representing the diversity of groups working on salmon recovery, helped identify some of the key functions that such a regional organization will need to perform. These are outlined below and then followed by descriptions of how the work could be carried out and how such an entity will be initially organized.

1. Link existing federal, state, and tribal programs at the regional level

Many programs are key to recovery efforts and each program includes initiatives (e.g., hatchery reform, growth management and water quantity planning) and on-going activities (e.g., habitat restoration projects and watershed planning) that must be coordinated to insure timely actions that are integrated at the watershed, marine, and regional levels. In order for the Shared Strategy to be successful we must find ways to coordinate the work demands and results from these important programs. Without effective coordination, people working at the watershed level and in local governments will not have the time to spend on the Strategy. People involved in these programs and on-going efforts could benefit from participating in the objectives of the Shared Strategy by providing access to critical data bases, use common watershed assessment tools and monitoring protocols, synchronize specific products and schedules needed to develop a recovery plan.

2. Foster participation of watershed groups and local jurisdictions

The second key function of the Shared Strategy organization is to provide support for recovery activities by watershed groups and local jurisdictions. One of the primary assumptions of the Shared Strategy is that work in the watersheds across Puget Sound will serve as a fundamental building block for a recovery plan and its successful implementation. A process is already underway to identify goals for each watershed. The anticipated role of the watershed groups and local jurisdictions will be to work with these goals to determine how to make them a reality and how they may need to be adjusted to address issues. There are currently groups or organizations working on watershed and marine concerns across Puget Sound. Few, if any of these groups, have the full capacity or mission to be a focal point for all recovery in their area and provide a forum to facilitate discussions on habitat, harvest, and hatcheries. During the next few months it will be essential that existing groups discuss this role and decide if they are able to serve as the focal point in their area. Groups and local governments currently working on 2496 and 2514 implementation will be important to engage as soon as possible.

3. Provide coordination to the regional effort

The third key function of the organization will be to work with stakeholders across the region to orchestrate the five steps proposed for recovery planning and keep the effort focused on developing a recovery plan for the region. There will necessarily be a great deal of dialogue and debate around the recovery plan and there is currently no single entity capable of overseeing the regional effort. A vehicle to provide coordination that is empowered by those working on recovery at the local and regional level can help guide this debate and affirm regional direction and decisions.

Creation and purpose of the organization

The Puget Sound Salmon Forum, a nonprofit organization, was recently created to help implement the Shared Strategy for Recovery of Salmon in Puget Sound. The Forum will serve as a catalyst to shape the effort as we strive to recover wild salmon in Puget Sound – building on and expanding the collective capacity and motivation of local, state, tribal, and federal governments, as well as private organizations and businesses. The Shared Strategy is also recognized, embraced, and endorsed by federal salmon managers as a rigorous and scientifically robust approach to develop a recovery plan. The Shared Strategy is a unique attempt to build a collaborative plan to recover a species listed under the Endangered Species Act, advancing a new approach that hopefully will have widespread application to other critical environmental challenges.

Through implementation of the Shared Strategy, the Forum will provide a place to improve, prioritize, and advance immediate actions that will help fish. This will be accomplished by working with the people and programs that address habitat, harvest, and hatcheries. All three of these programs must be coordinated both locally and across the region to ensure money is spent wisely and provide measurable goals for success.

The Forum is governed by a board of directors that provides formal oversight and fosters private sector support for the Shared Strategy. A Plan Development committee composed of the leaders from government, business, environmental, and local watershed interests will direct the development of the recovery plan and promote immediate actions. Broad-based interests across Puget Sound will be represented on the Forum Council. The Council provides recommendations to the Development Committee and will review the recovery plan and propose actions that work on the ground and can be supported in local communities. Watershed groups will be part of the Council and also provide critical information for the recovery plan.

Individuals will be able to participate by being part of local watershed groups, as well as being involved in work groups developing elements of the recovery plan or promoting actions to improve conditions for salmon. Broad review and comments on draft products as they are developed as part of the Shared Strategy will be essential.

Funding

Funding for the Puget Sound Salmon Forum will be broad-based and sufficient to support the implementation of the Strategy successfully. It will be provided from both public and private sources to demonstrate the diverse support for this effort. To date, federal and state agencies, private corporations, and foundations have supported the effort both through financial contributions and in-kind contributions of staff resources.