

DRAFT Sub-basin Summary
Regional Nearshore and Marine Chapter of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan

ADMIRALTY INLET

Introduction:

This document summarizes discussions between the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team (TRT), NOAA Fisheries scientists, the Puget Sound Action Team (PSAT) and Shared Strategy staff about salmon recovery in the Admiralty Inlet sub-basin. People interested in this area should also review the recommendations provided to watershed planning groups in the Shared Strategy Feedback for Decision Makers (October 2004) and the Technical Feedback from the TRT (November 2004). The nearshore and marine chapter of the recovery plan which is under development will expand upon the information in this summary and will provide the scientific foundation for the following recommendations. This summary is intended to help regional and watershed planning groups synthesize the technical and policy information that has been compiled to date and stimulate policy discussions on the conditions that are necessary to implement actions that will support recovery in the nearshore and marine environments.

Fish Story:

Admiralty Inlet contains no natal delta, but likely supports at least twenty of the twenty-two chinook salmon populations in the Puget Sound evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) as a main migration corridor into and out of Puget Sound. For some populations such as Green River and Cedar River populations, Admiralty Inlet is likely the main migratory route used. This area is a bottleneck, and for populations from the Stillaguamish, Snohomish and Skagit, an important migration route to the straits and the Pacific Ocean. The open, exposed shorelines are believed to provide critical habitats for rearing, refuge from predators and a migration corridor for larger juvenile salmon that have moved out of more protected areas. Most fish using this sub-basin are expected to be larger in size than when they were closer to natal streams. Good water quality is critical for salmon in this sub-basin. Chum use of the area is not sufficiently known, though summer chum from Hood Canal probably exit Puget Sound by way of Admiralty Inlet. The marine area provides foraging and migrating habitat for bull trout.

Landscape Story:

The Admiralty Inlet sub-basin has approximately 133 miles of shoreline, only 13% of which is armored. The west side of Whidbey Island consists of high-energy, exposed shorelines, most of which are undisturbed and in relatively good condition. The northwestern point of the Olympic Peninsula adjacent to Admiralty Inlet provides low-energy areas, with bays and estuaries. Twenty nine pocket estuaries were documented and analyzed by the PSAT by examining oblique aerial photos on the DOE's Digital Coastal Atlas website. Based on criteria applied by the PSAT, about half of the pocket estuaries were considered to be functioning well. Stressors include shoreline development, urbanization, and diking and filling. Railroads impact nearshore habitat functions along the southern Port Townsend shoreline. Overwater structures are

relatively sparse. Eelgrass habitat is present in the sub-basin, with known continuous bands in the Port Townsend, Kilisut Harbor and Port Ludlow areas.

Key Actions:

At the September 9, 2004 meeting of PSAT, the TRT and Shared Strategy staff, actions for marine and nearshore sub-basins were organized under two strategy types – **protection** and **restoration**. Protection is recommended as the primary strategy direction for nearshore and marine areas, given the current state of knowledge. This strategy is designed to protect what is currently functioning, while leaving options open for future restoration. In the next five years, the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Program (PSNERP) is expected to provide additional information that will better inform the development of large-scale restoration efforts. Restoration actions in the near-term should occur where benefits to fish are reasonably certain and there is local support.

Key Protection Actions:

In addition to the recommendations identified in the WRIA plans, the following actions should be considered in the near-term if possible, and in the longer-term as part of a regional Puget Sound assessment:

- Protect against catastrophic events, such as oil spills. It is likely that such an event would significantly affect most if not all Puget Sound salmon populations.
- Provide support functions for all populations, especially main basin Chinook. The main function is as a migratory corridor.
- Protect shallow water habitats from further degradation.
- Protect pocket estuaries.
- Protect feeding and refuge opportunities by maintaining kelp beds and other foraging sites.
- Protect drift cell function that supports eelgrass bands and depositional features.

Key Restoration Actions:

There is not sufficient information to evaluate the regional benefit of restoration actions in this sub-basin. PSAT and PSNERP are encouraged to continue working with watershed planning teams on the regional assessment and prioritization of actions that are of regional benefit.

- Evaluate the effects of hatchery fish using nearshore habitats under current and restored conditions—how will their presence affect the status of wild salmon in the area?