

Feds adopt Puget Sound salmon recovery plan

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Washington state made "salmon history" today when NOAA's Fisheries Service adopted the Puget Sound Chinook recovery plan- the largest and most comprehensive plan ever approved by the federal government.

Crafted through a bottoms-up approach that included input from farmers and ranchers, the recovery plan is a requirement of the Endangered Species Act.

In 1999, the Puget Sound chinook, as well as the Hood Canal summer chum and the Lake Ozette sockeye, were listed as "threatened" under the ESA.

Today's formal adoption of the plan by NOAA's Fisheries represents the culmination of more than 5 years' effort by communities across the 14 river basins that drain into Puget Sound.

"This is a plan built on local salmon-recovery efforts and remarkable cooperation among state, tribal and local governments and others," said Bob Lohn, head of NOAA Fisheries' Northwest regional office. "You can't get a better foundation for recovery than that."

Lohn said that recovery plans for threatened or endangered species are typically written by federal officials. In contrast, this plan represents a cooperative approach that builds on local salmon recovery efforts and therefore will be more effective.

The plan was developed through the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound, a collaborative conservation effort that included a wide range of participants, including farmers and ranchers.

It integrates management of habitat, harvest and hatcheries. Fish biologists say that management of each of these must complement the others to enable salmon recovery.

"This is a comprehensive plan that offers real hope for salmon recovery," said Billy Frank Jr., chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

"Developing the plan has helped to build strong bridges between all of us who care about the salmon. I am confident that by working together we will restore Puget Sound chinook."

