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## Investing in Salmon Recovery – Building a Regional Consensus

*This paper is intended to provide background information for the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council's discussion on regional investment criteria.*

### **People, Projects and Programs**

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan (Recovery Plan) identifies the overall efforts needed in the next ten years to set the pace for salmon recovery in 50 years. Achieving salmon recovery is really a people issue. People in all fourteen watershed communities will need to work together building on existing programs and in new ways to achieve a level of coordination that is unprecedented in the region. It is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate the collective power of the region. To be successful, investments are necessary in people, projects and programs.

### **Why do we need to establish local and regional priorities for funding?**

The Recovery Plan calls for a doubling of the effort and thus the funds (from an average of \$60 million to \$120 million per year) to put the region on a recovery trajectory in the next ten years. This estimate refers to only capital needs for all H-sectors and it is well accepted that the total need, inclusive of operational programs, will be higher. Achieving the funding targets will require a concerted and coordinated effort among all Shared Strategy participants, at watershed and regional levels, and our counterparts in the other ESU recovery regions in the state.

Further, to attract the levels of funding that will be needed means our region needs to position itself to demonstrate to funders that:

- a) The most effective and efficient programs have been identified in each watershed and across Puget Sound based on objective scientific and policy criteria.
- b) This region has a well-thought out and disciplined strategy to help guide wise investment of funds to address watershed as well as ESU recovery goals.
- c) This region has an accountability and tracking system in place to show that investments are making a difference (i.e. through the regional and local adaptive management and monitoring programs).

With these factors in place, the region can be more competitive in maintaining local funding and increasing support from federal, state and private sources. The financing strategy in the Recovery Plan calls for a well coordinated effort to increase funding from a number of sources, allowing for the doubling of capital funds and increased human resources to carry out the necessary programs.

### **What is the overall approach to developing consensus on regional funding priorities?**

The foundation of the approach is building three-year work programs in each of the fourteen watersheds and at the regional level. These programs must include the most important programs and capital projects to move the region quickly to the pace and

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magnitude of effort needed to achieve the 10 year objectives. The three-year work programs must:

1. Improve the level and certainty of protection for habitat and the 22 existing Chinook populations.
2. Ensure protection and restoration is done in a manner that preserves and restores ecosystem processes for Chinook as well as other species.
3. Advance the integrated management of habitat, harvest and hatcheries (All Hs).
4. Continue to expand and deepen individual and community support.

The three-year work programs will be independently reviewed by the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team (TRT) and the Recovery Council (RC) Policy Work Group for consistency with the Recovery Plan and detailed comments provided in June 2005 (see criteria below being used for 3-year work programs).

Regional technical and policy criteria are also needed to develop regional investment scenario options. These investment options will be discussed at the watershed level and come before the Recovery Council for a final decision on the most effective scenario for investing in the next three years. The RC is expected to agree on the regional criteria at their April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting and then strive to reach consensus on the preferred investment scenario at their July 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **What criteria are being used to guide prioritizing and sequencing watersheds' 3-year work programs?**

The criteria below are being used by watersheds and the TRT Liaisons in developing their three year work programs.

### Technical criteria:

- > Address key factors limiting recovery
- > Ensure habitat protection addresses the most critical near-term functions and areas
- > Target likely early improvements in one or more Viable Salmon Population parameters (VSPs)
- > Sequence and coordinate habitat, hatchery and harvest actions per Technical Recovery Team (TRT) guidance
- > Sequence actions to re-establish natural salmon production ( if needed)
- > Ensure actions are consistent with the recovery goals and strategy outlined in the recovery plans. In particular, the actions should be consistent with the goals and strategy laid out in plans, plus the June 2005 TRT review comments, and comments prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service Northwest Region in the Supplement to the draft Puget Sound Salmon Recover Plan.

### Policy criteria:

- > Identify suite of habitat protection tools and their expected result for fish
- > Prioritize actions that benefit multiple Chinook populations as well as other salmon species
- > Actions are part of larger Regional efforts (e.g. comprehensive monitoring)
- > Actions build the capacity to implement the 10-year program.

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- > Reflect most efficient and effective method to achieve results where various options exist
- > Broadens and diversifies community support and engagement

The 3-year work programs are expected to identify the magnitude of effort needed in this first increment to achieve the 10-year objectives.

### **What regional technical and policy criteria should be used to guide the development of investment scenarios and build regional consensus on the preferred approach?**

As mentioned at the front-end of this paper, to make significant progress toward recovery will require significant investments in supporting people and ensuring capacity to carry out programs and projects.

Building consensus on the right investment for salmon recovery across Puget Sound will require weighing different criteria to create a balance between multiple objectives and interests. It is not possible or probably desirable to create a formula that pops out the perfect scenario that meets all the interests and technical needs. Consequently, the criteria below are suggested as factors that should be weighed in creating investment scenarios for deliberation by the watersheds and various interests across Puget Sound.

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board's (SRFB) allocation to the Puget Sound region would be one source of funds available to meet the investment priorities agreed to by this process. It is anticipated that other funding sources and associated fundraising efforts, such as the State Biennial budget, public and private grants, and local appropriations, would also be geared toward these priorities.

### Synopsis of RC discussions and decisions related to criteria and investment scenarios:

The Recovery Council is expected to discuss and agree upon the criteria to use for creating investment scenarios at their April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Once the ESU-scale criteria are set by the RC, the TRT and RC policy work group will draft regional scenarios to show different options for how the criteria could be weighted. For example, if the emphasis is placed on ensuring that the highest risk populations don't go over the brink versus preserving the strongholds versus a somewhat equal weighting, and so on. Different funding levels—full, medium and low—will also be considered in investment scenarios. These scenarios will be discussed at the May 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RC. The RC is scheduled to select an investment scenario at the July 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. Watershed Leads and others will have the opportunity to discuss and vet these proposals between RC meetings.

The regional technical and policy criteria and resultant scenarios should move the region forward toward ultimately achieving the technical results that define recovery (NMFS Supplement, December 19, 2006):

- At least 2-4 viable Chinook populations are present in each of the five bio-geographic areas in Puget Sound.
- All populations improve in status from current conditions.
- Each of the five bio-geographical areas has one or more viable populations from each major diversity group historically present in that area.

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- Freshwater tributaries and nearshore areas provide ecological function to support ESU-wide recovery.

### Proposed technical criteria to guide development of investment scenarios:

Note—these criteria could apply to all salmon species in Puget Sound.

- Ensure highest risk populations don't go over the brink
- Ensure more robust populations continue to provide insurance of ESU resilience (i.e. protect the strongholds)
- Provide early improvements in viable salmonid parameters (VSP) for natural-origin populations

### Proposed policy criteria to guide development of investment scenarios:

- Watershed and regional groups' preparedness to implement both ESU and watershed priorities. This criteria refers to the certainty of implementing the priority actions--e.g. if a watershed area is selected on the basis of ensuring their highest risk population doesn't go over the brink, these funds would go toward projects identified in the watershed's work program related to achieving that goal
- Identifies clear path to building capacity where needed to start down the recovery trajectory (i.e. establish agreed upon measurable goals and objectives, bring the necessary resources to bear to implement programs and projects)
- Prepared to be responsive to emerging funding opportunities connected to priorities (e.g. farm/small forest incentives)
- Broadens and diversifies community support and engagement
- Work program demonstrates appropriate implementation pace for achieving 10-year goals

These criteria should support listed and non-listed salmon recovery efforts. Some Puget Sound watersheds already have multi-species plans that were reviewed previously and for which these criteria should be a good fit. This is also true for the Hood Canal summer chum plan. For species such as Coho, one suggestion offered is to use NOAA's Biological Opinion as the analysis on which to apply these criteria.

*Key Question: Are these the right set of ESU-scale criteria for the Recovery Council to use to guide investment decisions across the region? If not, what changes would you make?*

### **Final Notes**

This draft was prepared in response to preliminary conversations with the TRT, RC policy work group, watershed implementation leads and the RC.

The next scheduled discussion of these criteria is Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup> at the Watershed Leads meeting in Edmonds.