

**Investment Strategy for Puget Sound Salmon**  
**A Three-Year Action Plan**  
**Draft**  
**July 20, 2006**

*This paper updates and replaces the June 28, 2006 draft provided for discussion in preparation for the July 27<sup>th</sup> Recovery Council meeting. Revisions in this paper are based upon feedback from lead entities, watershed implementation leads and other interested parties that participated in a number of discussions with Shared Strategy staff and with each other in sub-groups on select topics (acquisition for protection and restoration priorities) as well as the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting. Changes in the proposed investment strategy are added to the end of the original June 28<sup>th</sup> sections or italicized within paragraphs to clearly show the progression of ideas. Unless new policy questions are identified, the original policy questions still need discussion. Occasionally, reference is made to the degree of support for recommendations along the consensus spectrum adopted for use by the Recovery Council. As a reminder, consensus on this spectrum is defined as:*

1. *Endorsement (I like it)*
2. *Endorsement, with minor contention (I basically like it)*
3. *Agreement with reservations (I can live with it)*
4. *Stand aside (I don't like it but I don't want to stop it)*
5. *Block (I can't live with it)*

The questions provided in this paper will be those posed to the Recovery Council for decision-making. Two attachments are discussed in the paper and serve as background information for the proposals provided in brief detail below. The paper is divided into five parts:

- a) Next Steps in Salmon Recovery—an overview of the objectives, issues and opportunities before the Recovery Council
- b) Focus on the Fish—application of the delisting criteria, the foundation of our recovery approach
- c) Initial Consensus on Funding priorities —proposals believed to be close to consensus
- d) Investment Proposals Needing More Work—specific recommendations that still need to be further developed *or having been refined, require further discussion to arrive at consensus*
- e) A closing

**I. Next Steps in Salmon Recovery**

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council, the fourteen watershed groups and other interested parties now have greater clarity about what it will take to recover salmon at both the local and Puget Sound level. The goals in the Salmon Recovery Plan are defined and measurable. The Recovery Plan is clear about the significant policy decisions we face and the three year work plans are clear about the resources needed to advance implementation. We know more about what is important to do, where it needs to be done, who needs to do it, and what resources are necessary to make it happen. We are prepared to take the next steps to implement the Salmon Recovery Plan and to obtain the

**Investment Strategy: A Three-Year Action Plan**  
**7-20-06 Draft**

support and resources necessary to protect and improve the places salmon live and lay the foundation for more fish in the future. In taking these next steps, we also acknowledge that actions and resources directed toward the recovery of Chinook salmon benefit bull trout and other species' core areas as well as freshwater and nearshore habitat which they use for foraging, migrating, and over-wintering purposes.

To position ourselves for increased support and funding, it is crucial that we determine the best investments for salmon across the region. This paper lays out the issues that must be decided by the end of July to develop a proposal to the State for the biennial budget. *The approach taken by this proposal is to develop the entire set of priorities for investments in the three-year period from 2007 to 2009 and then prepare the biennial portion (2007-2008) based on the three-year strategy.* The work program for the Hood Canal summer chum ESU is under development. It is expected that the Recovery Council will consider proposals for summer chum recovery funding separately from this proposal.

Seeking State funding necessitates the establishment of priorities for the whole region. These priorities—set by the Recovery Council and the watersheds—will then drive the pursuit of additional funding with the federal government and private foundations.

Current funding levels for salmon recovery are less than half of what is necessary to achieve the results we want in ten years. If funding cannot be increased significantly we will not be able to achieve recovery in the 50 year timeframe of the Salmon Recovery Plan. The next ten years are critical to success if we are going to protect the salmon populations and ecosystems of Puget Sound while adding 1.4 million people and experiencing the initial impacts of climate change. We must act strategically and with urgency to get the funds and support necessary to implement the plan and ensure that the funds received are invested in the most important actions.

Fortunately, we have done a lot over the past four years to become more strategic in our approach and investments. We have developed a unique recovery plan that has measurable goals and outcomes in each watershed and across the region. The plan defines the work needed in habitat, harvest and hatchery management. This spring we defined six objectives to guide our work for the first three years of implementing our plan and the fourteen watersheds developed three-year work plans to match the objectives. All this work has been independently evaluated by the Technical Recovery Team (TRT) and by the Recovery Council Work Group. The independent review affirmed a significant advancement in the detail and strategic thinking to move the overall recovery effort forward to on-the-ground implementation.

The six objectives for the three years are:

- A. Improve the certainty and level of protection for habitat and the 22 Chinook populations
- B. Restore ecosystem processes for Chinook and other species by preserving options and addressing threats in: estuaries, mainstem, upper watershed, freshwater tributaries and nearshore, and water quality and quantity
- C. Develop and implement adaptive management and monitoring

**Investment Strategy: A Three-Year Action Plan**  
**7-20-06 Draft**

- D. Advance integrated management of harvest, hatchery and habitat
- E. Continue to expand and deepen individual and community support to implement a suite of prioritized programs and projects needed to get on a recovery trajectory
- F. Support non-listed salmon species

The work plans from each of the watersheds have been summarized according to these objectives in *Attachment A—“Watershed Work Plans Related to Key Puget Sound Recovery Objectives.”* In addition to the actions identified by the watersheds, Recovery Council staff developed additional proposals where necessary to more fully address the three-year objectives. These recommendations are also summarized in Attachment A.

The total package, if implemented, would result in a significant advancement in our certainty that:

- Puget Sound’s freshwater and marine ecosystems will be protected into the future
- Significant portions of the major estuaries, mainstem and headwater areas that support spawning Chinook will be restored
- Our understanding of what is necessary to support recovery in the nearshore and marine areas will improve
- Harvest, hatchery and habitat actions will be integrated and sequenced in support of recovery

The total cost of the three-year work plans and staff recommendations to achieve these outcomes is approximately \$500 million.

Although this level of cost was expected, it is unrealistic to believe we can achieve this level of funding in the first three years of implementation. If current funding levels from the federal, state and local governments continue over the next three years we can expect approximately \$150M for capital projects. An aggressive program at the State level could yield another \$60 to \$90M for capital projects during this same period plus hopefully \$10 to \$15M in operating funds. This paper proposes strategic priorities based upon the premise that our region may be able to achieve slightly less than half the need identified in Attachment A. Setting priorities that are both strategic in terms of recovering salmon and exciting to those who will support and pay for our work is the foundation of our future success.

## **II. Focus on the Fish**

In order to set our strategic direction it is important to step back to the Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) criteria developed several years ago by the TRT and endorsed in the Recovery Plan. The specific criteria pertinent to this discussion are that all 22 Chinook populations need to improve with some needing to achieve low risk status in each of the five sub-regions of the Puget Sound.

These criteria define recovery for the region and mean that none of the remaining 22 Chinook populations can be lost and some need to improve more dramatically than others. *Attachment B -- Ecological Integrity of Chinook Salmon Watersheds in the Puget Sound and Population Status--* is a draft paper developed by the TRT that

**Investment Strategy: A Three-Year Action Plan**  
**7-20-06 Draft**

provides a coarse view of the current Chinook population status and the relative ecological integrity of their watershed. It contains a methodology and a working draft of the potential implications of the analysis. It shows that the 22 populations are in different places relative to the threat of extinction and that the landscapes in which they live are in different states of ecological health.

Although more work is necessary to more accurately position each population relative to each other, the draft paper identifies the coarse regional-scale strategies needed to be effective. It categorizes the 22 populations into four circles that have important management implications. Protection is critical for populations in all four circles—if funds are limited, it is crucial to protect all populations and the habitat to support them. One of the circles highlights several populations that are at extreme risk in the next three years. Protecting these populations (or others identified through a more rigorous analysis) will require aggressive actions to ensure they are not lost.

If the Recovery Council wishes to use this analysis to help prioritize and track progress over time, additional work will be necessary to ensure the analysis is up-to-date, uses metrics supported across the region, and accurately shows what is most important about the populations.

***Policy Question: Do you agree that we should continue to support the ESU Criteria and ensure that no populations are lost and protect current habitat productivity?***  
*This question still requires verification.*

***Policy Question: Do you support further work to conduct a more rigorous status analysis in the “Threat of Extinction and Ecological Integrity” paper to support decision-making, prioritization and tracking progress over time?***

*The current TRT analysis is being used to stimulate a discussion about what factors should be considered in focusing and sequencing restoration efforts given what is known about the status of the populations and the ecosystems that support them. Some people have also suggested that this analysis could be used to determine where to focus protection actions. There is broad support for further refinement of the analysis prior to generating population-specific funding requests. This further work is necessary to complete by October if the region is going to be in a position to submit and advocate for project-specific restoration and/or protection priorities to the legislature.*

***Technical/Policy Question: What improvements are necessary to the TRT draft analysis to ensure it is an accurate and useful tool for management decisions?***

*The following recommendations are based on the work of one restoration sub-committee meeting, the July 13<sup>th</sup> watershed leads discussion and follow-up conversation with Ken Currens, TRT.*

*The current recommendation is to form a working committee in August-September that further defines the metrics and data sets necessary to create an analysis that would:*

- Be supported across Puget Sound to develop population specific restoration funding requests*

**Investment Strategy: A Three-Year Action Plan**  
**7-20-06 Draft**

- *Potentially create an analysis for the sequencing of hatchery efforts*
- *Link to the measures necessary for adaptive management*
- *Provide insight into the role restoration can play in the recovery of each population*
- *Create a hierarchy of populations at highest risk of extinction and those needed at low risk for ESU recovery.*

*This working committee would draft recommendations for review by representatives (hatchery, harvest and habitat) from every watershed and the Recovery Council. A completed analysis would be ready by middle to end of October. The committee will be able to build from an initial list of potential metrics and changes created from initial feedback by watersheds and the TRT.*

***New Policy Question: Do you support the above proposal for improving the TRT analysis?***

### **III. Initial Consensus on Priorities for Funding (What we are all excited about advancing)**

The initial priorities for funding were identified at the meeting with watershed leads on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Consensus on these initial priorities was based on the principle (identified in the section above) that first and foremost we must protect the current Chinook populations and the ecosystems that support them. It was also based on the principle that we will need to improve the status of all populations over time. Therefore it is important to ensure our efforts across all watersheds are effective and efficient, and that we continue to support the infrastructure and community-engagement we have achieved at the watershed level.

The list below *has been* confirmed or modified through discussions with Recovery Council members, and watershed and other interested parties between now and the Recovery Council meeting on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

- A. Ecosystem Protection Initiative** – This proposal aims to increase the level of habitat protection and the certainty of on-the-ground results. Specifically, it builds on a pilot effort in San Juan County that would be spread to all watersheds during the next three year period. The proposal includes an independent assessment of current regulations, enforcement, incentives and education programs. It would initiate a community by community dialogue with scientists and stakeholders to gain consensus on the important habitats that need protection, identify gaps and areas of success in current programs and develop community, science and decision-maker-based solutions to ensure current habitat functions are indeed protected into the future. This proposal would cost approximately \$7M over the three-year period.

***Policy Question: Do you support implementation of the ecosystem protection initiative as one of the top priorities for funding by the State?***

*Participants at both the June 15<sup>th</sup> and the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting expressed strong support for this recommendation (at the 1 and 2 level on the 5-point consensus scale).*

- B. Shoreline Management Program Updates** – One of the key programs to protect habitat for salmon are county Shoreline Master Programs. They set the preferred uses along freshwater and marine shorelines and set the regulatory standards that must be met to protect habitat functions. Under current State requirements most counties in Puget Sound will not have to update their Shoreline Management Programs for another five to ten years. When the State offered financial support to counties willing to update their programs early, it did not have enough money to support the interest it received from across Puget Sound. This proposal would be to provide funds for counties that would like to accelerate their updates and accomplish them in the next three-years. This would cost approximately \$5M during the three year period.

***Policy Question: Do you support accelerating Shoreline Management Programs as one of the top priorities for funding by the State?***

*Participants at the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting agreed that accelerating SMP updates is important and that the proposal make clear that this refers to the twelve Puget Sound counties (not 14 watershed areas). Participants understood that the delineation by county would not change the proposed funding level of \$5M over three years.*

- C. Incentives** – One of the successes in developing the recovery plan was building support for salmon recovery in the agricultural community, with small forest landowners and other private property owners. Key to gaining support from these important stakeholders was recognizing their important contribution to stewardship. They are most excited about incentives that acknowledge and help them in their role of protecting and restoring habitat in a manner that also supports the on-going use of their land. This proposal would provide \$6M to implement the farm and forest incentives recommended in the Recovery Plan plus another \$2M to assist watershed efforts to provide tax incentives and other aid at the watershed level for landowners.

***Policy Question: Do you support the incentive program as one of the top priorities for funding by the State?***

*Participants at the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting requested further details behind the recommended 8 million figure incentives package and wondered how distribution is proposed.*

*Distribution has not been discussed as yet, but the current assumption of this proposal is that the \$6M would be distributed through the competitive grant process of the Pioneers in Conservation Program (see description on our website). Further discussion is needed to determine how to distribute the \$2M to*

*watershed efforts for tax incentives and other aid to landowners (the \$2M figure is a slight increase from watershed plan estimates of \$1.3M).*

*The \$6M figure is proposed for:*

- \$2,300,000 to farmers and small forest land owners to protect and restore fish habitat*
- \$1,500,000 to support purchase of development rights*
- \$2,200,000 to support marketing and certification of salmon-friendly farming and forestry practices*

**D. Capacity to support Adaptive Management; Harvest, Hatchery and Habitat Management Integration; and Expanding Community Support** – Since the state legislature created the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and lead entities there has been a considerable investment made in the infrastructure to support local decision-making and on-the-ground actions. This proposal would continue to support this infra-structure and build upon it to ensure additional support at the watershed and regional levels to take the next steps in adaptive management and integration of harvest, hatchery and habitat actions.

The proposal would also provide funds to watersheds to identify and implement the most important activities to build community support for action priorities. These activities range from focused discussions with key property owners for restoration projects to focused education of shoreline owners. The cost of this proposal is approximately \$25M (\$5M for H-Integration, \$5M for watershed capacity to implement priority programs and \$15M for adaptive management). This estimate does not include the full cost for monitoring, which will require the development of a detailed work program over the next couple of months.

***Policy Question: Do you support the capacity building proposal as one of the top priorities for funding by the State?***

*Participants at the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting expressed support for the capacity building proposal (with a spread of 1-3 on the 5-point consensus scale), affirming that the group should continue to pursue the recommendations and proposed funding categories at the proposed magnitude. One participant was at “4” because of a concern about how these funds as part of a whole priority package will contribute to recovery.*

*The group requested clarification on a number of questions:*

*Q: Is it tactically better to separate out capacity building (i.e. operating funds) into separate categories? There seems to be considerable overlap between the three categories: capacity building, h-integration and adaptive management and monitoring (AMM).*

*A: The Recovery Council Work Group weighed in on this question and agreed that the tactic of separating out the categories may increase the chances of raising operating funds. Funders prefer to see specifics related to outcomes. In*

*practice, staff resources, education and outreach efforts and coordination for these three categories may be mutually supportive.*

*Q: Where do regional functions fit into the funding categories?*

*A: It's likely that some portions of the work will be best done at the regional level and some at the watershed level and this would need to be clarified and agreed to once funds are in place.*

*Q: Please clarify the differences between the watershed plans and staff recommendations as summarized in the "Watershed Work Plans Related to Puget Sound Recovery Objectives" paper and this investment proposal.*

*A: The total estimated cost for the three categories (capacity, h-integration and AMM) in the summary paper total approximately \$46M (\$5.6 for capacity building, \$16.5 for H-Integration, and \$24M for AMM). This proposal assumes that watershed cost estimates to continue supporting lead entities would continue to be funded by WDFW and is not included in the \$25M figure above. This proposal, at less than the total request, is also based on the analysis stated at the start of this paper indicating that it will take an aggressive program at the state level to yield \$10-\$15 in operating funds. Watersheds would need to determine how to further prioritize their capacity building needs. One further assumption is that funding for the AMM monitoring program could come through the State's monitoring program.*

*Q: How does seeking operating funds relate to seeking capital funds and does it have the potential to "take away" from capital funds?*

*A: The proportion of operating to capital funds in this investment proposal (\$37M inclusive of the ecosystem protection initiative and SMP updates) is such that staff believes capital requests will not be put in competition with them, particularly if we are strategic in targeting various funding sources and providing compelling arguments about how these operating funds support recovery efforts. Many watersheds described in their three-year plans how capacity building was crucial to their ability to implement capital programs.*

***New Policy Question: Do you affirm that we should continue to support the goal of sustainable, harvestable salmon populations and tribal treaty fishing rights as we advance H-Integration efforts?***

*This question was requested by the All-H Leadership Group during a discussion at their July 21, 2006 meeting about what it means to advance H-Integration and the expectations about harvest management in that context.*

#### **E. Support for Co-Manager Harvest and Hatchery Actions**

Salmon recovery depends upon the effective integration of habitat, harvest and hatchery actions. Progress to advance H-Integration is expected to occur in the next year with managers from all H-sectors working together. Co-managers will undoubtedly need to play a leadership role and all the H-sector managers will need to share information about their respective contributions toward recovery.

Additionally, the Co-Managers are poised to engage in the Pacific Salmon Treaty negotiations for Chinook that will affect harvest rates on Chinook for approximately the next 10 years. *Three-year plans for the most part did not include estimates to support capital projects for harvest and hatchery actions that support recovery goals (Only 1-4 watersheds proposed actions totaling \$7.2M). This investment strategy does not have a specific funding recommendation to support harvest and hatchery capital investments.*

***Policy Question: Do you support the Co-Manager process to meet with watersheds by end of 2006 to identify and confirm priority harvest and hatchery actions that should be included in three-year work plans and for advancing all-H Integration strategies?***

*Recent discussions among state and tribal co-managers indicate that the original timeframe (by the end of 2006) is unrealistic and that more work is needed to refine the process by which H-Integration efforts go forward.*

***New Policy Question: Is it important for the 3-year investment strategy to reflect funding for harvest and hatchery actions that are consistent with recovery goals? If so, what is the recommended process for identifying priorities and funding levels?***

#### **IV. Investment proposals that need more work to develop a specific recommendation or having been refined, require further discussion to arrive at consensus**

The following proposals are identified as needing more work if they are to be included in a State budget request or other funding package. Each section is followed by a key policy question important to discuss in preparation for the July 27<sup>th</sup> Recovery Council meeting. *Further work was done on items A (acquisition for protection) and B (restoration). New recommendations and/or questions still remaining to be resolved or needing further work are identified at the end of each section.*

##### **A. Protection of Existing Habitat Through Acquisition**

One of the important means to protect key habitat is by acquiring property. There are a number of different organizations acquiring habitat for protection in the Puget Sound region, but there is no common strategy to determine priorities across the whole area. The combined work plans from the fourteen watersheds proposes \$87M for acquisition of habitat for protection purposes. There seems to be broad support for some acquisition during the next three-years, but the total cost estimate is too high given expected funding levels and other actions needed for recovery. Additionally, many watershed work plans include general figures for exploring options for acquisitions of properties not yet identified and/or assessed for habitat values.

**Investment Strategy: A Three-Year Action Plan  
7-20-06 Draft**

We must develop a means to set priorities and develop different funding levels for acquisition. Several watersheds have worked closely with local and regional conservation groups to develop strategic approaches for acquiring property in their area. The staff will pull together a group of people from watersheds and conservation groups to develop a strategy for the region and create some options for consideration by the Recovery Council at their July meeting.

***Policy Question: What factors should we use to set a regional strategy for acquisition and what funding levels are appropriate in relationship to the overall three-year funding strategy?***

*As indicated above, a sub-group of watershed leads and land conservation organization representatives met to discuss what factors to use for a regional acquisition strategy.*

*The combined work of the sub-group and the subsequent discussion at the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting concluded the following: Acquisition of intact habitat is accepted as a key component of all watersheds' protection programs. The identification and prioritization of property for acquisition must include a review of the level and extent of protection offered by existing regulatory and voluntary protection programs. Acquisition as a tool is most strategically used to preserve critical habitat processes and functions that benefit fish in cases where regulations cannot reasonably prevent modifications that would result in the loss of habitat processes and functions critical to salmon recovery.*

*Examples include protecting a source of spawning gravel for a productive and important river reach by acquiring parcels where regulations would exempt owners from restrictions against bank hardening to prevent erosion, and acquiring floodplain parcels to enable the river to retain its ability to meander.*

***New Policy Question: In a limited funding scenario, should funds be directed to those acquisition projects that are best used in cases where regulations cannot reasonably prevent modifications that would result in loss of habitat processes and processes critical to salmon recovery (i.e. acquisition is the best tool to ensure protection)?***

***New Policy Question: Should acquisition for protection be focused on a specific set of populations (similar to the restoration prioritization proposal below), or should protection funds be relatively evenly distributed to all populations in support of the notion that protection is needed everywhere?***

***Note: the assumption is that for either option, acquisition would still be used when it is deemed the best tool for protecting habitat.***

***New Policy Question: How should the balance of spending between protection and restoration actions be determined (according to population status analysis or according to watershed priorities)?***

## **B. Restoration**

Similar to acquisition, restoration projects account for about \$275M of the three-year work plans from the watersheds. This includes about \$22M specifically identified by some watersheds for acquisition to preserve future options for restoration. These projects are critical to rebuild the ecological integrity of Puget Sound to support the abundance, productivity, diversity and spatial distribution of salmon. There is broad support for continued restoration across the Sound. However similar to acquisition, there are too many needs to be fulfilled in this three-year timeframe, and we have to set priorities. The staff will pull together a work group to develop recommendations and options for the regional strategy to restoration. They will consider how to use the coarse-scale TRT analysis included in *Attachment B* as well as the methods used by individual watersheds to prioritize their restoration efforts. The work group recommendations will be available for the Recovery Council to consider in their July meeting.

***Policy Question: What factors should we use to set a regional strategy for restoration, and what funding levels are appropriate in relationship to the overall three-year funding strategy?***

*A restoration sub-committee met once as indicated above and brought initial recommendations related to the above policy question to the July 13<sup>th</sup> watershed leads discussion. The following ideas emerged from those discussions plus a follow-up conversation with Ken Currens, TRT.*

*The sub-committee and watershed leads were in agreement that the current TRT analysis is best used in its current form to make initial decisions on the overall policy direction about how to prioritize restoration dollars. Both groups also support the principle that all populations are important to protect and eventually restore consistent with the ESU criteria.*

*Two key pieces of information should be considered when deciding how to emphasize restoration in the ESU:*

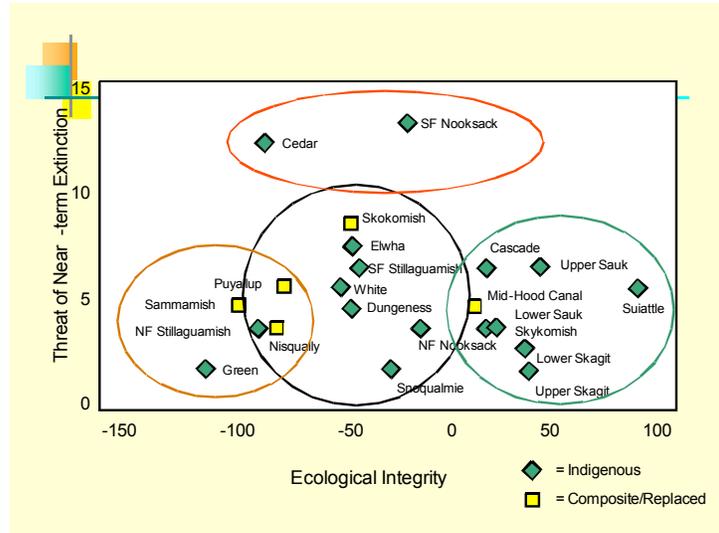
- *Understand the role that restoration can play in the recovery of the population*
- *Understand the hierarchy of which populations are at highest risk (caused by ecological degradation) and then those known to be needed at low risk for the ESU.*

*The following description of the bubbles within the TRT Analysis was used to frame the discussion about how to focus and sequence restoration dollars in the next three-years.*

***Top Bubble--High Risk:*** *Conceptually this bubble includes populations that are most at risk of extinction in the next three years. The analysis focuses on abundance, productivity, and hatchery impacts that increase the risk of extinction. The populations that rise to the highest risk categories in this analysis are elevated above*

**Investment Strategy: A Three-Year Action Plan**  
**7-20-06 Draft**

*the other populations due to low abundance, low productivity, and hatchery practices that threaten potentially indigenous populations in the near-term. This near-term risk could be lowered by appropriate hatchery practices, some of which are planned but have not yet been implemented. If such changes were implemented, the highest risk populations*



*(i.e. Cedar and SF Nooksack) would have a lower risk and would drop down to join the lower left group and middle group, respectively. With the risk to these populations reduced, the most important consideration for focusing restoration efforts relates to the spread of populations along the horizontal (ecological integrity) axis.*

Lower Left: *These populations spawn and spend their early life in freshwater systems that have already been heavily degraded. These populations are already heavily supported through hatchery programs and as such have a lower risk of extinction in the near-term. It is also likely that the most significant ecological impacts have already occurred and reversing the impacts will require major changes, significant costs and a long-term commitment to extensive management.*

Middle: *Most of these populations are indigenous and hatchery production in these watersheds uses local, indigenous broodstocks. The freshwater systems where they spawn and rear have retained important aspects of their ecological integrity but further losses would push them into the lower left group and increase the costs of recovering these populations. The populations that currently fall within this bubble represent many of the populations needed at low risk for a recovered ESU. They represent a range of life history diversity types as well as the five geographic regions of diversity and risk. Restoration investments directed toward these populations will likely prevent decline of the ecological integrity into the far left bubble and could result in critical improvements in connectivity and function.*

Lower Right: *These populations are almost entirely comprised of native runs not supported by hatchery operations. The freshwater systems where they spawn represent the highest ecological integrity remaining in Puget Sound. All six of the Skagit populations currently fall within this category. Smaller incremental investments relative to other populations in the ESU will likely result in improvements to the populations as they are building on a strong foundation of ecological integrity.*

*Recommendations*

- *Preserve future opportunities for restoration through acquisition*
- *Emphasize restoration efforts in the middle bubble*
- *In areas outside of the middle bubble focus efforts on activities that improve our understanding of the system and increase certainty of restoration efforts to address the whole ESU*
- *Revise the TRT analysis prior to the legislative session in order to develop a more specific set of recommended actions that can be supported by the Recovery Council.*

***New Policy Question: Do you support the above recommendations?***

**C. Independent tributaries and nearshore**

Independent tributaries to Puget Sound and nearshore/marine areas are critical components for the recovery of all salmon populations. The recovery plan calls for increased certainty to protect current nearshore/marine habitat functions. Because there is significant clarity on the restoration work needed to restore the natal estuaries across Puget Sound, these areas were included in the restoration section of this paper. However, there is less certainty about what the strategy for restoration actions should be in the independent tributaries, pocket estuaries, and nearshore/marine environments outside of the natal estuaries. The Puget Sound Nearshore Group has been developing studies and analyses to determine the best restoration investments. They have offered to review the watershed proposals for nearshore restoration outside of natal estuaries and provide a recommendation to the Recovery Council by the end of 2006. Staff recommends we ask the Nearshore Group for this assistance.

***Policy Question: Do you agree we should use the Nearshore Group to develop a regional strategy for nearshore restoration?***

*This question is still pertinent.*

**D. Water Quality and Quantity**

The recovery plan identifies the importance of water quantity and quality for salmon recovery. It also points out that little work has been done to identify and quantify the changes needed to ensure that water quantity and quality support fish goals. Since the recovery plan was developed, the Governor created the Puget Sound Partnership which will take an in-depth look at both water quantity and quality issues. The staff recommends that we ask the Partnership to ensure their work includes the needs of salmon.

***Policy Question: Should we encourage and support the Partnership in developing specific recommendations for water quantity and water quality?***

*These two issues are already under consideration by the Partnership effort.*

**E. Enforcement**

A number of watersheds recommended specific proposals to increase enforcement of environmental regulations or fishing rules. At this time the staff does not believe we have sufficient information or analysis to develop a regional recommendation in support of increased or more targeted enforcement. It seems prudent to conduct the Protection Initiative first which will provide an analysis of where lack of enforcement is a problem and what the solutions would be.

***Policy Question: Do you agree we should send a strong message that support of existing regulations is a critical component of recovery, but wait until after the Protection Initiative to develop a detailed regional cost package for enforcement? Participants at the July 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Leads meeting agreed with this policy recommendation.***

**F. Bull Trout and Non-Listed Species**

All watersheds have plans and three-year actions that take an ecosystem approach to protection and restoration. This approach will have significant benefits for all bull trout, salmon species that are not listed, and other aquatic and terrestrial organisms. A number of watersheds developed plans that specifically identified actions for bull trout and non-listed salmon species. These actions account for about five percent of the total need identified. The Recovery Council supports efforts that address bull trout recovery and activities that protect and restore non-listed runs of salmon.

***Policy Question: Do you support allocating a percentage of funds (6%) to be dedicated to bull trout and non-listed species?***  
*The 6% figure proposed reflects the percentage in the three-year plans. This percentage has been out for discussion and as a proposal for several months. The overall sense is that this percentage is fair and supportable.*

**V. A Regional Consensus Will Inspire Action**

If we as the local and regional leaders for salmon recovery can come to consensus on an investment package for submittal as part of the State budget process, it will be the first time salmon recovery proponents across sectors, across watersheds, across harvest, hatchery and habitat management have come together to develop and advocate a common set of priorities for which to advocate. In fact, this will be the first time the whole Puget Sound region will have reached consensus on an issue of such importance for our future. This would send a powerful message to funders and others that we are unified, disciplined and committed to meet not only our individual needs but the collective needs of our region—for the salmon and the ecosystem that supports them.

Discussion and advancement of the proposals and recommendations listed above among local and regional partners will improve our capacity as leaders to be articulate about what is most important to do at the local and Puget Sound scale and how others can support us as we move successfully towards a Puget Sound that sustains healthy salmon populations.