Shared Strategy for Puget Sound
Comments on April 2007 Three Year Work Program Update
(Snohomish)

Introduction

In April 2007, watersheds submitted three-year work program updates on accomplishments and proposed actions that built on the 2006 three year work program they developed to get on a recovery trajectory in the first three years of implementation.

This feedback is intended to assist the watershed recovery plan implementation team as it continues to address actions and implementation of their salmon recovery plan. The feedback is also being used by the TRT and Recovery Council Work Group to inform the continued development and implementation of the regional work program components such as adaptive management. The feedback will also stimulate further discussion on recovery objectives to determine what the best investments are for salmon recovery over the next three years.

Guidance for the 2007 work program updates

Guidance for the preparation of the 3 year Work Program update emphasized the importance of stating what has changed in the Update of the 3-year Work Program from the prior adopted Work Program. Watersheds were asked to:

- Describe why you have made the changes proposed, including rationale for including omitting or changing the rank of a project
- Describe any adjustments related to considering sequencing, timing, or H-Integration issues
- Discuss the status of implementation of your three year work program. – what have you accomplished in terms of the priority actions, what have you struggled with and how you resolved it, and provide suggestions, if the issues were not resolved, how we might work together to improve the situation in the future.

The guidance for preparation of the work program update provided the following as factors to be considered by the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team in performing its technical review of the Update

a. Is the Update consistent with the hypotheses and strategy for the watershed's work Program?
b. Is the sequencing and timing of the action sin your updated 3-Year work Program appropriate for this first full year of implementation of the Puget sound Salmon Recovery Plan>
c. Are there significant components missing from the work program? Is so, that are these and what can be done about them in the three-year work program update or at a regional scale?

Watersheds were provided with the following 7 questions that the Recovery Council Work Group would address in performing its policy review of the Three-Year Work Program

1. Is the work program consistent with the policy feedback and recommendations from the 2004 documents, Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan (See Volume I, Watershed Profiles – Results sections, and the NMFS supplement to the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan, as well as the regional nearshore chapter guidance, where applicable?
2. Is the work program tied to the identified three-year objectives and scheduled to proceed at a pace sufficient to achieve the watershed's ten year goals?>
3. Is the work program narrative tightly linked to individual projects s and priorities?
4. To what extent do programmatic actions address protection identified in the work program and non-capital project list?
5. To what extent are habitat, harvest and habitat actions integrated and included in the work program?
6. To what extent does the work program address the watershed's capacity to implement the updated three year work program?

Guidance noted that the Work Group would also examine the objectives of the three year work Program and how well the program addresses them. This includes considering whether the Work Program Update:

- Improves the level and certainty of protection for habitat and the 22 existing Chinook populations;
- Preserves options for achieving the future role of this population in the ESU;
- Ensures protection and restoration preserves and restores ecosystem processes for Chinook, and
- Advances the coordinated/integrated management of harvest, hatchery and habitat

I. Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team Review

The TRT reviewed fourteen individual watershed salmon recovery three-year work program updates in April and early May 2007. Three questions were addressed. The questions and the TRT's review comments are below.

<u>Snohomish (WRIA 7)</u>

Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team Review

The TRT reviewed updates to fourteen individual watershed salmon recovery three-year work programs in May 2007. Three questions were addressed. The questions and TRT's review comments on the Snohomish (WRIA 7) three-year work program are below.

1. Is the Update consistent with the hypotheses and strategy for the watershed's Work Program? (The 'work program' includes hypotheses and strategies in the Puget Sound Recovery Plan, including the watershed plan, TRT review comments and NOAA Supplement comments).

Yes. The updated 3-year action plan presents good logic for how effort is to be distributed among the sub basin strategy groups outlined in the Snohomish salmon recovery chapter of the

Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan. The projects on this three-year list are consistent with the sub basin strategy group priorities in the recovery chapter. To select and design specific projects within the guidance of the three-year plan, the watershed used detailed analyses of physical processes and fish use (e.g. *Skyomish River Braided Reach Assessment*, Snohomish County Surface Water Management, May 2006), where available. This provides some assurance that specific projects will be successful.

Restoration projects continue to dominate the habitat project list even though the basin strategy gives priority to protection. All projects proposed are important for initial implementation of the watershed recovery chapter, and they are grouped into priority tiers based on first the priority of the project in the watershed recovery chapter and second the ability and capacity of sponsors to complete them. This effectively separates the requirements for capacity building from the priorities for salmon recovery and shows which high priority projects are unlikely to be completed if capacity to complete projects is not increased. There are projects listed for each "h", harvest, hatchery, and habitat management, which is consistent with the basin's coordinated all-h strategy. The list also includes monitoring and research projects, which is a necessary component of a complete recovery approach.

2. Is the sequencing and timing of the actions in your Updated 3-Year Work Program appropriate for this first full year of implementation of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan?

Yes. The work plan focuses on the most important protection and restoration actions in the sub-basins of the Snohomish, putting the greatest effort in the subbasin strategy groups identified as having the highest priority but including projects for all subbasin strategy groups in the plan. The plan is comprehensive in its inclusion of actions in harvest and hatchery management as well as habitat projects and programs. The harvest and hatchery actions appear to mesh well with the habitat actions, and the watershed is currently working on a formal "H-integration" analysis to evaluate this in greater depth.

The updated three-year plan also put more focus on nearshore habitats, important to critical early marine rearing lifestages. This has been possible because of efforts to coordinate among the watersheds with shorelines in the Whidbey basin area. The nearshore protection and restoration projects resulting form this coordination will be important to support the productivity of the Snohomish basin Chinook populations as recovery actions in other areas are implemented.

The updated three-year plan also includes 8 projects related to monitoring and adaptive management, which addresses a gap noted in last year's review.

3. Are there significant components missing from the work program? If so, what are these and what can be done about them in the three-year work program update or at a regional scale?

This plan is very comprehensive and well organized towards specific recovery goals, however, there are several key components that would benefit from increased specificity or inclusion. Addressing water quantity, especially limits on production due to low flows, will be key to Chinook recovery in the Snohomish basin. This is addressed through several capacity-building

projects in the three-year plan and is touched upon in the "basin-wide non-capital/capacity-building" section. These actions are a necessary first step, but they must be designed to lead to specific efforts that will protect and restore natural flow patterns. Habitat regulation and protection actions are mentioned but not with sufficient specificity to understand how they will work, what the staffing requirements will be, and what the expected outcomes will be. Climate change has been recognized as potentially the most significant impediment to the success of this plan, but there are no actions proposed to address this or to better understand its effects so that the plan can be modified in response. All of these items may most effectively addressed by region-wide efforts.

Shared Strategy Objectives

1. Improve the level and certainty of protection for habitat and the 22 existing populations

Habitats in the Snohomish basin that are currently intact are listed, and projects are encouraged to preserve these through acquisition or other means. However, the work program only has a place-holder for developing a comprehensive plan for identifying and protecting currently functioning habitat processes. There does not appear to be an approach to integrating land use planning directly with salmon recovery objectives. The importance of protecting instream flows for salmon recovery is addressed through capacity building and initiation of a process for bringing the appropriate parties together to set water quantity guidelines keyed to salmon recovery objectives. Although there is also a good deal of water quality work underway in the basin, the plan does not include a similar process for coordinating this with salmon recovery.

2. Preserve options for achieving the future role of this population in the ESU?

The work program preserves options for the future role of the Skykomish and Snoqualmie populations in the ESU. The habitat actions in the plan emphasize protection where possible. Wild stock goals are given priority in the harvest and hatchery management plans. The critical life stages that occur in the nearshore marine waters of the Whidbey Basin are now addressed through inter-watershed coordination focusing on that area. This work fills an important gap identified in the TRT review of last year's three-year plan. The plan includes monitoring of actions in each of the "h"'s. These activities will be more effective when they are included into an adaptive management plan that specifies how actions will change based on the outcome of monitoring.

3. Ensure protection and restoration preserves and restores ecosystem processes for Chinook salmon?

The sub basin strategy groupings provide an appropriate structure for assuring that the right kinds of projects will be implemented in locations where they will have the greatest effect on protecting and restoring basin-wide ecosystem processes.

4. Advance the integrated management of harvest, hatchery, and habitat

The coordination among the habitat, harvest, and hatchery management sectors that was clearly evident in the recovery chapter carries through to the updated three-year implementation plan. Hatchery, harvest, and habitat management actions are all designed to move the populations towards the same recovery goals. Harvest management guidelines are based on population performance under current habitat conditions and designed to be modified when habitat conditions change. The hatchery program is designed to provide fish for harvest with minimal impact on wild stock recovery goals. Initial implementation actions in this three-year plan focus on genetic integration of wild fish into the hatchery broodstock and increasing naturalization of the offspring of hatchery-origin fish in the watershed. The updated 3-year implementation plan also includes one project for documenting ecological interactions between hatchery and wild fish in the estuary. Ecological interactions of hatchery and wild fish merit even more attention in this basin.

The watershed is currently working on a formal "H-integration" analysis to evaluate these interactions in greater depth. The analysis includes work on hatchery effects on the Snoqualmie population where there is no in-system hatchery program. This is new work that may prove beneficial throughout the region. The work plan includes one project for documenting the potential genetic interaction between hatchery strays and wild fish, which is very important for the h-integration analysis. H-integration utilizes capacity that could otherwise be applied to other aspects of the plan, but in the view of the TRT these resources are well spent because of the importance of assuring that the actions in all the H's work together.

II. Policy Review Comments

The Recovery Council Work Group, an interdisciplinary policy team, evaluated each of the fourteen watershed work plans. The following questions guided the evaluation of the work plans updates.

1. Is the work program update consistent with the policy feedback and recommendations from the 2004 policy feedback summary, Recovery Plan Watershed Profiles - Results section, and NOAA's Federal Supplement?
2. Is the work program update tied to the objectives identified and at a pace sufficient to achieve the watershed's ten year goals?
3. Are there significant elements missing and how might these be addressed?

In addressing these three questions, the interdisciplinary team noted accomplishments and strengths of the three year work program update and also identified and discussed gaps and special issues warranting attention. Specific comments are provided below, followed by a short discussion of comments common to all watersheds.

General comments on 2007 watershed work program updates

Although the watershed 2007 work program updates reflect advancement in terms of project identification, many of the watersheds continue to have gaps, to varying degrees, that were

identified in the 2006 work program review. Regional assistance to the watershed planning teams will be needed to address how best to fill the needs identified below.

Work Plan Accomplishments, Sequencing and Prioritization: Work program updates are a useful tool for defining progress toward plan goals and ESU-wide recovery. Narratives should be crafted to give a sharper focus on what each watershed expects to accomplish within the three-year period and identifying alternatives if they are unable to implement a given suite of actions. All work program updates could be strengthened by providing more focus on how projects and actions are prioritized and sequenced. It is also important that the narrative provide sufficient information to enable watershed teams and regional reviewers to determine whether the pace of implementation is appropriate to achieve each watershed's ten- year goals.

Integrated Management of Habitat, Harvest and Hatcheries: All Puget Sound watersheds' work programs would benefit from additional efforts to achieve H-Integration. During 2006, all watersheds with Chinook populations have engaged in actions that reflect increased attention to the integrated management of habitat, harvest and hatchery. By the end of 2008, it is anticipated that those watersheds will have completed or substantially advanced efforts to accomplish the 6 Step process developed at the regional level by the H-Integration sub-group of the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Steering Committee. The Shared Strategy and TRT liaisons will continue to assist watersheds without independent Chinook populations concerning integrated management and the capacity of the nearshore to sustain natural- and hatchery-origin populations of all salmonids.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management: A regional monitoring and adaptive management plan is currently being drafted by Shared Strategy staff along with a work group of technical experts, which will guide monitoring efforts at the regional and fish population scales. Some watersheds have already begun putting together their own monitoring and adaptive management frameworks and initial monitoring tasks. The regional team will coordinate with those watersheds to ensure that both of the monitoring and adaptive management plans are consistent and complementary with each other. During the intervening time, the Shared Strategy staff, work group and TRT acknowledge that they play an important role in providing assistance during the coming year to ensure that all Puget Sound watersheds can engage in a coordinated and efficient process to develop, refine and implement a robust monitoring and adaptive management approach. This will enable watersheds and the region to assess progress in reducing uncertainties in the population and ESU-wide recovery. Shared Strategy anticipates that the regional plan will be adopted by the Recovery Council by the end of 2007. In the meantime, the Puget Sound TRT and Shared Strategy liaisons will assist watersheds who are poised to take the next steps in the development of their watershed monitoring and adaptive management plans.

Protecting and restoring ecosystem processes for Chinook and other species by preserving options and addressing threats are critical components of recovery planning both at the local and regional scale. Recovery actions have progressed from relatively straightforward work to complex and more expensive multi-year projects. All watersheds are challenged in terms of their capacity to acquire land in order to secure future options, and to implement the large-scale projects. The Shared Strategy staff and work group members acknowledge that additional efforts are needed at the regional scale to assist in securing resources that will enable watersheds to

protect restoration options in rapidly developing areas and to implement projects at an appropriate pace to achieve ESU-wide recovery.

Water quality and Water Quantity: Water quality and water quantity will continue to be important issues for the long-term recovery of all populations within the ESU.

Work on water quality issues is within the authority of the Washington State Department of Ecology and will be primarily pursued through its implementation of the NPDES permit program and the establishment of TMDLs under the Clean Water Act throughout the ESU. However, watersheds can play an important role in ensuring that local jurisdictions implementing NPDES permits adopt water quality programs that include actions and regulations that protect and enhance water quality in rivers and streams that are critical for salmon recovery.

At the regional level, a work group has been established on instream flows to determine how to move forward the protection strategy identified in the Recovery plan. At present, the Plan calls for a 3-pronged approach to improving instream flows: (1) setting and/or revising instream flows under the authority of the Department of Ecology; (2) improving our scientific understanding of fish population needs in relation to instream flows, groundwater dynamics and relationship to surface water, as well as the implications of climate change on instream flows over time; and (3) coordinating water management decisions and actions within each watershed to avoid further degradation of instream flow conditions through the creation of Protection and Enhancement Programs (PEPs). Watersheds will play an important role in moving these issues forward in the near term. Each watershed should consider (1) advocating for appropriate instream flow rules in places where they are needed; (2) participating in the development of new science by sending technical staff to instream flow workshops planned in 2007; and (3) working with the Department of Ecology to begin creating PEPs in areas where instream flows hinder the recovery of fish populations. The TRT and Shared Strategy liaisons will assist watersheds in advancing water quantity and water quality actions.

Comments Specific to Snohomish 2007 Work Program Update

Significant Advancements:

- The Snohomish work plan update reflects a well thought-out approach for how to implement the goals and priorities identified for salmon recovery in the watershed.
- The work plan update includes a significant advancement in cross-watershed partnerships focusing on the assessment and restoration of the Whidbey Basin.
- Advancement in integrating habitat, harvest, and hatchery pieces of the recovery plan is reflected in the work plan update both in the narrative of progress and projects for future work. This work demonstrates the existing strength of the decision-making body for the Snohomish watershed.
- There is advanced specificity and focus on building outreach and education programs in line with the recovery strategies.
- Important progress has been made in restoration projects.

Issues Needing Advancement:

- Connect work relating to in-stream flows and water quality to the salmon recovery plan.

- Increase focus on protection efforts and land use regulations in relation to salmon recovery. This is a timely issue in light of on-going and projected population growth.
- Capacity need was identified in the work plan update as a significant component to making advancements in salmon recovery. Continuing to address this need, and the articulation of this need, will be an important for this watershed.