

Nisqually Watershed (WRIA 11) Shared Strategy Feedback for Decision Makers

I. Key Questions for Regional Summit: The following questions are important to determine the contributions of the Nisqually watershed to regional salmon recovery in the next ten years. Answers to these questions by the end of December 2004 will support regional consensus on the direction for Puget Sound salmon recovery at the January 2005 summit.

1. Measurable goals for the long-term and the next ten years: Of the habitat, harvest and hatchery conditions necessary for the population which uses your area, which can you make significant progress on in the 10-year timeframe?
2. What conditions are necessary to implement the actions identified in your 10 year timeframe? Are the conditions supported by those responsible for implementation? If funding during the next ten years is not available for all areas where you would like to make significant progress, how would you prioritize actions?
3. What actions are necessary to achieve the protection of existing functions? What conditions must be in place to achieve protection? Are these conditions supported by those responsible for implementation?

II. Based on the chapter submittal, the summer review process, and our best scientific understanding, the Technical Recovery Team and Work Group consider the following policy decisions as the most important to answer and include in the chapter by April 30, 2004. This will increase the certainty that actions in the next ten years will move us on a trajectory toward recovery.

1. Delta Restoration: Confirm timeline and steps to implement a target number of projects to restore the Nisqually delta. (The planning team anticipates that up to 1,000 acres should be restored within the next two years).
2. Riparian Planting and Floodplain restoration: Confirm timeline and steps to implement a target number of riparian planning and floodplain restoration projects.
3. Adaptive Management: Confirm commitment to continue to support the structure that has been put in place to monitor and manage progress toward recovery.
4. Hatchery Management: Develop a hatchery management plan based on an integrated hatchery-wild strategy that will lead to a viable (low risk) population.
5. Harvest Management: Develop a harvest management plan to ensure that the harvest rate is consistent with the natural productivity of the system and ability to meet hatchery management plan objectives.

6. All-H Integration: Steps and timetable to reconcile hatchery management practices and habitat actions and goals
7. Water Quantity: Identification of constraints or conditions which would attach to taking potential actions as recommended in the Watershed Plan and other instream flow studies; timeline and action plan to address instream flow problems

III. Increasing ESU Certainty: The Technical Recovery Team suggests that addressing the following will increase the certainty of meeting ESU recovery and should be noted in the plan with a brief statement of intent and long-term strategy to address, even if actions are not possible to develop at this time.

1. Identify the actions and timeline to protect and restore areas, especially shallow water/low gradient habitats and pocket estuaries, within 5 miles of the Nisqually delta.
2. Continue to develop a strategy to address habitat conditions resulting from the railroad, i.e. separation of upland from aquatic environment and bank armoring.
3. Implement action items that address sediment load, habitat diversity, channel stability and instream flows in the Mashel and Ohop sub watersheds.
4. Protection: Where gaps exist in protection, actions need to be taken to ensure protection is occurring.

IV. Highlights of Summer Review: This section summarizes our understanding of your responses to the six questions from your June submission and August discussions.

A. Information about the planning approach, conditions necessary to achieve recovery, and measurable goals.

1. Planning group: Is there a group working to complete a draft chapter?

The Nisqually Chinook Recovery Team prepared and published the Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan in August 2001. Participants included in the NRT workshops during plan development include the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and National Marine Fisheries Service. The plan was officially adopted by the membership of the Nisqually River Council (NRC) in 2001. Members of the NRC include Thurston County, Pierce County, and incorporated cities within the Nisqually watershed.

2. Recovery Conditions: Has the watershed group identified the conditions (habitat, harvest, and hatchery) necessary to reach recovery?

Yes. The recovery plan includes short term (15 year), mid range (50 years) and long-term (50-100-year timeframe) recovery goals, objectives and action items.

3. Measurable Goals: Has the watershed group endorsed the planning targets as a long term goal? If not, what is their goal?

Yes. Planning targets have been adopted as a long term goal. An adaptive management structure is in place to assess and manage progress toward recovery. The short term, 15 year action plan objective is “to manage terminal area fisheries to provide for all Chinook escapements to the spawning grounds in excess of 1,100 to evaluate production potential and determine the effects of domestication on the ability of this population to succeed in the wild.” The escapement level is expected in result in an average natural origin escapement of 500 adult Chinook over the next 15 years. (Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan, August 2001, p.4)

4. Long Term Contribution to ESU Recovery: What is the long term contribution of the independent spawning populations using this watershed for ESU recovery? To achieve ESU recovery, the TRT draft delisting criteria that all populations show significant improvements. Also, based upon the delisting criteria, 2-4 populations in each of the five sub-regions must achieve the planning targets and other viable salmonid population parameters (VSP). These criteria are not intended to limit additional populations in each of the five regions from achieving the planning targets.

The Nisqually watershed recovery planning team has adopted planning targets. This contribution to ESU recovery is encouraged.

5. Monitoring and Adaptive Management

The recovery plan is in its third year of adaptive management and is currently being updated.

B. Highlights of improvements completed or underway or existing protections of ecological functions that support recovery. Results for fish have not been evaluated.

1. Riparian protection: A prioritized plan of action has resulted in the ensuring that over 67% of the mainstem riparian habitat of the Nisqually River is in permanent protection.
2. Actions to protect the riparian corridor and implement instream-enhancement along the Mashel River and comprehensive habitat restoration of Ohop Creek are underway.
3. Water quality and water quantity: Participating governments recently adopted a watershed plan that addresses water quality and water quantity within the context of salmon recovery.

C. Significant proposals – Proposed strategy that strives to significantly protect or improve an important factor for recovery with actions that can be evaluated qualitatively or quantitatively for their results for fish; total cost of proposal(s)

1. Identification of strategies and actions addressing limiting factors: Habitat conditions have been diagnosed and sets of candidate actions have been identified, analyzed and prioritized based on projected outcomes using EDT.
2. Costs of habitat restoration components of the recovery plan have been estimated for projects, with the exception of water quality, road decommissioning actions, and restoration project in the Interstate 5 corridor.

Total cost of proposal:

Costs of land acquisition, estuary and floodplain restoration, and other habitat restoration project components of the Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan, estimated using the Primer on Habitat Project Costs, total \$34,111,250. This figure excludes costs of road decommissioning, water quality actions, and an extensive restoration project in the I-5 corridor (Habitat Project Costs in the Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan, July 12, 2004, p.1).

D. Poised: The watershed has designed or initiated a process that will result in the development of significant proposals to improve conditions for fish. Anticipated or resulting proposals should be included in the recovery chapter.

1. Hatchery Management Program: The Nisqually Tribe is working with the Hatchery Scientific Review Group to design a program to achieve a programmatic hatchery change in the next to years to become fully integrated with the natural stock.