

San Juan Islands (WRIA 2) Shared Strategy Feedback for Decision-Makers

I. Key Questions for Regional Summit: The following questions are important to determine the contribution of the San Juan Islands 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. What habitat conditions in the San Juans are necessary to support the recovery of the populations which use this area?

It is our understanding from the draft materials submitted on June 30, 2004 and the August meeting with the TRT and Work Group that work needs to be done to improve the specificity and clarity of the answer to this question.

2. Summer review discussions between the TRT, Shared Strategy staff and work group, and representatives from the San Juan Citizen's Committee about regional recovery have focused attention on the key role that San Juan County habitats provide for Puget Sound chinook. San Juan County nearshore and marine habitats currently support the twenty-two chinook populations in Puget Sound at multiple points during their life cycle. These populations are largely considered to be at high risk and will have to increase their abundance, productivity, spatial structure and diversity to achieve recovery. Do decision-makers support the continuation of this role into the future? What policy conditions are necessary to pursue continuing this role? Are these policy conditions supported by those responsible for implementation?
3. The level of protection currently provided for existing habitat functions is still highly uncertain across Puget Sound. The San Juan Islands currently contribute a high degree of functioning habitat to the twenty-two populations in Puget Sound. What is necessary to achieve the protection of existing functions? Would decision-makers endorse a spatially explicit strategy (combining regulatory and voluntary tools) to protect the intact nearshore areas in San Juan County that support salmon recovery? What policy conditions must be in place to achieve protection? Are these policy conditions supported by those responsible for implementation?
4. What are your measurable habitat goals which will support regional recovery in the ten-year timeframe? What policy conditions are necessary to pursue the ten-year measurable habitat goals? Are these policy conditions supported by those responsible for implementation?

II. Essential Decisions for Final Watershed Chapter: Based on the June submittal, the summer review process, and our best scientific understanding, the Technical

Recovery Team and the 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 taken in the next ten years will move us on a trajectory toward recovery.

These questions must be answered after additional work has been completed in Section I.

1. What are your steps and timelines for clarifying and adding specificity to your answer to what conditions are necessary?
2. How will you identify and implement actions based on your measurable habitat goals (specifically your protection strategy)? What are the steps, timeframe and potential costs for reaching your ten-year habitat targets?
3. What are the steps and timelines for articulating policy conditions and determining if these conditions are supported by those with the ability to implement actions?

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 long-term strategy to address even if it is not possible to develop actions at this time.

1. Develop a plan that clearly states hypotheses, strategies, actions and commitments and policy conditions. There is a lot of work occurring in the San Juans, but the plan does not yet describe these activities.
2. Develop and implement a strategy that is spatially explicit in describing intact areas of nearshore and forage fish spawning beaches and habitats and ensures through commitments and conditions that these areas are protected through either regulatory or voluntary means.
3. Determine if impacts from development on beaches, bays and bluffs have significantly degraded habitats critical for recovery in the San Juans and if so what restoration program needs to be implemented.
4. Work with the regional nearshore effort to protect against catastrophic events.

IV. Highlights of Summer Review 2004: This section summarizes our understanding of your responses to the six questions from your June submissions and August discussions.

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

Planning Group: Is there a group working to complete a chapter?

Yes, the San Juan County Citizen's Committee is working to complete a chapter. This group does not have the participation of key decision-makers.

Recovery Conditions: Has the watershed group identified the conditions (habitat, harvest and hatchery) necessary to support the region in reaching the planning targets?

No, though initial work has been completed that informs an answer to this question.

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

The chapter submittal includes the planning targets for all 22 chinook populations, Hood Canal Summer Chum recovery goals and bull trout recovery standards. The chapter was submitted by the Citizen's Committee and has not been endorsed by the San Juan Commissioners or other key decision-makers.

The plan presents a strong vision statement, but no measurable goals.

Quantitatively linking nearshore habitat actions to the planning targets at this time is highly uncertain. In lieu of biological goals measurable habitat goals could be established for the short-term. Measurable habitat goals have not yet been established.

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 recommends 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. These criteria are not intended to limit additional populations in each of the five regions from achieving the planning targets.

All twenty-two chinook populations use the habitats provided in San Juan County. Based on the TRT delisting criteria, nearshore, marine and tributaries to Puget Sound not identified as primary freshwater habitat for any of the 22 identified chinook populations should be functioning in a manner that is sufficient to support an ESU-wide recovery scenario.

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

1. Protection: The implementation of the Critical Area Ordinance and Shoreline Master Program, WDFW's no net loss policy on forage fish and eelgrass and other ordinances and voluntary programs contribute to the protection of habitat functions and values that support chinook.
2. Beach restoration projects initiated by the community have been monitored over the last 6-12 years and have resulted in a reestablishment of backshore vegetation.
3. Water quality: Friday Harbor has upgraded their storm sewer systems.

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)

None have been submitted yet as part of the chapter.

Total Cost of Proposal:

No costs were provided.

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. Eelgrass, marsh, banks and bluffs, forage fish spawning beaches and kelp forests have all been identified and mapped. This information is poised to be used to develop protection strategies.
2. Protection: A significant portion of the shoreline in San Juan is under ownership of federal, state, tribal or other organizational ownership related to resource management. NW Straits Commission is hosting a workshop to explore how these shorelines are currently protected with a component of the discussion focusing on what is necessary to support salmon recovery.
3. Two-thirds of the documented forage fish spawning sites in San Juan have limited riparian coverage and are being targeted for restoration.