

South Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Group

Shared Strategy Feedback for Decision Makers

I. Key Questions for Regional Summit: The following questions are important to determine the contribution of the South Sound 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 are the goals for the long-term and objectives for the next ten years? Of the habitat, harvest and hatchery conditions necessary for the populations that use 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 terms and conditions must be in place to achieve protection? Are the terms and 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 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.

1. Protection: Level of protection for all intact freshwater areas and nearshore (forage fish spawning beaches and habitats) which provide functions and values that support Chinook and bull trout; timeline and steps to provide protection where gaps occur
2. Water Quality: The actions and timeline to address water quality degradation in inlets and restore and maintain dissolved oxygen levels in inlets
3. Water Quantity: timeline and steps to address summer flows and enforce water quantity regulations in specific stream reaches as identified in the WRIAs 13 and 14 Limiting Factors Analyses
4. Adaptive Management: identification of an adaptive management structure to monitor and manage progress toward recovery goals and objectives

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 actions are not possible to develop at this time.

1. Develop measurable habitat restoration goals addressing ecological processes and conditions.

2. Identify the actions and timeline to protect and restore nearshore habitat within a 5 mile radius of the Nisqually River, recognizing that there may be actions outside of that area that should be taken to provide benefits for fish.
3. Deschutes River estuary: Conduct a preliminary assessment of the feasibility and redesign for restoration of the Deschutes River estuary to support the populations that use the South Sound
4. 3-H Integration: Steps and timetable necessary to reconcile hatchery and harvest management practices and habitat actions and goals

IV. Highlights of Summer Review: This section summarizes our understanding of your responses to the six questions from the 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?

Yes. The group includes biologists from the Squaxin Island Tribe, Nisqually Tribe, WDFW and Thurston County; policy representation from Mason County and Thurston County, and representatives of PSAT, DNR, and the South Puget Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group.

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

The South Sound technical committee has determined that it lacks sufficient information to identify measurable goals and to quantify the habitat conditions for Chinook populations that use the South Sound. Instead, the South Sound technical committee has identified habitat functions and intact areas for protection. Co-managers are currently identifying harvest and hatchery management practices for the purpose of 3-H integration.

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

The South Sound Recovery Planning Group's planning efforts are focused on functions and values of nearshore, marine habitat that serves multiple Chinook populations, and freshwater tributaries not identified as primary freshwater habitat for any of the 22 identified Chinook populations. Decision makers have not yet adopted habitat goals.

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 recommend 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 Central and South Sound Chinook populations that must achieve the VP parameters to meet the TRT delisting criteria have not been defined, with the exception of the White River (early run) Chinook.

To achieve 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 ESU-wide recovery. The South Sound Recovery Planning team is planning largely for the nearshore and freshwater tributaries. The Nisqually River Chinook planning team has adopted the long term planning targets for the Nisqually population; this contribution to ESU recovery is encouraged.

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

1. Fish Access: Several fish access and passage improvements through culvert removals and replacements have been completed and/or are underway.
2. Riparian: The implementation of Fish and Forest and Habitat Conservation Plans contribute to the protection of riparian functions and values that support chinook and bull trout.
3. Regulatory protections: The implementation of each jurisdiction's Critical Areas Ordinance, Shoreline Master Program, and other ordinances and voluntary programs contribute to the protection of habitat functions and values that support Chinook and bull trout foraging, migrating and over-wintering habitat. These programs have not been assessed by the Shared Strategy Work Group for the magnitude of protection they provide.

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. Regulatory Protections: Pierce County has proposed a revised Critical Areas Ordinance (“Directions”) that is expected to provide protections for habitats that provide important values and functions for Chinook and other salmon species. Thurston County will be updating its Critical Areas Ordinance using Best Available Science shortly.
2. Regulatory Improvements: Integration of recovery protection and actions into state, tribal and local government plans, policies and development regulations and development of a strategic plan for improving project review and enforcement activities.

Total Cost of Proposal: Note: Potential acquisition and restoration actions for which estimates are provided are still under development have not yet been submitted to potential implementers for consideration.

- Regulatory Improvements and development of a strategic plan: \$500,000
- Acquisition: \$3 million
- Restoration efforts: \$99 million

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. Nearshore Assessments: The completed assessment of the majority of the South Puget Sound shoreline provides the basis for the identification, protection and restoration actions of functions and values in intact nearshore areas.
2. The draft provides a characterization of natural process functions and habitat functions and general actions to address human-induced stressors in identified intact areas.
3. Water Quality: The draft includes an informative discussion of water quality issues and conditions that can be incorporated into salmon recovery planning activities. Resolution of the appropriate nutrient baseline condition and management targets will improve habitat conditions for fish.
4. Protection: Thurston County is preparing a revised Critical areas Ordinance that is expected to provide protections for habitats that provide important functions and values for Chinook and bull trout.
5. All-H Integration: WDFW, the Nisqually Tribe and Squaxin Island Tribe are analyzing hatchery and harvest management practices and are committed to All-H integration.
6. Formation of a South Puget Sound Advisory Science Team is under consideration to direct science-based analyses and recommendations for salmon recovery based on adaptive management.
7. Formation of a regional forum for cooperative, inter-jurisdictional salmon recovery planning and expansion of recovery efforts to include all South Puget Sound salmonids in the nearshore and freshwater environments.