

Shared Strategy for Puget Sound Comments on April 2006 Three Year Work Plan South Puget Sound Salmon Recovery

Introduction

In April, 2006, watersheds prepared three-year work programs that would enable them to get on a recovery trajectory in the first three years of recovery plan implementation. The work programs were reviewed by the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team (TRT) and the Shared Strategy Interdisciplinary Policy Team. Technical and policy feedback on the South Puget Sound Salmon Recovery three-year work program is provided below.

This feedback is intended to assist your watershed as you refine your three-year work program and continue with implementation of your recovery plan. The feedback will also be used by the TRT and Shared Strategy Work Group to inform the development of the regional work plan. A summary of the work plans was developed by Shared Strategy staff to stimulate discussion on recovery objectives to determine what the best investments are for salmon recovery over the next three years.

Objectives provided as guidance for the development of work programs

The following objectives were provided as guidance to watersheds in the development of their work programs. The Shared Strategy Work Group and TRT developed the objectives pursuant to consultation with watershed implementation leads and the Recovery Council.

- Improve the level and certainty of protection for habitat
- Protect the twenty two existing Chinook populations by beginning to address the most immediate and potentially greatest threats that could cause populations to decline in this timeframe
- Preserve options for increasing ESU diversity
- Restore ecosystem processes for Chinook and other species by preserving options for habitat restoration, and by addressing the most immediate and potentially greatest threats in
 - estuarines
 - mainstem
 - upper watershed
 - freshwater tributaries and nearshore
 - water quality and quantity
- Advance the integrated management of harvest, hatchery and habitat to address the most immediate and potentially greatest threats
- Continue to expand and deepen individual and community support for key priorities
- Develop and implement adaptive management and monitoring program
 - monitoring
 - accountability system for evaluation and decision making

- Build capacity in each watershed to implement the full breadth of prioritized programs and projects needed to get on a recovery trajectory in the first three years
- Support multi-species

I. Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team Review Comments

The TRT reviewed fourteen individual watershed salmon recovery three-year work plans in May 2006. Three questions were addressed in their review and discussions:

1. Is the watershed work plan consistent with the hypotheses and strategy for their watershed? (*The 'plan' includes hypotheses and strategies in the larger plan, including watershed plan, TRT review comments and NOAA Supplement comments.*)
2. Is the sequencing and timing of their work plan appropriate for the first three years of implementation?
3. Are there significant components missing from the work plan? If so, what are they? What can be done about them in the three-year work plan?

The TRT's comments in response to these three questions are provided below.

Consistency with the hypotheses and strategy in the May 2005 plan

- Mostly. Little information is provided to determine why specific projects were chosen in freshwater and nearshore parts of South Sound. For example,
 - Why are there so many projects in deeper South Sound (around the Deschutes), rather than in the northern parts of South Sound, where there are likely to be more benefits to Nisqually and White River fish?
 - Projects that improve habitat structure within streams are important, but higher benefits for Chinook would be realized were protection of nearshore and freshwater quantity and quality improvements to receive higher priority ranking.
- There are more studies/assessments and restoration projects listed than protection/acquisition projects for both nearshore and freshwater areas.
- Not enough information is provided to enable reviewers to understand how prioritization of projects within and among sub-basins, freshwater vs. nearshore, would proceed if the full funding is not attained for the projects on their list.

Sequencing and timing

- Mostly. Justification for some of the high priority projects is not clear. For example, why is a LWD project in the Deschutes (hatchery fish benefit) a high priority?

- Higher benefits to Chinook would be realized were projects that protect the nearshore and freshwater quantity and quality improvements ranked more highly than those that improve habitat structure within streams.

Significant components missing

- The hypothesized interaction between hatchery and wild fish in the South Sound region is not spelled out. As habitat recovery and hatchery improvement actions are put in place, what is the expected effect on hatchery and wild fish interactions? Where are hatchery origin and wild fish likely to co-occur, in what numbers, and for how long? What will be the likely outcomes of those interactions? How will they monitor these and make needed adjustments in hatchery or habitat strategies over time?
- The work program would be strengthened by addressing how harvest strategies interact with hatchery and habitat strategies and how they may be adjusted over time as needed, e.g. fishing rates on hatchery stocks and their effects on wild fish recovery. Another question to be addressed is how harvest rate targets affect release numbers for hatchery fish, and how those rates affect the anticipated benefits of habitat projects.

It is important that watershed recovery planners refer to the May 2005 Technical Gap Analysis to ensure that uncertainties are addressed in the adaptive management plan and work program refinements.

II. Policy Review Comments

The Shared Strategy Interdisciplinary Policy Team evaluated each of the fourteen watershed work plans. The following questions guided the evaluation of the work plans.

1. Is the work program consistent with the policy feedback and recommendations from the 2004 documents (“Watershed Policy Feedback Summaries”, Recovery Plan December 2005, Volume I, Watershed Profiles results sections, and NOAA’s federal supplement published in the Federal Register on Dec. 16, 2005)?
2. Is the work program tied to the objectives identified at a pace sufficient to achieve the watershed’s ten –year goals?
3. Are there significant elements missing and how might these be addressed?

The interdisciplinary policy review team noted strengths of the South Sound three-year work program, issues warranting special attention, and gaps and uncertainties that were also found other watersheds’ work programs. Specific comments are provided below, followed by a short discussion of comments common to all watershed work programs. The watershed planning team is encouraged to review the specific the policy and TRT comments that appear in the South Sound watershed profile in volume I of the Draft Salmon Recovery Plan (December 2006).

- The work program includes projects that address nearshore stressors identified in the recovery plan.

- There is a continuing need to identify which geographic areas within South Sound should be targeted for priority protection and restoration actions.
- Water quality remains a significant concern. The extent to which water quantity and water quality issues are being addressed is not evident in the work program project list and narrative.
- Plan refinement and implementation will benefit from addressing the need to develop an organizational structure and capacity for technical-policy discussions and deliberations.

Elements in common with other watershed work programs

All Puget Sound watersheds' work program refinements and recovery plan implementation activities will benefit from additional efforts to achieve H-Integration and the development of an adaptive management plan. Protecting and restoring ecosystem processes for Chinook and other species by preserving options and addressing threats is a critical component of recovery planning both at the local and regional scale. Strengthening the capacity to implement needed actions and to expand and deepen support for recovery program objectives is critical to ESU recovery. Recommendations to stimulate discussions on how to achieve these objectives are contained in a Shared Strategy document entitled "Watershed Work Plans related to Key Puget Sound Recovery Objectives."

As is true with technical feedback, it is important that the South Sound recovery planning team continue to refer to the 2005 policy feedback and regional recovery plan (Vol. 1) as it refines recovery plan components. As the work plan is refined, it will also be helpful for the watershed to review the December 2005 draft recovery plan chapter "Regional, Watershed and Marine Aspects of Salmon Recovery in Puget Sound."