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Board Study Session

January 9, 2007

Meeting Notes

Topic: Shared Salmon Strategy with Kathleen Peters, Kitsap County East Kitsap Peninsula Lead Entity Coordinator

Salmon Habitat Restoration:

The legislative language at the beginning of the Salmon Recovery Act reads: “The legislature finds that repeated attempts to improve salmon fish runs throughout the state of Washington have failed to avert listings of salmon and steelhead runs as threatened or endangered under the federal endangered species act (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.). These listings threaten the sport, commercial, and tribal fishing industries as well as the economic well-being and vitality of vast areas of the state. It is the intent of the legislature to begin activities required for the recovery of salmon stocks as soon as possible, although the legislature understands that successful recovery efforts may not be realized for many years because of the life cycle of salmon and the complex array of natural and human-caused problems they face”.

Local watersheds were asked to organize themselves along agreed-upon geographic lines into *lead entities*. The lead entities established a formal process for picking and prioritizing projects for funding by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, which was also created by this legislation. There are 15 lead entities in the Puget Sound region.

The East Kitsap Peninsula watershed lead entity is Kitsap County. The East Kitsap Peninsula area extends from Foulweather Bluff in the north to Anderson Island in the south, including other islands such as Bainbridge, Fox, and McNeil. It includes the eastern Kitsap peninsula, Gig Harbor, and Key Peninsulas as well.

The Hood Canal watershed lead entity is the Hood Canal Coordinating Council.

The geographic area for the East Kitsap Peninsula watershed consists of 360 miles of near-shore habitat, and 125 low-gradient, groundwater-fed streams that have salmon present.

Each watershed lead entity has a technical advisory group made up of biologists, engineers and other agency staff who are familiar with the area, *e.g.* for the East Kitsap Peninsula, familiar with its watersheds and salmon populations. Long-time members of the East Kitsap Peninsula technical team are Paul Dorn (Suquamish Tribe), Doris Small (Dept. of Fish & Wildlife) and Peter Namtvedt-Best (City of Bainbridge Island). Jim Bolger (Kitsap County) was also a member of the technical team for several years.

The Citizen's Committee, which reviews and prioritizes projects for funding by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), is comprised of local citizens who volunteer for the lead entity committee process. The technical and citizen committees developed and approved a strategy for salmon habitat restoration which is science-based and multi-species focused.

The factors ranked for project selection are:

1. Benefits to salmon from the project
2. Certainty of success of the project (ability of organization to deliver)
3. Consistency with the East Kitsap Strategy
4. Education, Outreach, and Partnerships
5. Cost appropriateness

A total of 19 projects have been funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board in the East Kitsap Lead Entity up to 2005. Since then, the sixth and seventh rounds of funding have added 9 more projects to the East Kitsap total.

Salmon Recovery under the Endangered Species Act

There are three species that were listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act:

- Puget Sound Chinook (also called King Salmon, the largest of the species)
- Bull Trout
- Hood Canal Summer Chum.

Hood Canal Summer Chum spawn much earlier than the late fall chum runs in the rest of Puget Sound. They reside in Hood Canal and the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca. Bull trout are members of the char subgroup of the salmon family. They require very cold, clean water to thrive, as found in mountain streams. Kitsap County is not a part of the critical habitat listed for the recovery of this species.

That leaves only Chinook salmon to include in the East Kitsap Peninsula recovery plan. They need big rivers for depositing their eggs. The East Kitsap Peninsula does not have the big snow-fed rivers that are the typical spawning habitat for these fish; but does have shorelines with the habitat important as their food source and residence while they are in Puget Sound.

Salmon need clean gravel in stream beds and cool water for their reproduction – they return from the sea as mature adults to spawn each year in rivers. When the fry emerge from the gravel, they stay in the stream for anywhere from a few days to a year or more, then move into salt water to feed and grow.

Shared Strategy for Puget Sound:

The Federal government wants to use locally developed and agreed-to recovery plans for taking salmon off the Endangered Species list. The Shared Strategy for Puget Sound is a non-profit organization created as a collaborative initiative that includes federal, tribal, state and local governments, businesses and conservation groups. They created the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Draft plan submitted in June 2005. The draft plan was completed and submitted to the Federal Government through their agency NOAA Fisheries. The plan's adoption is scheduled for Jan. 19, 2007.

East Kitsap Salmon Recovery Planning:

East Kitsap is one of the 14 Shared Strategy for Puget Sound watersheds. The Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council was included in discussions, as part of the Countywide Planning Policies.

The East Kitsap chapter of the Shared Strategy of Puget Sound was written collaboratively by the state, Kitsap County, the Suquamish Tribe, and the City of Bainbridge Island. That chapter and all of the documents in the Salmon Recovery Plan are considered to be *living* documents, to be updated frequently. For instance, a three-year work plan written in 2006 was added.

Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council:

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council was formed in 2006 by the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound after the draft Salmon Recovery Plan was submitted to the federal government. The Kitsap Regional Council was asked to represent the East Kitsap Watershed on the Council; Mayor Darlene Kordonowy is the representative. This is the policy group tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Salmon Recovery Plan.

One task for the Puget Sound Recovery Council is decision-making on funding allotments for watersheds for the Puget Sound projects, to be funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. In 2006, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board decided to fund projects that are a part of the formal Salmon Recovery Plan, for the entire region; this is a shift from individual watershed recovery strategies.

Puget Sound Partnership

The Puget Sound Partnership was formed by Governor Gregoire; she asked the members of the Partnership for recommendations of actions to be taken to protect and clean-up Puget Sound.

The Partnership met 9 times in 2006 – Kitsap was well-represented on this group with Commissioner Patty Lent, Senator Phil Rockefeller, Representative Sherry Appleton, and Congressmen Jay Inslee and Norm Dicks participating. The recommendations were given to the Governor in December 2006.

Five Actions Recommended to the Governor:

- Clean up areas with immediate septic problems
- Protect Puget Sound habitat
- Implement priority projects (salmon plans)
- Accelerate clean-up and control of toxins and pollution
- Significantly reduce polluted storm water run-off

The 2007 Legislative Session which began yesterday will take action on the recommendations.

There is also a recommendation to form a new state agency to oversee the integration of existing plans. The work of several organizations will probably be rolled up into this initiative – including the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound.

The County is in the process of forming the East Kitsap Watershed Forum in order to continue evaluating the lead entity project proposals and to serve as the organization that will implement the Puget Sound Partnership actions. In November 2006, the Board of County Commissioners sent letters inviting all of the cities, tribes and other counties (Pierce, Mason) to participate. The County has applied for a grant from the State Department of Ecology to add new tasks, *e.g.* integrating storm water planning and other water plans with the salmon plan.

The first meeting to organize the Forum is January 25 @ 10:30 a.m. at the Kitsap County Administration Building - anyone is invited. The main focus of the first meeting will be housekeeping, *e.g.* setting up by-laws, and continuing the work of selecting projects for the eighth round of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.