



Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council

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Executive Director

* *alternate*
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Board Study Session March 6, 2007

Meeting Notes

Topic: Beyond Salmon Strategy: The East Kitsap Watershed Forum *presented by Peter Namtvedt Best, Natural Resource Planner, City of Bainbridge Island*

Introduction of the Forum:

Plans are underway to take our local watershed recovery to a new level by way of the proposed ***East Kitsap Watershed Forum***. A watershed is defined as a region or area bounded peripherally by a divide and draining ultimately to a particular watercourse or body of water. There are 14 sub-watersheds in this one large eco-region.

The Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council has had a seat on the Salmon Recovery Council for the past two years. Past Kitsap Regional Council Chair Darlene Kordonowy expressed the importance of the eco-system based resource management efforts this Forum will exercise. Participants with varied environmental specialties will partner with the Forum making the targeting of grant funding much simpler than it is today due to the regional presence it will represent. Forum innovators will spend 2007 expanding upon and refining their group and efforts with plans to take action by the end of 2008.

Environmental Status and Trends:

Current signs show trouble for local marine water quality and wildlife. Beaches closed for recreation, disappearing wildlife, and declining environmental health degrade our local quality of life. Degraded natural systems affect the way we live and our opportunities for economic growth in areas such as tourism.

Tribes are important partners in resource management as they are still recognized as owning all natural resources and serve as co-managers with the Washington State Department of Fisheries. They are reliant upon a healthy eco-system for spiritual and cultural practices which are inherent in their daily living. Significant decline in resources from historic levels have severely limited their access to such rights. The Tribes urge all jurisdictions to “pull together in this canoe.”

Eco-system-Based Management:

Eco-system may be defined as *the complex of a community of organisms and its environment functioning as a single ecological unit*. Managing the entirety of an eco-system makes boundary lines irrelevant, including political boundaries. One must look at all aspects of the system to fix the whole -- fragmentation has been tried and now all of those fragments need to blend in to the whole.

Managing at the eco-system level is a growing scientific trend: eco-system solutions, which often cross jurisdictional lines.

Nearshore assessments have been conducted and considered from an eco-system point of view. We have moved out of a regional scale and into a sub regional watershed with multiple counties and cities “pulling together” to get our peninsula, or estuary, wholly repaired.

Existing Activities

Individual jurisdictions have been affected by or have already addressed some watershed issues via comprehensive plans, critical area ordinances, shoreline management programs, storm-water programs (non-point pollution discharge elimination systems), sewer and water systems, education and stewardship programs. Countywide conservation efforts have also been addressed via the Countywide Planning Policies and local salmon recovery entities. These entities include contribution from the Tribes, Washington State, local government agencies, citizens, volunteers and partnerships that are overseen by local Kitsap County staff. The Washington State Recovery Act has identified Kitsap County as the lead entity responsible for implementing salmon recovery and is the provider of funding for such efforts.

Numerous volunteer agencies are participating in recovery and conservation, including:

- WRIA 15 – Water Resource Planning Group
- Kitsap Nearshore Coordination Group
- SSWM Advisory Committee
- Kitsap Environmental Education Program
- Fish and Shellfish Harvesting

Forum Need, Vision and Current Status

The goal is to consolidate the efforts of all agencies, both volunteer and funded, into one coordination and resource management entity. This will enable higher efficiency from a smaller and concentrated staff. This style of management will provide more consistency and provide the capacity and flexibility to achieve local and regional goals. They will serve as one official conduit for state and federal funds, enabling the group to fairly address local needs and priorities. This staff will provide representation at the regional and state level.

Benefits of the Forum will include:

- Healthier eco-systems
- Better quality of life
- Efficient use of local staff and resources
- Increased state and federal funding
- Shared knowledge and experience
- Parity with other watersheds
- And most importantly will be more organized for what’s coming down the pike!

XYZ has provided a \$50,000 grant for organizational development, including setting up regular meeting schedules, establishing a website, writing status reports using monitoring data accumulated thus far, identifying recommendations and formalizing the organization by the end of 2007.

Points of discussion:

- The Kitsap Regional Council is a multi-jurisdictional agency. Would it make sense for a Collaborative Strategies sub-group to receive the reports and report to the Regional Council Board, instead of having reports to the individual jurisdictions?
- Part of the job of the lead entity is to come to each of the jurisdictions to ask how the elected officials want to participate. An independent web site will provide access to information that is all in one place. Later in 2007, there will be a gathering of our local elected officials. The Forum is trying to bring together funding mechanisms. There is 7.5 million in the Governor's budget and other money is being moved around in different bills.
- The citizen's group that was doing the prioritizing of the watershed projects in the County will be participating in the Forum meetings and working on the transition. There are three different technical review committees (federal, regional, and local) that make projects lists; the citizen group will help organize them and rank the projects.
- The Puget Sound is a gigantic estuary and our job is to clean it up and make it vital and healthy! The Kitsap Mayors talk about our "hamlets" on the waterfront, but without significant work on our eco-management, the hamlets will suffer. Every watershed must work together to clean our estuary; unless we keep our eco-system in line, it will be a worse place to live.
- Participation in the Forum is voluntary, and its intention is to find greater opportunities to discuss and coordinate benefits for all.
- There are no Port representatives identified yet, but the Ports have participated in various activities in the past.