

Stillaguamish Watershed (WRIA 5) Shared Strategy Feedback for Decision-Makers

I. Key Questions for Regional Summit: The following questions are important to determine the contribution of the Stillaguamish watershed 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. The following questions are intended to confirm the goals and measurable outcomes the watershed is pursuing for salmon recovery and key decision-maker support for this approach.

1. We are asking many watersheds to answer the question of where they can make significant progress in the 10 year timeframe relative to the planning targets. It is our understanding from the draft materials submitted on June 30, 2004 and the August meeting with the TRT and Work Group that the significant proposals stated in Section IV below comprise the Stillaguamish Implementation Review Committee's answer to this question.
2. The SIRC support of the current chapter is a strong basis to support pursuit of commitments and conditions from key decision-makers. Do the Snohomish County Council, the city councils, the Stillaguamish Tribal Council, the Tulalip Tribe's Board of Directors and other stakeholders (DNR, USFS, small woodlot owners, agricultural members) endorse pursuing the planning targets and other viable salmonid population parameters, the proposed 10 year actions and the policy recommendations in the plan if done so consistent with the guiding principles?
3. What policy conditions are necessary to pursue the planning targets, the proposed 10 year actions and the policy recommendations identified in the plan? Are these policy conditions supported by those responsible for implementation?
 - i. Specifically, protection of existing function is still highly uncertain across Puget Sound. What is necessary to achieve the protection of existing functions? What policy conditions must be in place to achieve protection? Are these policy conditions supported by those responsible for implementation?
 - ii. To increase the certainty of the benefit of the significant proposals listed in Section IV below it is important to develop in the short-term a comprehensive strategy for floodplain management, peak flows and sediment transport. We recognize that this work may change some of the projects or priorities currently put forward in the 10 year action plan. Do those impacted by floodplain management, peak flows and sediment transport commit to develop comprehensive strategies to address these issues?

- iii. Will decision-makers protect existing flows and establish potential steps for resolving low flow issues in this timeframe?
4. The South Fork Stillaguamish population is at a high risk of extinction due to low spawner numbers with high relative contribution of strays from nearby natural and hatchery stocks. Do the co-managers commit to include a strategy for protection and restoration of the South Fork population in the chapter? Do stakeholders agree to place a high priority on protection of existing functions that support the South Fork population to ensure that this population is not further degraded in the short-term?
5. If funding during the next ten years is not available for all areas where you would like to make significant progress, how will decision-makers prioritize actions?

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. The questions below are intended to provide more detailed information for the final plan by focusing specifically on how the goals and measurable outcomes will be accomplished.

1. Protection of existing function will be critical to achieving the desired 10 year results. How will local governments protect existing function as detailed in the plan through adoption and enforcement of their CAO/SMP updates and comprehensive plans? How will stakeholders such as land trusts, non-profits, and individual landowners protect existing functions and habitats not protected through regulatory mechanisms consistent with the habitat goals stated in the plan?
2. What are the steps and timeline necessary to complete a comprehensive strategy for floodplain management, peak flows and sediment transport?
3. Habitat, harvest and hatchery integration is critical given the role that the Stillaguamish Chinook Natural Stock Restoration program plays in supporting the North Fork population and the potential role a rebuilding program would plan for the South Fork. What hatchery and harvest actions will the co-managers include for the 10-year plan and what results will those actions, combined with the habitat actions, have for fish?
4. How will decision-makers protect existing flows? What are the steps and potential timelines for resolving low flow issues?

5. How will adaptive management be structured to monitor and manage progress toward recovery? Will existing programs and resources, such as Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, contribute to monitoring efforts?

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. Significant proposals listed above appear likely to be diminished without a comprehensive strategy and set of actions to address floodplain management, peak flows and sediment transport.
2. Low flows need to be restored in the areas noted as impacting recovery.
3. A strategy with actions for the protection and restoration of shoreline habitats consistent with the life history trajectories of natal and non-natal populations needs to be developed. This includes an approach to protection and restoration of the shallow water/low gradient habitats, pocket estuaries and eelgrass habitat within five miles of the Stillaguamish delta. It also includes the continued need to protect against dissolved oxygen and eutrophication problems associated with sewage outfalls, spills or agricultural run-off.
4. There is a significant gap between what is being proposed for the 10 year timeframe and the overall recovery need. What is the strategy for closing these gaps over time and do the principles accurately portray the conditions by which decision-makers could commit to working towards the planning targets?
5. H-integration: A habitat, harvest and hatchery integration strategy must be reflected in the recovery plans. The strategy should describe the development and use of tools to assess the combined effects of habitat, harvest and hatchery actions.
6. Protection: Evaluate each jurisdiction's Critical Area Ordinance, Shoreline Master Program and other ordinances and voluntary programs relative to the needs stated for recovery in the plan. Where gaps exist in protection, determine what actions are needed.
7. Discuss connectivity between Skagit Bay and Port Susan and the potential benefits increased connectivity would contribute to recovery.

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 draft chapter?

Yes, the Stillaguamish Implementation Review Committee is a multi-stakeholder group committed to writing and implementing the plan. The committee does not have the involvement of decision-makers for some of the key actions necessary.

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

Yes

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

Yes, the SIRC has endorsed the planning targets.

The SIRC also provided habitat targets for the 10 year timeframe and results predicted for the fish from those efforts relative to diversity, abundance and productivity. They have generally described implementation and adaptive management and the SIRC's role in measuring progress.

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

The watershed planning team has adopted planning targets. This contribution is encouraged.

Multiple populations use the nearshore and marine environments of Snohomish County, however, the ten chinook populations most likely to intensely use these habitats for juvenile rearing come from the Snohomish, Stillaguamish and Skagit rivers. The Snohomish group has currently endorsed the planning targets and is working to achieve low risk populations. The Skagit river system does not currently have a group that

has determined the goal they are trying to achieve. However, the TRT delisting criteria would encourage some if not all Skagit populations to achieve the planning targets. 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. Specifically, this means that the contribution of Snohomish County nearshore and marine habitat will need in the long term to be consistent with the role for the Skagit, Stillaguamish and Snohomish populations if these aspirations are to be met.

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 each jurisdiction's Critical Area Ordinance and Shoreline Master Program, Forest and Fish and other ordinances and voluntary programs contribute to the protection of habitat functions and values that support chinook and bull trout.
2. Harvest: Significant reductions in harvest have been made by the co-managers. Current co-manager harvest rates are sufficiently low to allow the populations to grow when other factors (improved freshwater and nearshore habitat, improved marine survival) allow.
3. Hatchery: The Hatchery Genetic Management Plan (HGMP) for Harvey Creek is being implemented to support the recovery goals for the North Fork population.
4. Floodplain conditions: Protection and restoration actions have been taken to improve floodplain conditions.
5. Riparian restoration and protection: Voluntary plantings have occurred in the basin and existing CAOs offer some protection to riparian corridors.
6. Sediment reduction: Logging road decommissioning is currently being implemented.
7. Estuary: Significant land acquisition has occurred in Port Susan and restoration actions have been implemented through innovative partnerships between the Stillaguamish Tribe and the farming community.

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)

The following proposals were included in the June 30th, 2004 submittal and results are based on EDT modeling that has not been verified by the TRT.

1. Protection: Protect 1,445 acres.

2. Sediment: Address the 2 most significant landslides and 106 miles of logging roads. 124 miles of road have been identified as unstable though the result treating these will have on fish is not known relative to meeting their properly functioning conditions goal of less than 12% concentrations of fine sediments in spawning areas.
3. LWD: Install 51 log jams out of a projected recovery need of 3,700 pieces.
4. Riparian: Plant 400 acres out of a projected recovery need of 8,000 acres.
5. Floodplain conditions: Restore 30 acres. Recovery need is calculated at restoring 4.1 miles of hardened bank.
6. Estuary: Restore or create 325 acres of estuarine habitat out of a projected recovery need of 3,500 acres.
7. It is believed that the actions stated above will contribute to reductions in nutrient loading and high temperatures.
8. Harvest: Rebuilding exploitation rates (RER) are used to regulate impacts to the chinook populations and were set at a maximum of 25% for natural origin fish.
9. Hatchery: 220,000 sub-yearling North Fork Stillaguamish-origin summer chinook are scheduled to be released each year to contribute to increased natural spawners.

The result that EDT predicts these proposals will have for fish is:

South Fork: Diversity: 45% to 79%
 Productivity: 1.4 to 3.4
 Capacity: 3,028 to 4,543
 Abundance: 861 to 3,196

North Fork: Diversity: 58% to 86%
 Productivity: 2.7 to 5.4
 Capacity: 3,839 to 7,316
 Abundance: 2,430 to 5,950

The harvest model predicts a 93% probability that the North Fork population will stay above the maximum sustainable harvest level under the plan given recent low marine survival and poor freshwater conditions. If marine and freshwater conditions improve, the probability is even higher.

Total Cost of Proposal: The total cost for habitat improvements for the 10 year timeframe: Approximately \$43,000,000

These actions were proposed, but were not modeled as part of EDT. The SIRC did not include these in their 10 year action program, but cited them as important recommendations for consideration.

1. Forest practices: The plan specifies four key policies important to support the salmon recovery plan.

2. Water quality: The plan recommends local jurisdictions adopt Ecology's Stormwater Manual for Western Washington and specifies two key policies important to support the salmon recovery plan.
3. Illegal harvest: The plan recommends increased enforcement by the Stillaguamish Tribe and WDFW to address illegal harvest.

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. CAO and SMP updates: Snohomish County is currently in the process of updating their CAO and SMP. Both WRIA 5 and WRIA 7 have recovery plans that define areas critical to protect in support salmon recovery.
2. Water quantity:
Low flows: DOE and the Stillaguamish Tribe have identified streams that currently are providing flows believed to support salmon recovery and are in process of setting flows to protect these from future withdrawals.