



I: Letter from WDFW to Shared Strategy on Recovery Plan Implementation



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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February 15, 2006

Mr. Bill Ruckelshaus, Chair
Puget Sound Shared Strategy
1411 - 4th Avenue, Suite 1015
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Bill,

Congratulations on the completion of the Regional Salmon Recovery Plan for Puget Sound. It is an outstanding document, and provides a valuable roadmap for salmon recovery in Puget Sound. More importantly it represents a consensus of federal, state, local and tribal governments, is based on sound scientific principles and was developed in partnership with local citizens and watershed groups. I am particularly proud of the role that Lead Entities played in the development of the plan.

Implementation of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan will take coordinated, dedicated efforts of all organizations with a stake in salmon recovery. It will also take leadership and commitment. Broadening the Development Committee to include leadership from each of the watersheds and other organizations that have a clear role in implementation is an excellent step and I look forward to joining you on February 15th to meet the new group. I gladly accept your request for the continued participation of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) on this new regional leadership group.

I also want to assure you that WDFW is committed to implementing the components of salmon recovery that fall under our jurisdiction. As you know there are many areas where WDFW will play a key role in salmon recovery. I am committed to ensure WDFW continues to address the important building blocks of recovery summarized below.



- **All-H Integration:** One of our greatest priorities for 2006 is to move ahead quickly on All-H Integration. WDFW will work with tribes, Shared Strategy and watersheds to advance this important aspect of successful salmon recovery. We are starting this process with an All-H Integration work group on February 17th. The group includes members of Puget Sound’s Technical Review Team, NOAA, Shared Strategy workgroup, Hatchery Scientific Review Group, Tribes and WDFW. It is my goal, that by the end of the year, we have advanced all-H integration so that each watershed can produce a chapter similar to the “Integration” chapter in the Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation plan.
- **Harvest Management:** The co-manager’s Puget Sound Chinook Comprehensive Harvest Management plan serves as the scientific foundation for the development of annual protection strategies that are consistent with the conservation and recovery of naturally spawning fish. The implementation of this plan is having positive results with proven increases in the numbers of listed salmon on the spawning grounds. The plan has long recognized the importance of adaptive management, and that evolution in harvest management will occur in response to improved understanding of the status and productivity of populations. To that end, in conjunction with the upcoming H-Integration process, WDFW intends to review assessment data and ensure that the incidental harvest of Chinook is consistent with estimates of productivity and recovery of the Puget Sound ESU. In short, we must be progressive in where and how to focus harvest opportunities to assure both healthy populations and healthy fisheries.
- **Hatchery Reform:** The Hatchery Scientific Review provided valuable guidelines and principles to reform hatchery programs. While over 700 of the 1,100 actions are underway, significant work remains to be done. Watershed by watershed, WDFW’s hatchery objectives will be reviewed as part of the H-Integration process. This review may lead to changes in hatchery goals and objectives or operations or both. When changes are identified by the co-managers, a hatchery program will be re-evaluated using the scientific tools provided through the hatchery reform process to ensure that the hatchery program is the appropriate size and type for helping to achieve harvest and conservation goals for the watershed.
- **Habitat:** The Department is supporting implementation of salmon recovery plans through five major efforts:
 - **Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership (PSNP):** The WDFW is the lead non-federal partner in the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project. The Army Corps of Engineers project is working to complete a science-based feasibility study for a large-scale ecosystem restoration project in Puget Sound. We are also working in conjunction with Puget Sound Action Team to provide support and coordination with the Governor’s Puget Sound Initiative and the Puget Sound Partnership. PSNP will continue to provide technical support to priority large-scale restoration activities. In addition, the Department is



working with Lead Entities to identify regional priority salmon recovery projects for funding through the “Estuary and Salmon Recovery” budget request.

- **Salmon Recovery Funding Board:** The department will continue to actively participate in the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and by supporting the “2496” process. Watershed Stewards will assure that local implementing organizations have access to agency technical tools, data and expertise. In addition, we will expand our efforts to help Lead Entities improve their local prioritization processes. The Department is initiating a project to provide watershed groups with habitat project management tools through development of Habitat Work Schedules. These schedules will help potential project funders find local and regional priority projects. And finally, the Department will continue to support local sponsors, such as Regional Fish Enhancement Groups to identify priority salmon recovery projects to bring forward.
- **Habitat Protection:** WDFW is beginning implementation of a project to assure that the HPA program and agency land management are being executed in compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act through a variety of potential tools and programs, including HCP’s. The Department’s Mitigation Optimization project is developing collaborative processes that will bring local, state and federal permitting agencies together to improve the effectiveness of mitigation by linking mitigation decisions to priority watershed restoration and protection needs. Through the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project, WDFW is developing science “white papers” detailing the habitat needs of various species, including juvenile salmon, in the estuaries and shorelines of Puget Sound. The Department will work with local governments to incorporate this science into local land and water management processes. The Department will continue to pursue acquisition and conservations easements for the long-term protection of priority salmon habitat through a variety of local, state, and federal programs, such as the WWRP as outlined in it’s recently published “Lands 2020” document. And finally, the Department is committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the HPA permitting process.
- **Monitoring and Adaptive Management:** WDFW will continue to co-chair and provide staff support to the Governor’s Monitoring Forum. WDFW will also continue to participate in the Shared Strategy AAM workgroup and upcoming workshops. Scheduling these workshops to avoid major fish management forums, like North of Falcon, will help us get the appropriate staff at these important workshops. A recent letter from the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Association of Counties to Jay Manning, (Director of the Department of Ecology) suggested that Ecology, WDFW,



Shared Strategy, Northwest Indian Fish commission and local jurisdictions get together to discuss common monitoring principles. It is important for all of us to work with them on this request. The Department will continue to expand and improve on its ability to monitor “fish in” and “fish out” for core populations critical to salmon recovery in the Puget Sound basin.

- Finally, all of these activities require adequate funding. The Department will continue to work closely with you, Bill, and to serve as lead for a multi-agency effort to advocate for state and federal funding for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project, and other projects, programs and activities critical to the implementation of the Puget Sound recovery plan.

Sara LaBorde, WDFW Salmon Recovery Coordinator, will work with Shared Strategy to detail the timeline of these actions, as well as develop a reporting system to ensure that WDFW fulfills these commitments as we move forward.

Bill, thank you for your outstanding leadership and for absolute commitment to a citizen-led, “bottom-up” approach to salmon recovery. I look forward to the opportunity to advance implementation of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery plan and being an integral part in developing health, sustainable salmon populations in Washington.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey P. Koenings, Ph.D.
Director