

*Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership:
Support for the Puget Sound Partnership's
Response to Governor Gregoire's Five Charges*



PUGET SOUND
NEARSHORE
PARTNERSHIP



RESTORING OUR
ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

www.pugetsoundnearshore.org



Governor's Charge #1: *Develop recommendations for the Legislature, Congress, and me to preserve the environmental health, goods and services needed by the year 2020 to ensure that the Puget Sound's marine and freshwaters will be able to support healthy populations of the native species, as well as water quality and quantity to support both human needs and ecosystem functions.*

Relevant Efforts: In order to identify priority restoration and conservation actions, we are compiling and synthesizing the best available science on the current status of the nearshore ecosystem and its relationship and effects on the health of the species that rely on the nearshore. At the center of our technical efforts is an examination of the historic changes that have taken place in the Puget Sound nearshore. This analysis will identify which natural ecosystem processes are “broken” and where. To inform our strategic approach, we will also need to determine what restoration is feasible given the current developed state of Puget Sound's shorelines and gauge the public's willingness to invest in restoration. These broad restoration goals will then further be focused to identify and implement both early and long-term actions.

To insure that our work is relevant and resonates with our stakeholders, we have identified nine "valued ecosystem components" (VECs) linking restoration actions to human values. These VECs help translate the benefits of improving the health of Puget Sound with social and economic values.

Lessons Learned: In discussing our work with stakeholders, we have come to understand that we can improve public understanding by linking our efforts to things people care about (i.e., VECs). Therefore, we have chosen an approach where goals are derived by linking habitat conditions to those VECs. However, in pursuing those goals, we understand from our science experts, and the experience of other large-scale efforts, that it is essential to focus on the root causes of ecosystem degradation and pursue actions that restore processes, which build and sustain habitats supporting the larger ecosystem. In other words, an ecosystem-based approach rather than species-by-species management.

The Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership's "Valued Ecosystem Components":

- Pacific salmon**
- Orcas**
- Great blue heron**
- Forage Fish**
- Eelgrass and kelp beds**
- Marine and shore birds**
- Native shellfish**
- Shoreline forests**
- Beach bluffs**

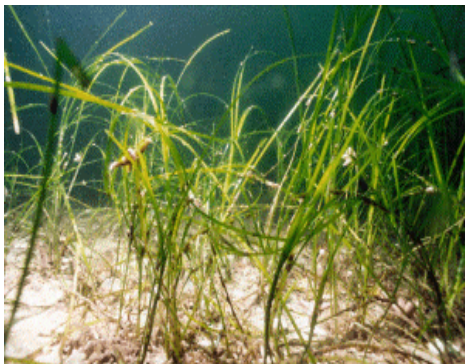
The Nearshore chapter of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan was developed with guidance and input from the Nearshore Partnership. In developing this ecosystem scale plan, the Puget Sound Action Team used concepts and principles developed by the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project's Nearshore Science Team. This has proven a useful exercise in demonstrating the practical applications of our science-based approach. Furthermore, the Strategic Needs Assessment under development by Nearshore Project scientists will add significant value to the Shared Strategy by supporting general recommendations in the Nearshore chapter, and by helping to specify how much of what kind of restoration is needed at different locations in Puget Sound.

Timeline

- Late 2007** – Completion of our Strategic Needs Assessment Report identifying priority restoration and protection needs (what is broken and where)

- 2008** – Completion of the Final Feasibility Report identifying specific large-scale ecosystem restoration projects for implementation by the Corps, and other smaller scale projects to focus local restoration efforts

Continuing Commitment: The Nearshore Partnership is aggressively pursuing a schedule to complete the assessment and study in 2008. In the interim, we have produced and distributed technical materials that are available for the Puget Sound Partnership to use, and will continue to provide throughout our project. When complete, we will have identified nearshore restoration and protection actions necessary to sustain healthy populations of native species as well as support human uses and enjoyment. We anticipate the General Investigation study will provide a platform from which to pursue the federal, state, local, tribal, and private funds necessary to significantly “scale-up” nearshore ecosystem restoration throughout Puget Sound.



Governor's Charge #2 *Engage citizens, watershed groups, businesses, the environmental community, and tribal, local, state, and federal governments, in a broad public education effort and enlist their help in developing the recommendations. These should support implementation of the 14 community-based watershed plans and the Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan, provide increased accountability for meeting our goals, and help integrate salmon recovery with the other efforts to protect and restore the Sound.*

Relevant Efforts: Early in the development of our program, we recognized the importance of directly engaging the larger “restoration community” of Puget Sound to inform them of our approach, and in seeking their ideas on how our work might best assist their efforts. We have reached out to participate in meetings and provide presentations to the Lead Entities (2496 process), watershed planning units (2514 process), local governments, tribes, the Northwest Straits Commission, and Marine Resource Committees.

The Nearshore Partnership has also worked directly with the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) to provide guidance to Lead Entities seeking to develop salmon recovery projects in the nearshore, and to provide technical review and evaluation of those projects. In fact, more than \$30 million in nearshore salmon recovery projects have been funded over the past five years, based upon technical guidance and evaluation by the Nearshore project.

In addition to our efforts in direct support of the SRFB, we have also worked with Lead Entities and other project sponsors to develop information on future nearshore restoration projects. This collaborative effort has resulted in a database of over 600 potential projects, many of which were included in the watershed-based salmon recovery plans submitted to the Shared Strategy.

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The Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) hosts this database on their PRISM platform, used widely by other programs including Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB). Use of IAC's PRISM helps to make this information broadly available, and allow for easy addition of new project ideas by watershed groups, governments, and citizens.

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Similarly, our Nearshore Science Team (NST) has actively engaged their community of research, academic, and agency scientists. Workshops have been used to bring expert review to draft technical products. Participation and sponsorship of regional and national conferences, such as the Georgia Basin/Puget Sound Research Conference and the Restore America's Estuaries Conference has allowed for presentation and discussion of our emerging science-based approach, and link to national, regional, and local restoration efforts.

We have taken practical steps to educate the regional public about “who we are” and “what we are doing.” This has included development of a “brand” for the Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership including a logo, professionally published written works, and a webpage.

In September of 2005, the Nearshore Partnership worked with local non-governmental organizations (NGO) to organize the “*Select Forum on Restoring Puget Sound*”. This forum drew lessons from other national programs to help participants understand how to elevate the issues of Puget Sound to the national agenda. In particular, the role of NGOs in contributing to success elsewhere in the nation was the focus of presentations and breakout sessions. Following the success of the Forum, the Alliance for Puget Sound Shorelines, consisting of People For Puget Sound, The Nature Conservancy, and the Trust for Public Lands, developed a successful \$3 million grant from The Russell Family Foundation to begin the work of public education, habitat restoration, and policy development in support of recovery of Puget Sound shorelines.



Lessons Learned: We have come to appreciate that even the very best technical approaches will not be implemented if they are not understood and supported by the public. This includes both the general public, those with familiarity with the issues (i.e. the community of restoration practitioners and resource managers in Puget Sound), and the broader community of scientists. This reflects our belief that a significant number of the public would help with the protection of

our resources if they knew how to do it and understood why it was important. The regional restoration community has appreciated our efforts at communication and outreach, and has helped us to refine our methods in ways that make them more broadly useful.

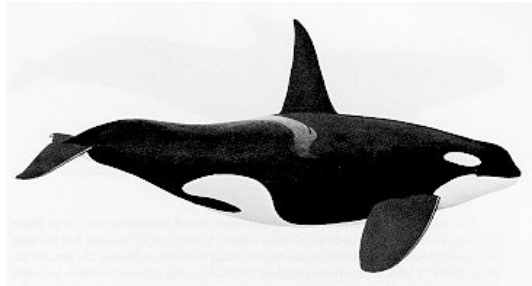
Our program's technical products have been well received and are being utilized - such as Pierce County's use of the scientific information about nearshore processes during recent Shoreline Management Act updates. Similarly, Salmon Recovery Funding Board is using the “guidance” provided by the Nearshore Science Team to evaluate funding requests. The Nearshore

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Partnership understands that completion of the General Investigation Study, the original goal of PSNERP, will be best done while continuing to prove its overall relevance through support of on-going regional restoration efforts.

Continuing Commitment: The Nearshore Partnership will continue its outreach with the regional restoration community, seeking their input as we develop and implement our approach, and provide the PRISM database as a place to manage their best ideas about identified nearshore projects. Our contact list is available to the Puget Sound Partnership, and we will use our website as another source of information about efforts to protect and restore Puget Sound, providing a link between our program's website (www.pugetsoundnearshore.org) with www.pugetsoundpartnership.org.

Governor's Charge #3: *Assess the existing organizational structures that work to protect and restore the Puget Sound's fresh and marine watersheds, as well as those involved in the recovery of salmon, orca, and other threatened species. Recommend a structure for an on-going public-private partnership to steward the ecosystem back to health and protect it over the long-term.*



Relevant Efforts: The Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership has faced similar issues of organizational structure, albeit on a smaller scale. We have adopted a structure built around the systematic use of science to inform the decisions of our Steering Committee and Project Management Team.

In forming our Nearshore Science Team, we have sought representation along lines of scientific disciplines, not agency representation. Conversely, we have structured our Steering Committee to provide broad stakeholder representation. We formed an Implementation Team to serve as the point of translation between our science products and the regional restoration community's on-the-ground projects. Our Project Management Team includes both federal and local project management representation, as well as leadership from our Nearshore Science Team and Implementation Team.

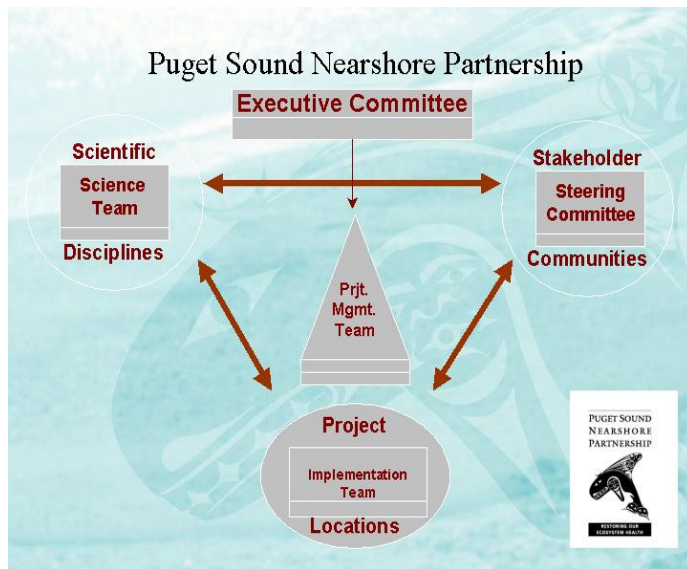
Lessons Learned: In its earliest origins, our project was originally conceived as a General Investigation focused on the King County nearshore environment. Managing the program adaptively, we have made changes to be more inclusive. Understanding that the scope of the problem includes all of Puget Sound, not just the Central basin, the General Investigation was scaled to include the entire nearshore environment of the Sound. We recognized that solutions to Puget Sound nearshore recovery would certainly include large-scale restoration that requires the assistance of the Corps.

A successful approach, however, will require support at multiple scales of action, including support of other federal. As a result, early project implementation, advance technical guidance to local jurisdictions, and broader research science can serve to advance our collective efforts, while benefiting from the work of PSNERP.

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We can learn from the lessons of other large-scale ecosystem restoration efforts. These lessons include the importance of having the Nearshore Science Team and their efforts separate from implementation responsibilities and those of direct project management. We have also benefited from our decision to keep representation of technical expertise and scientific discipline separate from organization representation and advocacy. Finally, in anticipation of the need for federal funding requests, it is important to have the cooperation and coordination with the federal agencies integrated throughout the program.

Continuing Commitment: We are committed to developing and implementing a science-based approach for identifying priority nearshore restoration and protection actions necessary to improve and protect ecosystem health over the long-term. The Nearshore Partnership will provide a governance structure for the collection and synthesis of nearshore science, the identification of nearshore restoration needs, the implementation of early action projects, and the designation of large-scale ecosystem restoration.



The Nearshore Partnership Executive and Steering Committees include members that are also participants in the Governor's Puget Sound Initiative. We understand that nearshore habitat restoration and protection, while essential to improving the health of Puget Sound, is just part of the response necessary to restore the Sound. It is essential that the Nearshore Project coordinate and integrate with the important work related to water quality, toxics, water quantity and other issues critical to our success. We welcome your input into on how we can improve our coordination with the overall efforts of the Puget Sound Initiative.





Governor's Charge #4: *Review current and potential funding sources to provide for the protection and restoration of this ecosystem and, where possible, recommend the priority of expenditures to achieve the desired 2020 outcomes.*

Relevant Efforts: One strategy successfully pursued in other regions of the United States is the use of the Corps of Engineers General Investigation (GI) Study authority to assess the feasibility of ecosystem scale restoration. GI feasibility studies become the justification required to request Congress for the necessary authority and funding for substantial federal investment. GI studies require a local sponsor, in our case the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), to enter into a cost-share (50-50) agreement with the Corps. By working cooperatively with other members of the Nearshore Partnership, WDFW has been successful in securing \$2.7 million in local funds to meet our cost share requirements with the Corps of Engineers.

On the federal side, the Corps has enjoyed consistent support from both the Administration and Congress, during a period where other General Investigation projects and Corps' restoration programs around the country have seen budget declines. By expanding the original project scope, to include early action project implementation and support for Puget Sound science, we have been able to take advantage of other federal funding sources such as the U.S. Geological Survey and their Coastal Habitats in Puget Sound initiative.

In addition to GI cost-share funds, the Nearshore Partnership has been able to secure \$2.5 million in the State's supplemental budget to support implementation of nearshore restoration projects. We have also received early action project funding support from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the NOAA Restoration Center.

Our approach to funding has been guided by a Funding Strategy report we commissioned several years ago. The report and its recommendations are available to the Puget Sound Partnership. The Funding Strategy report is available on request.

Lessons Learned: Our Steering Committee carefully examined the options available for funding large-scale restoration efforts and came to the conclusion that the Corps process was the most promising conduit for significant federal funding. While costly to fulfill the Corps program requirements, it appears to be the best path to federal resources necessary for the scale of restoration required in Puget Sound.

While sensitive to the pressure for "quick answers" and "instant action," we have come to understand that effective use of limited restoration resources requires a strategic approach, and an up-front investment of time and money. We have adopted a strategy of not relying solely on the Corps for federal funding, but to also seek funding from other federal agencies' budgets by supporting their requests and including their participation. A similar approach has been taken in meeting the cost-share requirements for the local sponsor (WDFW), and we have developed partnerships, which allow the use of staffing and program resources of other agencies and groups.

Continuing Commitment: As a funding strategy emerges from the Puget Sound Partnership, we will coordinate our funding requests for local, state, and federal resources with the Partnership and its members. We will continue our work on the General Investigation study, recognizing its potential for securing a substantial federal investment in Puget Sound restoration and protection. The Nearshore Partnership has established an advocacy infrastructure in Washington D.C. that includes the congressional delegation and staff, national NGO's, and lobbyists. This infrastructure is available for use by the Puget Sound Partnership to use to advocate for the Puget Sound Initiative as well. In addition, the Nearshore Partnership will continue to advocate for funding for the activities of the Puget Sound Initiative, as well as for completion of the Nearshore General Investigation.



Governor's Charge #5: *Recommend how we should organize and apply broad-based scientific knowledge and current capacity, to inform our policies and assist in setting and meeting our goals.*

Relevant Efforts: Our earliest efforts focused on developing the capacity necessary to apply scientific knowledge to inform nearshore ecosystem restoration in

Puget Sound. We studied ecosystem restoration efforts throughout the U.S., and used this information in developing an organizational structure that would allow interdisciplinary science to guide the technical approach of the program. We reached out to other local and regional restoration projects and programs, to learn from them and to shape our work in ways to link with and assist them.

In assembling our Nearshore Science Team (NST), we have planned for a multi-disciplinary approach, recognizing that physical, biological, and social science disciplines all would be necessary to understand both natural and human dimensions of the Puget Sound ecosystem. This includes participation of a social scientist on the Nearshore Science Team, and others as consultants on specific projects. The NST has advanced the use of Conceptual Models in understanding the relationship between shaping process, physical structure, and ecological functions of the ecosystem from their interdisciplinary perspective. A required element of our Work Plan includes completion of an economic analysis (cost benefit analysis) of the study recommendations.

We have also recognized the importance of informing on-going research of our science needs, and have completed a detailed research plan with the assistance of U.S. Geological Survey. Similarly, we are working to advance the state of, and support for, the use of project monitoring and adaptive management tools by developing model plans for specific projects. The document is available on request.



Lessons Learned: Integrated from the outset and effectively guided by a clear Work Plan, an interdisciplinary science team is essential in guiding the work of large-scale ecosystem restoration. To keep information provided to management decision making unbiased and

objective, we have learned the importance of selecting scientists by academic discipline, not agency representation.



Many of our ideas on organizational structure derive from the Nearshore Partnership's ["Application of the 'Best Available Science' in Ecosystem Restoration: Lessons Learned from Large-Scale Restoration Project Efforts in the USA"](#) document. This document reports on the findings of a series of workshops with the lead scientists from other large-scale restoration programs around the nation. Included are reviews of the restoration programs for Chesapeake Bay, The Everglades, Louisiana Coastal, San Francisco Bay/Delta, Upper Missouri, and Glenn Canyon (Colorado River). This is a valuable resource available to the Puget Sound Partnership for review and use.

We understand the important need for social scientists to participate in the entire project, alongside those with expertise in relevant physical and biological science fields. As products have emerged from the Nearshore Science Team, we have supported their peer review and publication to insure integrity and availability. The “culture” of science expects nothing less, and the use the publishing of products to ensure an open and understandable process and results provides long-term credibility of the program.

In establishing the relationship between the Nearshore Science Team and other program elements, including our Steering Committee, we have come to understand the importance of clearly defining the products wanted from the science team. We appreciate the dynamic relationship between those practicing restoration in the field and those toiling in academia, and strive to keep our work relevant to practitioners by developing and organizing scientific information, and channeling it to provide useful guidance.

Finally, in examining our program in relationship to other ecosystem restoration efforts, we have come to appreciate that our approach is unique and innovative. There are not many restoration efforts that examine and evaluate basic ecological functions and historical conditions, develop clear goals for ecosystem health, and then determine what and how much action is really needed.

Continuing Commitment: As we continue progress towards completion of the PSNERP General Investigation study, we intend to provide science products and information of relevance to the Puget Sound Partnership, and the broader community of restoration practitioners in our region. Our research plan provides a useful example of a successful science plan for others to implement or modify for their own needs. We will continue to publish and distribute our work products, and make widely available the data we have collected and developed. Further, all of our technical products and reports are available to the Puget Sound Partnership. In addition, individual science team members are willing to participate in support of the broader science needs of the Puget Sound Initiative.

