



ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP RESTORING AND PROTECTING THE NATION'S SECOND-LARGEST ESTUARY

The Puget Sound region of Washington is home to more than 4 million people, a number expected to swell to 7 million by 2020. In fact, nearly 71 percent of all jobs and 77 percent of total income in the state derive from the Puget Sound basin.



Much of the reason for the population and economic activity in the region is due to the Sound itself. It is a staggeringly beautiful place to live. The Sound supports a number of economic sectors, including commercial shellfish and fishing operations, marine manufacturing, naval shipyards, recreation and international import/exports. In fact, the combined ports of Seattle and Tacoma make Puget Sound the second-largest U.S. harbor for container traffic, with \$28 billion in state-originated exports and 34,000 jobs. With 68 state parks and eight national parks, wildlife refuges, forests and other public lands bordering it, Puget Sound is responsible for nearly \$9.5 billion in travel spending and 88,000 tourism-related jobs that bring \$3 billion in income to the region.

Despite the good news of the economic vibrancy of the region, Puget Sound is sick. Consider the challenges:

- » Chinook salmon populations are so low that recreational fishing days have been reduced in central Puget Sound by more than 75 percent.
- » Nearly 550 streams, rivers and lakes are impaired by poor quality, which closes beaches and limits local seafood industries.
- » Fish kills occur in Hood Canal during periods of low oxygen as a result of organic runoff and failing septic systems.

The Puget Sound Partnership was created in 2007 through legislation proposed by Governor Gregoire to bring together citizens, governments, tribes, scientists and businesses to restore and protect Puget Sound to ensure both a thriving regional economy and a healthy ecosystem.

In addition to ensuring the remarkable value — economic, scenic, cultural and recreational — of Puget Sound, restoration and preservation activities also mean employment for Washingtonians. Already we have seen investments in the work of the Partnership strengthen our economy and create jobs. In 2010, those investments totaled \$251 million, which created 7,476 direct and indirect jobs across 565 projects.

Through investments in Puget Sound restoration and protection, we will continue to create long-term jobs and economic benefits that extend beyond the employment associated with individual projects. Restoring salmon populations, for instance, increases recreational, commercial and tribal jobs in addition to wholesale and retail jobs. And restoration projects in estuaries and riparian areas spur almost twice as many jobs per \$1 million spent than infrastructure projects. In sum: Investing in the health of Puget Sound delivers a higher rate of return on investment and more certain return than most built capital investments.

LEADERSHIP

Given the number of organizations operating through the Puget Sound region — more than 600 — and the multitude of problems, establishing leadership was the first step undertaken by the Partnership. It's a big job: One group among hundreds must take the lead by identifying the range of issues, setting priorities, collecting the best available science and constructing a work plan, all while keeping a regional view foremost.

ACTION AGENDA

The Partnership's signature leadership activity was the development of an Action Agenda in consultation with multiple entities and individuals. This plan guides the work of governments, tribes, scientists, businesses and others to ensure a healthy ecosystem and a thriving economy. It sets recovery targets for Puget Sound and lays out a framework for how — working together as one region — we can achieve the vision of a healthy Puget Sound. First published in 2008, the **Action Agenda** is both a durable scaffold for action, coordination and accountability, as well as a living document updated every two years to reflect progress, lessons learned and new challenges. A major update of the Action Agenda will be available [here](#) in August 2012.

To guide future versions of the Action Agenda, the Partnership also compiles resources to integrate science's vital role in an adaptive management framework and performance management system. The **Puget Sound Science Update** and the **Puget Sound Science Review** are primary sources for synthesized, peer-reviewed, scientific information related to Puget Sound and the Salish Sea.

PARTNERSHIPS

One of the opportunities for restoring Puget Sound is the many people with a direct stake in the Sound. From tribal members who make their livelihood fishing its waters to the boaters who enjoy sailing to homeowners whose residences dot the perimeter, all have an interest in the health of Puget Sound. A key role of the Partnership is to join these many groups into a united effort to help the Sound.

To this end, the Partnership set up **ECO-net**, a Sound-wide network of professionals responsible for projects to improve Puget Sound. It has also established a local integrating organization in each Puget Sound watershed, a group of agencies charged with setting local priorities and implementing the Action Agenda within their watershed.

ACCOUNTABILITY

To make sure the Action Agenda is working, the Partnership developed "**16 Vital Signs for Puget Sound Recovery**," with 2020 targets that guide development of strategies and measure progress; more than 18,500 visits have been made to the Vital Signs website. The **Puget Sound Atlas** presents information on restoration and protection habitat projects and includes the **Action Report Card**, which tracks progress in reaching Action Agenda milestones and performance measures. The **Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program** details a coordinated regional approach to evaluating

data on key ecosystem health indicators. The Partnership also produces a **State of the Sound** report every two years to document the status of the Sound in addition to the overall status of implementation and funding of the Action Agenda. The next report will be completed by November 2012.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Government action, by itself, will not recover Puget Sound — recovery will also require a public that understands the challenges and is committed to do its part. For this purpose, the Partnership, Department of Ecology and a coalition of more than 300 local governments and other organizations created **The Puget Sound Starts Here**. This ground-breaking campaign is raising awareness about everyday actions people can take to stem the flow of pollutants and toxics. The brand has a 26 percent recognition based on a survey, considered ‘very strong’ based on industry standards. The awareness target is 50 percent. The Partnership has awarded stewardship grants aimed at educating people and small businesses to lead to a healthier Puget Sound.

A Puget Sound curriculum has been introduced to 30 percent of Puget Sound school districts to create and coordinate environmental education programs.

PUGET SOUND RECOVERY PROJECTS

A key role of the Partnership is to coordinate, facilitate and advise on technical projects taking place around Puget Sound. Since 2008, the Partnership has helped 702 projects to be launched or completed, contributing an estimated 15,000 jobs (see last page). Total investment to date is more than \$450 million, with \$146 million

from the federal government, \$129 million from local governments and the balance from various state funds.

Creation of the state’s Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) fund has led to more financial support for regional projects. PSAR has been an invaluable source for completing the highest-priority salmon recovery and protection projects around Puget Sound, including shoreline armoring removal at Seahurst Park, estuary restoration and agricultural improvements at Port Susan, nearshore and feeder bluff acquisitions, floodplain restoration through levee setbacks and many others. In 2007 alone, funding increased from \$10 million to \$52 million, which enabled significant local projects to proceed, including the Nisqually and Skokomish estuary restorations.



The following represent a sampling of some of the important work already completed.

SUSTAINABLE LANDS

The Snohomish Sustainable Lands Strategy is a locally based

solution to resolve conflicts between agriculture and restoration. The Partnership has supported a local process that has brought together the agriculture and restoration communities to develop an agreement on projects that achieve net gains for both interests. To date, 150 acres of tidal wetlands in the Stillaguamish Delta have been restored through removal of the Port Susan Dike. The project will also restore estuarine function to the adjacent 4,000 acres.

BULKHEAD REMOVAL

The Partnership has supported the efforts of local and federal partners to restore salmon habitat and improve swimming access by removing bulkheads along the shoreline of Seahurst Park in Burien.

This is the largest removal of shoreline armoring on Puget Sound, with 1,400 feet of bulkhead removed so far, and another 1,800 feet slated for future removal. The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association designated Seahurst Park as one of four winners of its 2010 Best Restored Beach Award.

STORMWATER RUNOFF

Reducing pollution from stormwater runoff is one of the top priorities for the recovery of Puget Sound. In 2009 alone, local governments in the Puget Sound Basin spent \$160 million on pollution prevention programs through their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits. This removed an estimated 234,000 tons of sediment that did not reach Puget Sound or its tributary watersheds.

The Partnership completed an assessment to identify stormwater prevention and treatment projects needed to protect the Sound. It also developed a program to target funding to the top priority projects to treat existing stormwater sources. The Partnership has provided technical support to local governments that are implementing “low impact development” standards that minimize stormwater runoff. In 2012, the Partnership will release a new, step-by-step manual to help local governments integrate low-impact development into their permit applications.

SHELLFISH PROTECTION

The Partnership is leading implementation of the Washington Shellfish Initiative, a unique project that includes several aims such as expansion of commercial and recreational shellfish beds, restoration of native shellfish and measures to ensure clean water for shellfish beds. The initiative is remarkable not only for being the first in the country, but for promoting clean water and jobs. Last year, over 4000 acres of commercial shellfish beds were restricted for harvest in Samish Bay due to poor water quality. So the Partnership worked

with landowners, livestock producers, shellfish growers, homeowners, local government and state agencies to control the pollution sources that were periodically closing the shellfish beds in Samish Bay. The dairy and cattle folks have fenced their cows out of streams, homeowners with failing septic tanks have made repairs and landowners have planted vegetation along the banks. In the past two years, average fecal coliform readings have dropped tenfold. Areas with remaining pollution have been targeted for the final cleanup.

WATERSHED RESTORATION

The U.S. Navy has agreed to mitigate the effects of underwater construction for a new wharf in Hood Canal by using the new “in lieu fee” program — a first-of-its-kind way to offset the environmental effects of development. The Partnership and the Department of Ecology assisted the Hood Canal Coordinating Council, tribal governments and federal agencies to secure the agreement. While construction affected almost a half-acre of nearshore habitat, it could restore a significantly larger area that would benefit the entire watershed and serve as an innovative model for future construction projects. Instead of trying to mitigate development projects one by one, the in lieu fee program allows someone who needs to build a dock or bridge to pay into a new fund and be quickly issued a permit. The millions of dollars flowing into the fund from the Navy can then be used to finance science-based priorities, spur implementation of salmon restoration plans and hold the region accountable for results.

FLOOD LEVEL MODIFICATIONS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers modified its national flood levee policies in response to the need to protect salmon in Puget Sound. In so doing, the Partnership facilitated discussions among federal agencies, the state’s congressional delegation and local governments. The Sound includes 192 flood levees (254 miles) along prime salmon river habitat, affecting 21 of 22 key

salmon populations. Proposed national policies called for removal of all vegetation on flood levees, as an engineering safety precaution. The Partnership was instrumental in securing changes to the policy to allow certain vegetation to be retained, sufficient to protect salmon while also ensuring levee safety. The Partnership executed a formal agreement with federal agencies to implement this new policy.

WASTEWATER FACILITIES

The Partnership prioritized and helped secure funding for the construction of the Belfair sewage treatment facility. This collaborative effort of county, state and federal governments and elected officials led the removal of residential and commercial septic systems in downtown Belfair. Their work created 61 construction jobs and reduced the output of nitrogen into Hood Canal, which suffers from low levels of dissolved oxygen that lead to massive fish kills.

OIL SPILL RESPONSE

Key elements of House Bill 1186 on oil spills signed into law in 2011 were based on the unanimous recommendations of the Oil Spill Work Group convened by the Partnership. This group comprised more than two dozen industry, environmental, tribal, agency, local government and military leaders who both applied lessons learned from the catastrophic oil spill in Gulf of Mexico and incorporated recommendations from a report developed by the Partnership and the Department of Ecology. The new law requires the best available equipment to ensure we can respond to a worst-case spill in Puget Sound.

TOXIC MATERIAL BANS

Washington is the first state in the country to restrict the amount of copper in brake pads and boat paint. The Partnership and a coalition of legislative, business and environmental leaders took action to reduce runoff of toxic materials into Puget Sound by working to pass legislation that phases out, and then bans, copper in brake pads (2011's Senate Bill 6557) and boat paint (2010's Senate Bill 5436).

The challenges to the health of Puget Sound have been generations in the making, and solutions will take time to work. However, in just five years, the Puget Sound Partnership has asserted bold leadership, forged productive partnerships and shepherded restoration projects that have delivered results, value for investment and jobs. With a directive unique among state agencies — set science-based priorities, spur implementation of priority actions by boosting the capacity of partners, and reporting progress and ensuring accountability — the Partnership was handed a considerable challenge. Yet today we see successes. More are on the horizon.