

WRIA 8 Plan Update Status Briefing Memo

January 19, 2017

Background

After more than a decade of implementing salmon recovery, WRIA 8 is updating the 2005 WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan (Plan) to assess current salmon conservation approaches, integrate lessons learned, incorporate new science and information, and develop habitat recovery goals. The Plan update was initiated after the WRIA 8 Salmon Summit in February 2016, and WRIA 8 staff and partners are working to complete a final draft by July 2017.

The Plan update is not intended to replace the 2005 WRIA 8 Plan, but instead to be an addendum to the 2005 Plan. The main elements of the Plan update include:

1. Identify and prioritize key Chinook salmon life stages (lifecycle conceptual model)
2. Identify and rank the human impacts to salmon survival
3. Set clear goals for WRIA 8 Chinook populations and habitat protection/restoration
4. Develop strategies to reduce human impacts and reach goals
5. Identify actions to implement strategies (update capital project and programmatic action lists)
6. Tie Plan update elements together into a narrative

A separate monitoring plan will be developed to identify the indicators and protocols for measuring progress to achieving the goals established in the Plan update.

Current status

Since February 2016, WRIA 8 staff and the Implementation and Technical Committees have been working on elements 1 – 4 of the Plan update, and have completed the conceptual model of salmon in the watershed and the assessment of human impacts, or “pressures,” on salmon, and affirmed the existing Chinook population goals. These elements were presented to the Salmon Recovery Council at previous meetings.

The Implementation and Technical Committees are close to completing recommended recovery strategies and habitat goals (elements 3 and 4 above). WRIA 8 staff is convening sub-basin work groups with partners to update the project and programmatic actions lists (element 5). WRIA 8 staff is working with a consultant to assist with folding Plan update elements into a narrative (element 6).

Key Takeaways so far

- The pace of habitat restoration since 2005 is too slow to recover Chinook salmon in the watershed.
- The most damaging pressures in the watershed today are: issues related to temperature and fish passage at the Locks; land conversion; levees; and shoreline armoring.
- The juvenile life stage is most at risk.
- River floodplain disconnection is the key issue in the Cedar River.
- Migration through the lakes and Ship Canal appear to be especially treacherous for juvenile salmon.

Issues to be addressed

- Habitat Tier designations
- Locks – fish passage and water quality
- Hatchery issues
- Predation and artificial light impacts

Questions for Salmon Recovery Council

How does the Council want to receive Plan update products for review/consideration?

- Does the Council prefer to receive a joint recommendation from the Technical and Implementation Committees, or should a subcommittee of interested Salmon Recovery Council members be identified to review committee products and develop a recommendation for the full Council?
- Does the Council (or subcommittee) prefer to receive a final draft product for review/approval or receive drafts of some or all Plan update elements separately (key life stages, strategies, goals, actions, narrative, and monitoring plan)?