

# WRIA 9 Watershed Ecosystem Forum Meeting Summary

Renton City Hall

November 12, 2015, 4:18–6:00 p.m.

<b>Members/Jurisdictional Staff Alternates Present</b>		
1.	Councilmember (CM) Bill Peloza, Meeting Chair	City of Auburn
2.	CM Marlla Mhoon, Co-Chair	City of Covington
3.	Al Barrie	Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group (MSFEG)
4.	Katy Buck	King County
5.	CM Kathryn Campbell	City of SeaTac
6.	Jay Covington	City of Renton
7.	CM Nancy Tosta	City of Burien
8.	Michael Garrity	American Rivers
9.	Joan Nolan	WA Dept. of Ecology
10.	James Rasmussen	Green Duwamish Alliance
11.	Stewart Reinbold	WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
12.	CM Dennis Robertson	City of Tukwila
13.	Greg Volkhardt	Tacoma Water
<b>Other Alternates Present</b>		
14.	Chris Andersen	City of Auburn
15.	Mike Mactutis	City of Kent
16.	Kathy Minsch	City of Seattle
17.	Susan Saffery	City of Seattle
18.	Ron Straka	City of Renton
<b>Other Attendees</b>		
19.	Maya Andrews	City of Burien
20.	Matha Bean	Consultant
21.	James West	WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
22.	Karen Bergeron	WRIA 9 Habitat Project Coordinator
23.	Linda Grob	WRIA 9 Administrative Coordinator
24.	Elissa Ostergaard	WRIA 9 Planning & Stewardship Coordinator
25.	Doug Osterman	WRIA 9 Salmon Recovery Manager

Meeting Chair Bill Peloza opened the Watershed Ecosystem Forum (WEF) meeting, and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

## 1. Public Comment

Greg Volkhardt announced that on October 28 NOAA sent the long awaited biological opinion on Howard Hanson Dam (HHD). It addresses the issues of orca whales, Chinook salmon, steelhead, and fish passage above the dam. It includes installing a type of fish trap as an interim measure to get salmon above HHD next year, which shows NOAA's commitment to fish above the dam.

Bill Peloza asked if anyone else saw the dead salmon in the creek on TV. It was about coho pre-spawn mortality in Longfellow Creek. Kathy Minsch said pre-spawn mortality studies have gone on for a number of years. James Rasmussen commented that Longfellow Creek has been trying to have a return of salmon for many years, but because of stormwater runoff, the creek is still dead. Doug Osterman, Salmon Recovery Manager, said he attended a Puget Sound congressional caucus meeting at Washington State University Extension, Puyallup, where he heard a pre-spawn mortality presentation from Jen McIntyre, NOAA. She reported that stormwater filtered through a column of sand and compost was effective in achieving 100% survival of coho. Stewart Reinbold said Jen McIntyre gave a great presentation to the

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WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council about Longfellow Creek, where there is 88% coho mortality. He said with filtering they live, without filtering, they die.

Michael Garrity announced that American Rivers is petitioning the King County Flood Control District (FCD) to continue the Green River System-Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) process so we don't lose momentum. SWIF has pretty much gone dark, and he voiced concern that two years of effort are being lost. He said he would like folks to make the case to FCD to restart the process.

## 2. Approval of Meeting Summary

*The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously approved the meeting summary for the August 13, 2015 meeting.*

## 3. Strategy for WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Planning

Elissa Ostergaard, Planning & Stewardship Coordinator, said we brought a proposal for the WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan (Plan) update to the Management Committee (MC) last month, and this presentation is a summary of their recommendations. She said the plan for the Plan update is to add new science and information, address gaps, update the project list, update policies, and incorporate Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) requirements. Topics that WRIA 9 would like to update, based on emerging science and gaps analysis, include: climate change and sea level rise; spawning and rearing habitat in the Middle Green; water quality (contaminants and early marine survival, temperature); and some new policies. The PSP and NOAA requirements are likely to include: a pressure assessment; habitat goals and indicators; conceptual models and results chains; and updating our monitoring and adaptive management (M&AM) plan. She reported that three to four WRIsAs will receive up to \$100,000 to complete updates by December 2016, but we decided it doesn't fit into our WRIA 9 timeframe and would be too aggressive.

Elissa explained WRIA 9's Plan update proposal:

- Stay within the current budget:
  - Expand capacity if capacity grant funds become available in 2017.
- Use existing staff, and add as possible:
  - Engineering: updating the project list;
  - Technical: incorporating new information;
  - Facilitation: policy and project discussions; and
  - MC will evaluate current staff work plans.
- Keep schedule flexible:
  - May increase WEF and other meetings; and
  - Proceed using PSP/NOAA guidance as available (2016-2017);

Elissa presented a slide containing a motion with the MC-recommended language for the Plan update strategy. She said we have already started on the topics we know we want to do, and will be developing a schedule; we hope to complete the Plan update by the end of 2017 or early 2018.

Discussion:

- James Rasmussen mentioned that there are several things missing from the presentation that he would like to see. The main thing is a Lower Green/Duwamish Steward, who would work on leveraging Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) with the habitat needs. WRIA 9 is partnered with the Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP), and ESJ is an important issue for them. He said even though we have been focused on salmon recovery, social justice issues are part of what we are dealing with as

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well. Bill Pelozza suggested James send him his thoughts. Doug Osterman, Salmon Recovery Manager, said a Duwamish Steward has already been submitted as a Near Term Action (NTA) to PSP.

- Susan Saffery asked if the concept of a Duwamish Steward would be written into the Plan update, or would we be hiring someone now. James Rasmussen said it could be both, and he added that NOAA does not take ESJ into consideration.
- Mike Mactutis asked what kind of guidance we are expecting from PSP. Elissa Ostergaard responded it will likely be how to do a pressures assessment, details about indicators and our monitoring and adaptive management plan, but she doesn't know exactly. Some WRIAs are just completing their M&AM Plans, so we will probably use some of that. Bill Pelozza mentioned that the MC said move cautiously on the Plan update so that we don't have to do the same work twice to meet PSP needs.
- Dennis Robertson, Management Committee Chair, announced that as soon as WEF approves this Plan update strategy, he is going to ask WRIA 9 staff to create a milestones and steps chart of what needs to be done without PSP money.
- Susan Saffery said two things were missing in the presentation that we heard at the MC:
  - The staff-identified ~\$100,000 in carryover funds that could be used to support the Habitat Plan update, and
  - If the MC should have a role in policy/a rule to have policies go first through them.Doug Osterman said no, the MC does mostly budget and other WRIA 9 administrative duties while the WEF wrestles with salmon recovery actions and other policies. He said we are considering a policy/planning group as part of the Plan update.
- Marlla Mhoon commented that the SWIF was very focused on social equity, and now it's going dark. She suggested maybe putting in our Plan that good salmon habitat projects improve social equity and justice, and should tie it into UWFP to get more funding. Doug Osterman said we can state it more explicitly in the Plan. James Rasmussen requested that wherever there's a project especially in the Duwamish, make sure there is access to the river, which is a very important part of ESJ.
- Marlla Mhoon proposed the following motion language: "Salmon habitat projects result in increased social equity and justice for residents by, for example, providing access to the river." Kathryn Campbell suggested voting on CM Mhoon's amendment first.
- Jay Covington inquired if we anticipate conflicts as we create more access to the river. There are agencies and different objectives on the river, and ensuring access to all is important. Doug Osterman said at a high level there is 100% overlap between the best WRIA 9 projects and the best ESJ benefits, though conflicts can emerge. James Rasmussen remarked that it's not as easy as giving access, it's providing access that doesn't encumber the habitat. It does take one more level of how we think about things.
- Dennis Robertson said ten years ago when we did the Plan we assigned 40% of the funding to the transition zone, and at the time we thought there was going to be lots of money coming in. But instead the money was tied to specific projects, and in the Plan update we are going to take a more experienced view. We will discuss policy decisions and the public access issue, and look at the crazy funding world we live in. James Rasmussen said the Duwamish Steward is another important issue.
- Greg Volkhardt asked if we are thinking about security issues with potential landowners. James Rasmussen explained that most restoration in the Duwamish includes public access, with an exception for Boeing, because of their security concerns; but Boeing created a lot of habitat. Public access to the river has always part of the Plan.

***The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously approved an amendment to the Plan update proposal from Marlla Mhoon: "Salmon habitat projects result in increased social equity and justice for residents by, for example, providing access to the river."***

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*The Watershed Ecosystem Forum then unanimously approved a motion to accept the strategy for updating the Salmon Habitat Plan: "Use existing staff plus a temporary engineer through the Vets4Hire Program, potentially increase meetings of the Watershed Ecosystem Forum or other communication and policy discussion means (such as online), and focus available funding (whether through grant opportunities or existing consultant funding) toward updating the Salmon Habitat Plan to incorporate the new scientific information. The priority of the WRIA 9 work program is to meet regulatory requirements, and the schedule of the Plan update should be flexible to be informed by available guidance from the Puget Sound Partnership. To maximize current staffing levels for the Plan update, the Management Committee would like to reevaluate the existing staff work plans, and consider opportunities to increase WRIA 9's capacity to update the Plan if funding becomes available."*

## 5. WRIA 9 ILA Approval

Doug Osterman reported that all jurisdictions except Algona have approved the 2016-2025 ILA.

## 6. New WRIA 9 Funding Process Graphic

Dennis Robertson passed around copies of the Funding Process Graphic, explaining that he first started with a rough drawing of the process with lots of arrows, which King County Graphics refined and made better. He said the graphic shows all the meetings the Chairs and staff attend, and the complexity of salmon recovery.

## 7. Contamination & Early Marine Survival of Chinook Salmon from the Green River

Elissa Ostergaard said this is one of the topics that will be included in the Plan update, and she introduced Jim West, Senior Research Scientist, WA Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), Toxics in Biota Unit.

Jim West said several WDFW staff worked on this study, funded to look at toxic contaminants in salmon, and they collaborated with NOAA Fisheries, Tribes (Tulalip, Muckleshoot and Nisqually) and state agencies to get fish samples. Indicator species were used [English sole (for sediments), herring (water column), and Chinook and coho salmon (human health)]. WDFW also looked at others for diagnostic and monitoring studies (crab, krill, plankton, blue mussels). Urbanization impacts on salmon include habitat loss and modification, and toxic contaminants, and central and south Puget Sound are the most threatened.

Jim reported that a NOAA study looking at the ability of upriver hatchery salmon to withstand bacterial infection in urban bays found 15% mortality. Additional studies on salmon in the nearshore confirmed exposure to toxics impairs immune competence, leading to more mortality. In another study, hatchery salmon migrating out through urban, contaminated rivers had a 45% lower return than in non-urban areas. Their pilot study objectives were to quantify contaminant levels in outmigrant Chinook salmon, evaluate potential effects on marine survival, and determine sources of contaminant inputs (freshwater, nearshore marine, or offshore marine habitats). Five river systems were studied, including the Green/Duwamish. The goal was to track fish to ask the question where contamination occurs. The estuary habitat was sampled in May, the nearshore in June, and offshore habitats in October. He described the method used as catch fish, kill fish, grind them up, mush them together, and measure the contaminants.

Jim listed the key characteristics of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the focus of his presentation, as being toxic, persistent, hydrophobic (oily), accumulate in marine biota, and biomagnify, meaning they increase in contamination concentration as you go up the food chain (see: Orcas). The Green/Duwamish had the second highest concentration of PCBs of the five river systems studied. Adverse effects thresholds

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are determined based on lab studies. Of our system's juvenile Chinook salmon in Elliott Bay, 100% are going to be above the threshold for multiple adverse effects. He noted that they are not trivial exposures, with effects including mortality, impaired growth and reproduction, immune dysfunction, and messed up hormones and enzymes.

Jim reported that each Green/Duwamish fish in the study had 150 nanograms of PCBs in their bodies. About 56% of the body burden of Elliott Bay nearshore Chinook came from the Duwamish. Chinook continue to pile on PCBs in Elliott Bay as they grow, and 36% of PCBs in central Sound Chinook were from Elliott Bay plus Duwamish. Offshore fish show fairly uniform PCB levels across basins because Chinook prey are contaminated throughout Puget Sound. In conclusion he said contaminant levels were high enough to cause adverse effects, likely affecting marine survival, and those effects may worsen with climate change.

## Discussion:

- James Rasmussen asked if the Department of Health (DOH) has been informed about this study. Jim West said we have given them all our information for adult fish, but have not given them information for juvenile fish because we were unsure what they would do with it. James said source control pollution is also an issue, and WRIA 9's voice is very important if there is going to be sufficient cleanup in the river. He said he hoped this presentation enlightens us, and shows how much further we can go. Jim said we spend a lot of time and thought on where contaminants occur in the biota, and we're asking the fish to tell us what's going on.
- Greg Volkhardt inquired if the English sole numbers have a similar distribution. Jim West explained that a defining characteristic of Puget Sound is that benthic conditions are pretty clean. You can't detect PCBs in 90% of our sites, but in the pelagic habitat it's completely different. Stormwater gets right inside plankton, and straight into herring and the food web. He said we have the most polluted herring in the world. He noted that the number one contaminant risk is time spent in Puget Sound.

## 9. Public Comment

Chris Andersen reported that the Fenster Levee construction was finished last month, concluding five years of Fenster Phase 2. The project had six different funding sources, removed 1200 feet of levee, and will help with floods. He said the Mill Creek ERP project is in construction, slightly later than we expected. The Muckleshoots came to the project fairly late, and with their input we changed a 20 foot culvert to a 26 foot culvert, and it is now a bridge.

## 10. Wrap Up/Next Steps

Bill Peloza announced that the 2016 meeting schedule is in the packet, and the next WEF meeting is February 11, 2016, Renton City Hall. Doug Osterman said the next steps are to get working on the Plan update steps, with first the technical mode, then the synthesis mode.