

WRIA 8 Update and Committee Reports

November 20, 2014

- **Puget Sound Regional Update** – The **Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PS SRC)** last met on September 25. Agenda topics included a presentation on the Building Cities in the Rain project to develop guidance that better aligns stormwater management and land use actions associated with Growth Management Act requirements, a presentation on hatchery management, established Nominating Committee membership for 2014, approved the ranked Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration 2015-2017 large capital project list for the legislative funding request, discussed the legislative-directed Watershed Proviso to review and assess the role of Puget Sound watershed groups, and received an update on steelhead recovery planning.

The **South Central Action Area Caucus** last met on November 3. The meeting agenda included an update on the meeting between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local integrating organizations for Puget Sound recovery to discuss possible changes to the funding model for allocating federal Puget Sound recovery funds. The Caucus Group is working on a letter to EPA to provide feedback on priorities for a funding model, specifically to create a way to more directly direct funding to priority actions identified by the Caucus Group. WRIA 8, as a member of the Caucus Group, is participating in these discussions and development of feedback.

- **Salmon Recovery Tour** – The October 10 WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour included about 40 participants, including state legislators, Congressional staff, local elected officials and staff, state and federal agency personnel and representatives of community groups from around the watershed. The group started at the Locks, learning about urgently needed fish passage and infrastructure improvements. In South Seattle, tour participants saw the final stages of a project daylighting and reconnecting Mapes Creek to Lake Washington, providing rearing habitat for Chinook salmon. Stopping along Issaquah Creek, the group was inspired by the completed removal of the Issaquah Hatchery Dam and other improvements that allow salmon access to 11 miles of high quality spawning habitat. Last stop on the tour was the large-scale restoration of Lower Bear Creek away from Highway 520 in downtown Redmond—the culmination of more than ten years' work. Join the tour next year for education, inspiration and networking!
- **Status of legislature-directed review of watershed based groups** – In the 2014 state legislative session, the legislature passed a proviso to the Puget Sound Partnership's 2015 supplemental budget to conduct a review of watershed groups, including salmon recovery Lead Entities, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, Puget Sound local integrating organizations, Marine Resources Committees, Hood Canal Coordinating Council, and others. Specifically, the Partnership was directed to "...review the roles of local watershed and salmon recovery organizations implementing the action agenda and provide legislative, budgetary, and administrative recommendations to streamline and strengthen Puget Sound recovery efforts." The Partnership contracted with Ross Strategic to conduct a third party review. Ross

did so by employing a literature review, interviews with specific representatives, and a web-based survey distributed broadly. Based on this information, Ross submitted a draft report on October 31 to the Partnership and 13 project "framers." Comments on the draft are due to Ross on November 12 and they will submit their final report on November 21. The Partnership will then provide recommendations to the Legislature, as directed, by December 1. In the meeting packet is the draft letter from the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council to the Partnership providing comments on this review process and specifically supporting the value and role of salmon recovery lead entities (like WRIA 8) around the state.

- **WRIA 8 E-news** - On October 16, we sent out our first WRIA 8 e-newsletter, reporting on the Salmon Recovery Tour, Salmon SEEson, and the upcoming Cedar River Open House. The issue also featured recent media coverage of issues relevant to salmon recovery in WRIA 8. Feel free to send story ideas for subsequent e-newsletters to Polly Freeman (polly.freeman@kingcounty.gov).
- **Cedar River Floodplains by Design proposal** – In response to the Department of Ecology's request for proposals for their \$50 million Floodplains by Design capital budget request, King County and Seattle Public Utilities jointly submitted a proposal to advance priority Cedar River floodplain acquisitions and restoration (including final design of the Riverbend floodplain restoration project). WRIA 8 provided a letter of support. Ecology received 71 project pre-applications, and 36 projects were invited to submit full applications. The review and ranking process produced a ranked list of 14 projects that were submitted as part of the legislative funding request, including the Cedar River proposal which ranked **seventh** in the final project ranking.
- **National Park Service technical support award for Cedar River Corridor Plan development process** – An award of technical assistance from the National Park Service was granted to support the recreational planning component of the King County Flood Control District's Cedar River Corridor Plan. Assistance from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program will be provided to help with engaging river recreationalists, landowners, and other relevant parties. WRIA 8 received an update on the Corridor Plan at the September Salmon Recovery Council meeting and has sent letters to the Corridor Plan project manager to express commitment as a partner and participant in the development of the plan and indicated interest in being a member of the forthcoming planning advisory committee. The letter from the National Park Service to King County is included in the meeting packet.
- **Legislative priorities update** – The Salmon Recovery Council approved 2015 federal and state legislative priorities at the September meeting, and approved sending a letter to WRIA 8 legislators and the Governor to communicate the priorities. A letter was sent to Governor Inslee on November 7 (the letter is included in the meeting packet). Letters will be sent to individual legislators in the next month. To continue communicating with interested parties regarding the urgently needed improvements at the Ballard Locks, WRIA 8 staff met with state Representative Gael Tarleton (36th District), staff from Congressman Jim McDermott's office, and attended an environmental roundtable event hosted by Congressman Adam Smith.

WRIA 8 staff also plan to meet with state Senator Andy Hill (45th District) in late November. Please let Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz, WRIA 8 Watershed Coordinator, know if you have a connection or would like to meet with a state legislator about WRIA 8 priorities.

- **Salmon SEEson program highlights** – Another successful Salmon SEEson is winding down. This year we were pleased to expand the program to include three new events/sites, bringing the total to eleven. The new sites included two on the Duwamish River in Tukwila, sponsored by Duwamish Alive, and one new site at Lake Sammamish State Park, sponsored by the Friends of Lake Sammamish State Park. While returning fish numbers were low this year, some individual sites reported good numbers of fish and fish-watchers.

Gary Smith of Water Tenders estimated that 3-5 Chinook and several dozen sockeye were visible at their Bear Creek location during the six days they had volunteers on-site. They counted nearly 1,000 visitors during that time and nearly all saw fish. Charlotte Spang, Cedar River Salmon Journey program manager, noted that on the Cedar River an exceptionally rainy October and the loss of the Renton Library site (which has significant foot traffic) to construction this year kept visitor numbers short of 2013's record highs. Still, about 9,600 visitors spoke with volunteers about Cedar River salmon and watershed health at the Locks and at four sites along the Cedar this fall. Volunteer naturalist numbers continue to grow, with 116 volunteers participating this year. Sharon Leishman of Duwamish Alive reported that families have been visiting North Wind's Weir to see fish this year, which is a new occurrence since they've joined Salmon SEEson.

Don't forget that salmon may still be seen at Carkeek Park through early December and maybe even some kokanee on Ebright and Lewis Creeks through January.

- **Compendium of references to recent stormwater research from NOAA** – Based on interest from several WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour participants on stormwater impacts to salmon mortality and habitat conditions, Michael Grady, NOAA, provided a list of the latest relevant stormwater research. The compendium is provided in the meeting packet. For questions or more information, please contact Nat Scholz (nathaniel.scholz@noaa.gov).
- **2015 Salmon Recovery Council meeting schedule and locations** – The Salmon Recovery Council meets six times a year, from 3:00 – 5:15 p.m. on the third Thursday of every other month, beginning in January. In 2015, because Bellevue City Hall will not have meeting space available due to planned construction, SRC meetings will be held at the Department of Ecology Northwest Regional Office (3190-160th Ave. SE, Bellevue) in Bellevue. The 2015 meeting schedule is attached – please mark your calendars!
 - January 15
 - March 19
 - May 21
 - July 16
 - September 17
 - October 9 – Salmon Recovery Tour
 - November 19

- **Returning Chinook and sockeye salmon numbers** – Salmon spawner surveys have been completed for 2014. Preliminary data indicate that 2014 was well below average for numbers of adult Chinook and sockeye salmon passing through the Ballard Locks as well as spawning on the Cedar River and elsewhere in WRIA 8. Unlike last year, we did not see an exceptionally large proportion of Chinook returning to the Cedar vs. Sammamish. Adult passage over the Landsburg Dam is also down in 2014, with an above-average proportion of hatchery-origin Chinook. Data have not yet been reported for the Sammamish population, but it is likely the number of Chinook in Bear Creek and other North Lake Washington streams will continue to be far below abundance targets.

Given that juvenile productivity from the Cedar River has been increasing in recent years, lower adult abundance suggests higher than average marine mortality. (Note that population dynamics for many species are naturally highly variable, and one disproportionately low year is not by itself cause for concern.)

WRIA 8 Committee Reports

- **WRIA 8 Technical Committee** – The Technical Committee met on October 8 and November 5. Meeting topics included updates on the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, WRIA 8 Wadeable Streams Status and Trends Project, fish in/fish out monitoring, regional adaptive management and monitoring initiatives, City of Bothell’s Sammamish River Side Channel Project, a new Lake Washington salmon predation study, and initial conversations on scoping, data and monitoring needs for the 10-year WRIA 8 Progress Report and plan updates.
- **WRIA 8 Implementation Committee** – The Implementation Committee met on November 4. Meeting agenda topics included a presentation by King Conservation District on their proposed 2015 system of rates and charges and work plan to the King County Council, discussion of the draft WRIA 8 2016-2025 interlocal agreement and draft memorandum of understanding between the Salmon Recovery Council and King County as service provider, and review of agenda topics for the November 20 SRC meeting. The Committee next meets on January 6, 2015.
- **Green Shoreline Steering Committee Meeting** – WRIA 8 recently hired Polly Freeman to support communications and outreach priorities, including Green Shorelines. Polly will work to promote existing Green Shorelines information materials and coordinate with the Green Shorelines Steering Committee on next steps for Green Shorelines efforts.