

WRIA 8 Update and Committee Reports

September 17, 2015

- **Puget Sound Regional Update** – The **Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PS SRC)** last met on Jul 16. Agenda topics included creating a nominating committee, approval of Puget Sound marine and freshwater common indicators, consideration of a proposed work plan and budget for the \$600,000 state budget allocation, debrief of the legislative session, discussion of a policy to allocate Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration capacity funding secured through the recent legislative session, and an update on the development of implementation strategies for estuaries and Chinook salmon as two of the Puget Sound Partnership’s Puget Sound Vital Signs. The PS SRC next meets on September 24. Andy Rheaume, WRIA 8 Vice Chair and Bothell Councilmember, and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz represent WRIA 8.

The **South Central Action Area Caucus** has had several workshops (7/28, 8/4, 8/12) and one meeting (9/9) since the last SRC meeting to develop logic model “results chains” showing how Puget Sound recovery strategies result in improved conditions for the ecosystem components identified to represent a healthy Puget Sound, such as Chinook salmon. The Caucus Group will be developing two and five year implementation plans for near-term actions focused on Puget Sound recovery priorities, which include several Chinook salmon recovery priorities. This work will inform regional and local recovery strategies and how future Puget Sound recovery funding and other resources are likely to be allocated. A request for proposals for regional near-term actions will go out on September 15. The Caucus Group plans to release a similar RFP for local area near-term actions, which may include priority Chinook salmon projects/programs. The Caucus Group will continue to meet roughly monthly through the end of the year. WRIA 8 does not currently have a SRC member representative on the Caucus Group. Anyone interested in representing WRIA 8 on the Caucus Group should let Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz know. The next meeting is scheduled for October 14.

- **WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council leadership for 2016 and beyond** – Current SRC Chair, King County Councilmember Larry Phillips is retiring at the end of 2015. The SRC needs to identify a new Chair for 2016 and beyond. According to SRC Operating Guidelines, the Chair must be an elected official representing a party to the ILA. Interested SRC members should let Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz know by September 30. The Management Committee will convene, either in-person or via email, to develop a recommendation for SRC consideration at the November 19 meeting.
- **WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour** – Invitations have gone out and plans are underway for the annual WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour, slated for October 9 from 9:00am – 2:00pm. The tour will include the following steps:
 - Ballard Locks – to revisit the urgent need for salmon passage and infrastructure improvements

- Riverbend project site on the Cedar River, where a mobile home park was purchased, residents are being relocated out of harm's way, and restoration of floodplain habitat for salmon is planned
- Stream channel and riparian area restoration at Confluence Park in downtown Issaquah, at the confluence of East Fork Issaquah Creek and Issaquah Creek.

As in past years, the target audience for the tour is Congressional staff, state legislators and staff, and SRC members. We will open the tour to others closer to the tour if we have room.

- **WRIA 8 Technical Workshop** – the WRIA 8 Technical Committee is planning a workshop for November 17 to update our information concerning Chinook salmon recovery in WRIA 8. This workshop is targeted toward researchers and technical practitioners in WRIA 8 who might have information and insight to share regarding the limiting factors and remaining gaps in our knowledge of Chinook salmon growth and survival in WRIA 8. This information will be used by the WRIA 8 Technical Committee to update the 2005 WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan.
- **Effects of high temperatures and low streamflow on salmon** – This summer broke records for low streamflows and high stream temperatures in many WRIA 8 streams, including the Cedar and Sammamish rivers. Temperatures at the Ballard Locks in late June through late August were also at levels that affect salmon migration. King County and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are sending out regular updates on the situation. Seattle Public Utilities, along with Tacoma and Everett, initiated water shortage contingency plans and moved to the voluntary stage, requesting customers reduce water consumption by 10%. While the recent rain and cooler temperatures have provided some much needed, short-term relief to high water temperatures, the need for robust water conservation measures has not changed. WRIA 8 has responded to these conditions in the following ways:
 - The Management Committee reviewed and approved sending a letter from the SRC to Seattle Mayor Ed Murray (see letter in meeting packet), commending Seattle Public Utilities for initiating their water shortage contingency plan and supporting the move to the voluntary stage, urging them to consider moving to the next stage of the plan as conditions warrant and to communicate water conservation messages with the public.
 - On Saturday, September 5, the Seattle Times published an Op-Ed authored by WRIA 8 SRC Chair, King County Councilmember Larry Phillips, jointly with the chairs of the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum (Duvall Councilmember Jason Walker) and WRIA 9 Forum (Covington Councilmember Marlla Mhoon). The Op-Ed can be found here: <http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/our-salmon-are-in-hot-water/>
 - Highlighted the effects of drought conditions on salmon in the WRIA 8 E-news and on the WRIA 8 website.
 - Management Committee approved contributing up to \$20,000 from WRIA 8 to serve as local match to a proposal to conduct a Sammamish River pre-spawn mortality study to better understand how low flow and high temperature conditions impact Chinook salmon migrating to spawning grounds. The study is being led by King County Water and Land Resources, with funding from the King County Flood

Control District and in-kind support from the Washington Department of Ecology and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

- Drafted a letter for SRC consideration to Col. Buck, Seattle District Commander of the Army Corps of Engineers, commending the Corps for recent efforts to study whether false lockings have a measureable benefit to reducing water temperatures in the Ship Canal and emphasizing the importance of further studying how to reduce temperatures in the Ship Canal to improve water quality conditions for salmon and ensure they can pass through into the rest of the watershed.
- **WRIA 8 E-news** – The WRIA 8 E-news published August 20 was a special drought issue, focused on the grave conditions salmon are confronting this season as they struggle to reach spawning areas despite warm rivers and streams and low flows from our record-breaking summer. The E-news discussed water conservation measures around the region, ways that folks can help salmon by reporting blockages and strandings, drought relief money available from Ecology, and more. Other regional issues were covered as well, including an effort to support improvements to the aging Locks – see <http://www.ballardlocks.org/> Read the complete E-news at www.govlink.org/watersheds/8/news and send ideas for the October issue to polly.freeman@kingcounty.gov by September 30.
- **Salmon SEEson** – The ninth annual Salmon SEEson program is underway, coordinating and promoting salmon watching opportunities for the public around the watershed and the broader region. The program continues to expand, this year adding three more sites in the Green-Duwamish Watershed, and North Creek in Bothell, bringing to 15 the number of locations where families and others can try to spot returning salmon now through the end of the year. Given this year’s very tough conditions for salmon, the website and messaging to our partners reflects the need for water conservation and ways to report fish in distress. We hope that the website can also serve as a way to let people know where fish are being seen as the season progresses.

The Saving Water Partnership continues to sponsor Salmon SEEson, as is especially appropriate this year, and we also have support from King County, Duwamish Alive, the Green/Duwamish Watershed and Central Puget Sound Watershed (WRIA 9). For more information about viewing site locations, best times to see fish, and a map of viewing sites, visit the [Salmon SEEson website](#). You can print out the flyer and poster from that site as well, or for hard copies of the flyer and/or poster, please contact Linda.grob@kingcounty.gov

- **Cedar River Corridor Plan Advisory Committee** – The Cedar River Corridor Plan Advisory Committee has met four times, and continues to revise the goals and objectives and identify the biggest flood risks and habitat needs. King County also convened two workshops in August, one to identify habitat restoration opportunities and a second to identify flood risk reduction opportunities. The project team will use workshop feedback to develop some initial proposed project concepts for Advisory Committee review. Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes represents WRIA 8 on the Committee, and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz serves as the WRIA 8 alternate. This planning effort is being coordinated by the King County Flood Control

District, and is intended to develop an integrated plan for managing flood risk, habitat restoration and recreational use along the Cedar River. The next Corridor Plan Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled for late fall.

- **Salmon counts** – Counts of returning salmon at the Ballard Locks are nearly complete for 2015. This year's runs started slowly, and remained low: As of September 9, about 5,200 Chinook and 34,000 sockeye are estimated to have passed the locks. This is roughly half the average run for Chinook and 17% of the average run for sockeye at this time. (There was a brief increase in Chinook passing through the locks coincided with the rains in late August and early September.) Numbers for Chinook are similar to last year, while numbers for sockeye are about half of last year's. Historically, 90% of the Chinook run and 99.9% of the sockeye run has passed the locks by September 9. Spawning surveys are just beginning on the Cedar River.

WRIA 8 Committee Reports

- **WRIA 8 Technical Committee** – The Technical Committee met on August 12 and September 9. Agenda items included updates on the Keller Farm (Redmond) wetland bank proposal, review of operational experiments by the Corps of Engineers at the Ballard Locks in 2014, the Puget Sound Partnership and WRIA 8 pilot monitoring and adaptive management planning for salmon habitat, streamflow and temperature updates, and planning for a technical workshop (November 17) to support the WRIA 8 Ten-year progress report and Chinook Conservation Plan update. The Committee next meets on October 14 and November 4.
- **WRIA 8 Implementation Committee** – The Implementation Committee met on September 1. Meeting agenda topics included updates on draft 2016 legislative priorities, request for projects from the Fish Barrier Removal Board, WRIA 8's monitoring and adaptive management project, the upcoming WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour, and WRIA 8's efforts to share information about the effects of drought conditions on salmon. The Committee also received presentations on King County's wadeable streams habitat status and trends report, King County's Bear Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Plan, and provided feedback on draft questions for a programmatic action implementation survey that will be sent to WRIA 8 partners this fall. The Committee also reviewed the draft topics for the September 17 SRC meeting. The Committee next meets on November 3, 2015.