



2016 Legislative Priorities for Puget Sound Watershed Health and Salmon Habitat Recovery

Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Partners

Updated: September 2015

Federal Priorities

- **Support an appropriations request of at least \$65 million for the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations for FY 2016.** This would maintain the current funding level. These funds allow NOAA to award grants to Washington State, tribes and local watershed partners to implement salmon recovery priorities. These are the grant funds WRIA 8 directs through the annual Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant round process. Habitat restoration enabled by these funds is consistent with the Action Agenda for Puget Sound recovery and tribal habitat priorities.
- **Support Puget Sound recovery legislation to designate Puget Sound as a “Great Waterbody”, making it a formal Clean Water Act program,** establishing an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Puget Sound Program Office, and making the Sound eligible for additional annual funding to implement priority restoration efforts and protect water quality. Legislation is being developed by Congressmen Denny Heck and Derek Kilmer as co-chairs of the Puget Sound Recovery Caucus. In addition, request support for defending and maximizing federal funding for Puget Sound protection and restoration through other programs, such as the EPA National Estuary Program.
- **Support funding for the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to implement critical prioritized infrastructure repairs and updates to the Hiram M. Chittenden (Ballard) Locks.** These repairs and updates are immediately necessary for continued safe operation of the Locks for navigation, maintaining lake levels (needed for the SR-520 and I-90

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THESE PRIORITIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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floating bridges), and providing safe passage for ESA listed Chinook salmon.

Request: Encourage Corps Headquarters to provide adequate operations and maintenance funding for identified prioritized projects on the Corps' list of Locks infrastructure improvements developed in 2012. To date, Locks managers have been slowly implementing these improvements as limited funding allows. More funding is needed to make critical repairs in a timely manner.

WRIA 8 encourages the Washington State Congressional delegation and other regional leaders to share their concern about the Locks' condition with Corps leadership in Washington, D.C. and request the Corps to increase operations and maintenance funding for critical Locks infrastructure improvements.

State Priorities

Capital Budget:

During the 2016 Supplemental Legislative Session, communicate support for salmon recovery capital funding priorities, including:

- **Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) Fund** – PSAR funds support implementation of the highest priority habitat protection and restoration projects throughout Puget Sound. The program includes two components: 1) Base funding allocated among Puget Sound watersheds for a habitat projects grant round, and 2) Funding for a prioritized list of specific large-scale, high-priority capital projects submitted by Puget Sound watersheds. Funds are derived from State general obligation bonds (RCW 77.85).
 - In 2014, WRIA 8 partnered with City of Renton to secure an additional \$150,000 PSAR project development grant for Renton to conduct a habitat restoration assessment and preliminary project designs in the lower Cedar River.
 - A portion of this funding also supports local watershed capacity for project development and implementation.
- **Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) grant program to protect and restore salmon habitat** – SRFB funds are a combination of state and federal funds that support annual grant rounds for salmon habitat

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protection and restoration projects in watersheds around the state. This funding is a cornerstone of WRIA 8's annual grant round.

- **Floodplains by Design** – In the past two biennial legislative sessions, the legislature allocated funding to the Department of Ecology to support a list of multiple benefit floodplain restoration and management projects, including the following WRIA 8 priorities:
 - In the 2014, King County received a \$4.1 million grant to support completion of the Cedar River Rainbow Bend floodplain restoration project and assist with relocating residents of a mobile home park as part of the Riverbend floodplain restoration project.
 - In the 2015-2017 biennium, King County and Seattle Public Utilities received a grant to acquire floodplain properties in priority reaches of the Cedar River and develop final design of the Riverbend floodplain restoration project.

Operating Budget:

No specific funding requests identified.

Policy Legislation:

- **Support continued efforts to explore new watershed-based funding authorities to support multiple-benefit projects that address salmon habitat protection and restoration, water quality, stormwater management, and flood management.** Since 2011, recognizing the limited funding available to implement salmon recovery, WRIA 8 supported and participated in cross-watershed discussions to identify alternative funding mechanisms to implement multiple-benefit watershed priorities, including but not limited to salmon recovery habitat restoration, stormwater management, and flood management. These efforts and discussions are on-going and may result in future legislation.

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