



2017 Legislative Priorities for Puget Sound Watershed Health and Salmon Habitat Recovery

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

Updated: September 2016

Federal Priorities

- **Support an appropriations request of \$80 million for the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations for FY 2017, as requested by the governors of Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Idaho.**

An \$80 million funding level would restore funding to the level appropriated in 2011 and would make more resources available to advance implementation of critical habitat protection and restoration projects.

These funds allow NOAA to award grants to Washington State, tribes, and local watershed partners to implement salmon recovery priorities through the annual Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant round process. Habitat protection and restoration projects enabled by PCSRF are consistent with the Action Agenda for Puget Sound recovery and tribal habitat priorities.

The President's proposed FY 2017 budget includes \$65 million for PCSRF, which is equal to the FY 2016 appropriation. Federal PCSRF funds are matched by state funds in the Recreation and Conservation Office budget.

***Request:** Support an \$80 million appropriation for PCSRF for FY 2017 in communications with the Congressional delegation and NOAA leadership.*

- **Support the “Promoting United Government Efforts to Save Our Sound Act” (PUGET SOS Act; H.R. 3630).**

This bill would establish a Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide for the coordination of federal Puget Sound recovery efforts with state, local and tribal recovery efforts. The bill enhances the federal government's role and investment in Puget Sound by amending the Clean Water Act to add a new

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section dedicated to Puget Sound recovery, providing lasting and structural recognition of the Puget Sound as a waterbody of national significance on par with the Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes. The bill, which was introduced by Congressmen Denny Heck and Derek Kilmer (co-chairs of the Puget Sound Recovery Caucus), would ultimately result in greater levels of federal funding for Puget Sound recovery.

***Request:** In communications with the Congressional delegation and EPA leadership, support the Puget SOS Act or a revised version of this bill, which will be determined following the Council on Environmental Quality visit to Puget Sound (likely to occur in September).*

➤ **Support funding for the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to implement critical prioritized infrastructure repairs and updates to the Hiram M. Chittenden (Ballard) Locks.**

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 floating bridges), and providing safe passage for ESA-listed Chinook salmon. To date, Locks managers have been slowly implementing 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.

***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. For Fiscal Year 2017, the Locks funding need is \$17.3 million.*

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State Priorities

Capital Budget

➤ **Support the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) Fund capital funding request.**

PSAR funds support implementation of the highest priority habitat protection and restoration projects throughout Puget Sound. The program includes: 1) base funding allocated among Puget Sound watersheds for a list of grant round habitat projects, 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). A small portion of this funding also supports local watershed capacity for project development and implementation.

***Request:** Support the Puget Sound Partnership's PSAR funding request for the 2017 – 2019 biennium, which is expected to be \$80 million (contained in the Recreation and Conservation Office budget).*

➤ **Support the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) capital funding request.**

SRFB funds consist of federal PCSRF dollars and state capital funds that serve as the required match to federal funds. Together, these dollars support annual grant rounds for salmon habitat protection and restoration projects in watersheds around the state. This funding is a cornerstone of WRIA 8's annual grant round, yet the funding from the state has been in decline for several years. For 2017 – 2019, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board intends to use a portion of the state funding to support Lead Entity capacity related to project development, which is intended to increase Washington's competitiveness for federal PCSRF funds.

***Request:** Support the Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) Salmon Recovery Funding Board state capital funding request for the 2017 – 2019 biennium, which is expected to be up to \$56 million.*

➤ **Support the Floodplains by Design capital funding request.**

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:

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- In the 2013-2015 biennium, 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.
- For the 2017 – 2019 biennium, King County applied for funding to construct the Riverbend Floodplain Reconnection Project on the Cedar River.

***Request:** Support Ecology’s Floodplains by Design funding request for the 2017 – 2019 biennium, which is expected to be \$70 million.*

➤ **Support the Puget Sound Partnership’s funding strategy, specifically as it relates to advancing implementation of PSP’s three strategic initiatives—habitat, stormwater, and shellfish.**

The overall intent of PSP’s funding strategy is to protect Puget Sound, and funding will support the Partnership’s ability to implement the Action Agenda for Puget Sound, which directly and indirectly benefits salmon recovery. PSP’s salmon recovery habitat restoration priorities may fall more directly under the PSAR program, but the strategic initiatives are an avenue to support stormwater reduction priorities; multi-objective habitat enhancement projects; and integrated water infrastructure projects that address a mix of stormwater, habitat, water supply, and flood protection.

***Request:** Support the Puget Sound Partnership’s legislative funding strategy for capital actions supporting implementation of the Action Agenda for Puget Sound.*

Operating Budget

- **Support the appropriation of state general funds in the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) budget to support Lead Entities.** RCO requests state general funds to support Lead Entity operational capacity, and these funds combine with federal PCSRF dollars to support annual Lead Entity grants for project development, grant round coordination, and project tracking. For over 10 years, the grant award to WRIA 8 was \$60,000, but for the 2016 – 2017 state fiscal year, the award

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will be \$45,658 due to declining state contributions and a commensurate decline in Washington's PCSRF award. The decline in federal PCSRF funds has been linked directly to the amount of capacity funds included in Washington's PCSRF application relative to the other four west coast states, which has increased due to the decline in state appropriations. As a result, the state contribution is necessary to improve Washington's competitiveness for PCSRF, which affects capital and capacity funding.

***Request:** Support RCO's request of \$907,000 in state general funds to support Lead Entity operational capacity. This is the same amount requested in the 2015 – 2017 biennium.*

Policy Legislation

- **Track and participate in 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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