



**Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish (WRIA 8) Watershed**  
201 S. Jackson Street, Suite 600  
Seattle, WA 98104-3855

December 16, 2016

Fred Jarrett  
Deputy King County Executive  
Chair, South Central Action Area Caucus Group  
401 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ste 800  
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: WRIA 8 feedback on proposal to restructure Puget Sound local integrating organizations along watershed boundaries

Dear Mr. Jarrett:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposal to restructure local integrating organization (LIO) roles and functions along watershed boundaries. WRIA 8 appreciates your and the South Central Caucus Group's effort to assess and consider the effectiveness of the LIO role and functions to ensure effective local engagement and implementation of priority local Puget Sound actions.

As a participating member of the Caucus Group, WRIA 8 understands the broad purpose and intent of the LIO to help coordinate and prioritize local efforts to protect and restore Puget Sound; however, we share many of the concerns identified in your memo regarding the effectiveness and value of the planning and process work the Caucus Group has been through to develop an LIO recovery implementation plan, update the Action Agenda, and solicit near-term actions. This substantial process work involved time and energy from numerous partners without a commensurate role in funding and/or policy decision making. A lack of a meaningful role in directing implementation funding has also contributed to the loss of elected official participation on the Caucus Group – without a role in directing funding for implementation, elected officials will not see value or be inclined to spend their limited time and energy on identifying and prioritizing actions.

While the Caucus Group has facilitated some useful information sharing and transfer of knowledge among participating jurisdictions and organizations, the South Central Action Area geography tends to be too large in area combined with too many jurisdictions and entities to effectively prioritize actions. WRIA 8 understands and shares the perspective that ecosystem or watershed-based boundaries are logical and likely more effective for coordinating natural resource management issues. Salmon recovery in WRIA 8 (and other King County watersheds), with its interlocal agreement to cost share efforts among 28 local government

partners, is a model for effective regional coordination on a complex natural resource management issue that has sustained strong support from local government and stakeholder partners for over a decade.

WRIA 8 offers the following comments on the concept of restructuring LIO functions at the watershed scale for consideration:

- Salmon recovery is a cornerstone of Puget Sound recovery, but more effort needs to be put into “breaking down the silos” to better integrate salmon recovery, stormwater management, and floodplain management on a regional/watershed basis.
- WRIA 8 is not opposed to considering how some LIO functions could be realigned along watershed boundaries, but we caution such a proposal needs thorough vetting and engagement of watershed groups, such as the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council. It is critical to identify functions that are of value to WRIA 8.
- The Caucus Group and Puget Sound Partnership should assess the critical LIO roles and functions commensurate with available resources, and the best structure to deliver those functions.
- WRIA 8 is focused on implementing salmon recovery through an interlocal agreement (ILA) between local government partners. The ILA partners pay annual cost shares to implement salmon recovery. Any proposed additional roles/functions should not slow or distract from implementation, and would need to come with additional capacity/resources.
- If salmon recovery watershed groups are determined to offer an effective structure for some LIO functions, WRIA 8 needs to see clear value to consider assuming additional roles/functions, including additional capacity and capital funding resources.
- In the six years since the Caucus Group was formed, it has allocated less than \$250,000 to local priority actions. Without a meaningful commitment of funding to support identifying and prioritizing actions, those functions are not likely to be considered a good use of time and resources.
- WRIA 8 has a ten year plan, which provides the technical basis, goals, actions, and an adaptive management process to guide salmon recovery. The Partnership should reconsider how it plans for Puget Sound recovery. Updating the Action Agenda every two years keeps the agency and partners in perpetual planning mode and takes away from meaningful progress on implementation.

Thank you for your leadership on Puget Sound recovery and the effort to increase effective implementation and alignment of priorities. The WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council looks forward to discussing this topic with you at its January 19 meeting. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions ([jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov](mailto:jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov) or 206-477-4780)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jason" being the most prominent.

Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz

Salmon Recovery Manager

Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8)

