

# WRIA 8 Updates and Committee Reports

July 18, 2019

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- **Puget Sound Regional Update** – The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PS SRC) last met on May 23. The meeting focused on approving the policy for Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) 10% monitoring funds for the 2019 grant round, deciding whether to recommend incorporation of the Salmon Benefit Index (SBI) into the 2021-2023 Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Large Capital projects scoring process, an update on the recently negotiated Pacific Salmon Treaty and alignment of Treaty implementation funding with Puget Sound priority projects, an update from NOAA on its timeline and process for finalizing the Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Plan, and approving the watershed allocation formula for the 2019 SRFB grant round. The PS SRC meets next on August 8. Diane Buckshnis, Edmonds City Councilmember, and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz represent WRIA 8.
- **The South Central Action Area Caucus** (Local Integrating Organization (LIO)) last met on May 1. The meeting focused on an update regarding how the LIO will engage with the Environmental Protection Agency, updates from Puget Sound Partnership, discussion of integrating performance measures for the LIO’s Puget Sound recovery priorities, and a panel presentation on shoreline armoring and current restoration efforts, education/outreach and incentive programs, and assessment efforts. Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz currently attends to represent WRIA 8. The Caucus Group meets next on September 4.
- **Welcome Lauren Urgenson, WRIA 8’s new Technical Coordinator** – The WRIA 8 team welcomed Lauren in early June. We are very excited to have Lauren joining the team, assuming the position previously filled by Scott Stolnack. Lauren will lead technical aspects of salmon recovery in WRIA 8, including coordination with partners from local governments, tribes, community organizations, and state and federal agencies to inform and guide implementation and monitoring of the WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan.

Lauren comes to WRIA 8 from the University of Washington’s School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, where she most recently worked as a research scientist designing and implementing a variety of projects to monitor ecological responses to natural resource management and restoration practices in the Pacific Northwest, as well as in China and South Africa. She brings a strong technical foundation in watershed ecology and management, and an interest in building and maintaining effective partnerships to implement and monitor WRIA 8 salmon recovery strategies. She holds a Master’s and PhD from the University of Washington, focused on riparian restoration and linkages with instream fish habitat. We look forward to the fresh perspective and new energy she’ll bring to our salmon recovery work. Lauren’s contact info:

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- **Snohomish County’s status as a WRIA 8 cost share partner** – On May 24, Mark Phillips, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council Vice Chair, and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz met with Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, County Councilmember Stephanie Wright, Executive Office staff, and County Surface Water Management Director to discuss the County’s status as a cost share partner in 2020. Executive Somers and Councilmember Wright were supportive of the goals and work of WRIA 8, and expressed a willingness to try to find funding in their budget to enable the County to return as a cost share partner, but that it would be very challenging given the County’s current budget condition. The WRIA 8 Management Committee approved sending a letter to the County Council on June 24 to request the County Council include funding for the County’s cost share in 2020 and put the issue back in front of the Council during their budget development process. Ongoing communications from the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council to Snohomish County Councilmembers on this topic will be important.
- **Congressional member outreach** – As part of the strategy to support WRIA 8’s federal priorities, WRIA 8 leadership and staff participated in two recent meetings with members Washington State’s Congressional delegation. On June 14, WRIA 8 staff participated in a briefing for Congressman Dan Newhouse at the Ballard Locks focusing on Puget Sound salmon recovery challenges and priorities the briefing and Locks tour also involved staff from the Army Corps of Engineers, Puget Sound Partnership, and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. On July 2, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council members, John Stokes, Mark Philips, and Victoria Hunt participated with WRIA 8 staff in a briefing with Congresswoman Kim Schrier on WRIA 8 salmon recovery efforts and priorities.
- **Ecology-led Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee status** – The WRIA 8 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee (WREC) continues to meet monthly as part of the process to develop a plan that will offset potential impacts to instream flows arising from permit-exempt domestic wells over the next 20 years. Meetings thus far have primarily focused on educating committee members about instream flows, the effects of well withdrawals on groundwater and surface water, and the types of projects that can be used to offset the projected consumptive use from new permit-exempt domestic wells. King County and Snohomish County are currently developing rural growth projections and consumptive use estimates, which will be the basis for planning decisions that follow later this year.
- **Salmon returns update** – Historically, about 60% of the **sockeye** salmon run has passed through the Ballard Locks by this time. Sockeye salmon numbers are extremely low this year: as of July 7, about 8,557 sockeye are estimated to have entered the Lake Washington system. The 10 year average is around 53,000 by this time, so this year the run is just 16% of average. **Chinook** salmon do not arrive in large numbers until later in July. Typically only about 1% of the run has passed by this time. As of July 7, around 38 Chinook have been estimated to have passed into the Lake Washington system. The 10 year average for Chinook at this time is 86 individuals.

- **Sockeye management** – Sockeye salmon in Lake Washington have declined in recent years, and are now at extremely low levels. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has performed an analysis that indicates that the survival bottleneck is likely in Lake Washington during the juvenile stage, and sockeye numbers are likely to remain very low unless actions are taken to improve juvenile survival in the lake. WRIA 8 supports WDFW leading development of a comprehensive, science-based sockeye management strategy to identify all limiting factors and guide actions to improve survival. Actions affecting sockeye salmon have the potential to also affect Chinook salmon (e.g., predator management or reducing artificial night-time lighting). The WRIA 8 Technical Committee will continue to track the issue and supports actions that may improve survival of multiple salmon species, including Chinook, in Lake Washington.
- **E-news** – The June 26 WRIA 8 E-newsletter included information about grant funding awarded to the WRIA 8 Meadowdale Beach Park Project, Southern Resident Orcas and #OrcaHeroes, the Engineering with Nature film premier at SIFF, invasive crab species in the Salish Sea, grant opportunities, upcoming workshops, events, and conferences, and links to several relevant news stories. Please send ideas for the August edition of E-news to Laura West at [lwest@kingcounty.gov](mailto:lwest@kingcounty.gov) by August 2. E-news distribution now includes over 900 recipients.

### **WRIA 8 Committee Reports**

- **WRIA 8 Technical Committee** – The Technical Committee did not meet in May – July. The next meeting is in August, and will focus on discussion of the Technical Committee’s purpose, approach, and objectives; synthesis of information on temperature and dissolved oxygen issues in the Lake Washington Ship Canal; and technical review of two habitat restoration projects.
- **WRIA 8 Implementation Committee** – The Implementation Committee met on July 9. Meeting topics included general WRIA 8 updates; presentation on King County’s open space/habitat acquisition and restoration strategy on the Cedar River, Issaquah Creek, and Bear Creek; review of WRIA 8 Management Committee’s 2020 budget and work plan recommendation; review and feedback on 2020 legislative priorities; discussion of WRIA 8 communications, education, and outreach strategy; and, review of agenda topics for the July 18 Salmon Recovery Council meeting.