

DRAFT – for discussion only



2023 Legislative Priorities for Salmon Recovery and Puget Sound Watershed Health

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

Federal Priorities

- **Support \$70 million for Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.** The PCSRF program is the primary federal funding for salmon recovery and supports annual grants for priority salmon habitat protection and restoration projects.
- **Support funding to advance design and construction of critical prioritized infrastructure repairs to the Hiram M. Chittenden (Ballard) Locks**, including design of an exclusion structure for the diffuser well and important upgrades and improvements to the fish ladder. **Advocate for the Corps' continued engagement in the multi-partner Roundtable process to identify and advance alternatives to address elevated water temperatures and low dissolved oxygen in the Lake Washington Ship Canal.**
- **Support key Puget Sound restoration funding programs and policy priorities, including:**
 - **\$50 million for National Estuary Program (NEP).** This is core program funding for Puget Sound Partnership and for competitive grants supporting implementation of priority Puget Sound recovery actions.
 - **\$54 million for Puget Sound Geographic Program in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (in House bill HR 8294; Senate bill TBD).** This program provides key funding to support Puget Sound recovery priorities, implementation of voluntary actions, and adaptive management. Funding supports local and regional partner efforts, including ten local integrating organizations and seven Marine Resources Committees. The program supports innovative approaches to addressing stormwater, habitat, shellfish, flooding, water quality and quantity, and endangered species recovery, including Chinook salmon and Southern Resident orcas.
 - **Passage of the “Promoting United Government Efforts to Save Our Sound” (PUGET SOS) legislation in House version of the National Defense Authorization Act**, which will establish a Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office in the Environmental Protection Agency to coordinate federal Puget Sound recovery efforts with state, local and tribal recovery efforts and enable greater levels of federal funding for Puget Sound recovery. The PUGET SOS enhances the federal government’s role and investment in

Puget Sound by amending the Clean Water Act to add a new 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.

- **Support federal funding for research and management of stormwater runoff to reduce impacts to salmon.** Stormwater is the largest source of pollution to the Puget Sound and much of the developed landscape does not have stormwater treatment. Chemicals from decaying tires, specifically 6PPD-quinone affect coho, Chinook, sockeye and steelhead. In particular, coho have been shown to be most sensitive and succumb to “urban runoff mortality syndrome” within hours of exposure. Federal funding is needed to support local governments in implementing critical stormwater retrofit projects to capture and treat toxic runoff. Federal infrastructure funding provides a once in a generation opportunity to effectively address stormwater management.
- **Support and create mechanisms to enable innovative funding approaches, including public/private partnerships, that engage federal agencies and private funding sources to implement projects, especially those under federal authority.**
- **Support directing funding from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act to priority habitat restoration and water infrastructure improvements in WRIA 8 and Puget Sound.** Several salmon recovery related priorities are identified for funding through recent federal investments. Aligning this funding with state and local project priorities and/or to flow through existing state programs supports and supplements existing salmon recovery priorities

State Priorities

Capital Budget

- **Support key salmon recovery Capital Budget funding programs:**
 - \$82 million for **Salmon Recovery Funding Board** in the Recreation and Conservation Office budget, which funds habitat protection and restoration projects statewide, as well as half of the operating costs of the salmon recovery Lead Entity program to coordinate implementation of salmon recovery in local watersheds throughout the state.
 - \$65-\$70 million for **Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration** in the Recreation and Conservation Office budget, which will fund critically important habitat projects in all Puget Sound watersheds and a prioritized list of large salmon recovery projects around Puget Sound.
 - \$70.4 million for **Floodplains by Design** in the Department of Ecology’s budget, which will implement a prioritized list of multi-benefit floodplain projects around the state that enhance salmon habitat and protect public health and safety.
 - \$25.5 million for **Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program** in the Recreation and Conservation Office budget, which supports nearshore protection and restoration.

- \$94 million for **Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board** in the Recreation and Conservation Office budget, which supports removal of barriers to fish passage.
- **Support other Capital Budget funding programs that can match and support salmon recovery priorities, including Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Water Quality Combined Funding program.** These programs are less directly focused on salmon recovery, but support a broad range of land protection and outdoor recreation priorities, including park acquisition and development, habitat conservation, farmland and forestland preservation, water quality protection and stormwater management. These funds often complement WRIA 8 grant funding to implement priority restoration projects.

Operating Budget

- **Support \$3,263,294 as base funding for salmon recovery Lead Entities in Recreation and Conservation Office budget.** These funds, combined with \$2.4 million of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board capital budget request, support base funding for Lead Entities in watersheds around the state to administer a locally-based process to develop and prioritize projects for funding to the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board (per RCW 77.85). Historically, these funds provided a \$60,000 grant annually to WRIA 8 as the designated Lead Entity for our watershed. This request represents an increase of \$2,289,294 in funding above the previous biennium funding level and helps address significant increases in Lead Entity operating costs.
- **Support state agency budget requests for monitoring salmon populations, and for studies and management of predation, elevated water temperatures, artificial light at night, priority aquatic invasive weeds, and other issues that affect survival of WRIA 8 salmon populations.** Monitoring salmon populations is critical to understanding and reporting on progress towards recovery goals. State support is important and necessary for studying and managing issues affecting salmon survival in WRIA 8 and Puget Sound.

Policy Legislation

- **Track and support legislation that seeks to improve regulatory protections for areas that are important for salmon habitat.** This could include proposals to define and implement “net ecological gain,” and regulatory improvements that enhance protection of riparian areas and lake and marine shorelines.
- **Support reforms to the Growth Management Act that align with salmon recovery goals and targets,** including efforts to integrate salmon recovery and climate change into comprehensive planning.
- **Support innovative efforts to streamline regulatory review and permitting to support habitat restoration project implementation.** Build on the pilot efforts from the previous legislative session to support improvements to the permitting process to streamline review and permitting for restoration.

- **Support increasing funding to regulatory entities for permit enforcement regarding land use regulations.** Lack of adequate regulatory permit enforcement enables continued unpermitted development and loss of habitat and critical areas.
- **Support legislation and funding requests that promote stormwater management planning, coordination, and implementation at a watershed scale,** address critical data/information needs, and seek innovative solutions to achieve multiple benefits from integrating stormwater management and habitat protection and restoration. Support advancing research and policy/product changes to address impacts of the tire dust chemical 6PPD-quinone on salmon survival. Champion legislation that prioritizes implementation of low impact development, facilitates green stormwater infrastructure, and that supports retrofits to older stormwater facilities to improve protection of the environment at the watershed scale.
 - In 2022, the state legislature allocated \$500M to the Washington State Department of Transportation to retrofit infrastructure with emphasis put on 6PPD-q. While that was a good start, a dedicated funding source for local governments for stormwater retrofits is needed.
- **Support efforts to address effects of climate change on salmon and salmon habitat.** WRIA 8 recognizes that recovering salmon requires planning for and adapting to changing watershed conditions resulting from climate change. WRIA 8 supports policies and programs that address temperature impaired water bodies to improve salmon migration and survival, increase the pace of salmon habitat protection and restoration to improve ecosystem resiliency, and that mitigate projected effects of climate change on salmon.
- **Track and participate in efforts to improve existing funding authorities to support salmon recovery and Puget Sound restoration priorities,** including efforts to develop new watershed-based and/or regional funding mechanisms to support multiple-benefit projects that address salmon recovery and Puget Sound restoration priorities.