

**WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council Guidelines for  
Commenting on Issues and/or Endorsing Projects and Programs**  
*Updated and Approved March 2018*

**Background**

The WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council (Council), WRIA 8 staff team, and the WRIA 8 Technical Committee are periodically asked to endorse proposals for grant requests, or to comment on actions/policies with potential to impact salmon habitat or which are important to salmon recovery in WRIA 8. These guidelines are intended to provide clarity for Council members, staff, and partner organizations about the conditions under which the Council and/or staff may provide comment or a letter of support.

Decisions whether or not to provide support for a project/grant proposal or make comment on an action/policy are made largely on a case-by-case basis, according to several factors, including:

- Consistency of proposal with WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan (2017 update to 2005 Plan) and Council priorities; level of importance for salmon recovery, and clear technical basis
- Adequacy of lead time for staff to prepare a letter/comments;
- Adequacy of lead time to allow review and approval by the appropriate WRIA 8 entities (e.g., Salmon Recovery Council Chair and Vice-Chair, Management Committee, Implementation and Technical committees, and/or Salmon Recovery Council); and,
- General support by WRIA 8 partners.

**Guidelines for commenting and providing letters of support**

**For Potentially Controversial Issues that are NOT a High Priority for WRIA 8**

WRIA 8 staff will politely decline to comment. An example would be a request for WRIA 8 to comment on a development with potential impacts on a Tier 3 area (portion of watershed not designated as Tier 1 or 2) or a request for support for a project with no direct linkage to Chinook salmon habitat or the recovery strategies outlined in the WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan.

**For Non-Controversial Issues that Are High Priority for WRIA 8**

An example would be a request for a letter of support for a grant proposal for a habitat project on the WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan (2017 update) project list or consistent with WRIA 8 recovery strategies and habitat goals. Requests for projects or programs in Tier 1 or 2 areas or that address identified priority data or programmatic needs should receive priority.

Process: Determining who signs comments or letters of support for non-controversial issues that are high priority will be made on a case by case basis, and could include Council Chair and Vice Chair, Salmon Recovery Manager, or other WRIA 8 staff. Salmon Recovery Manager will oversee the drafting and submittal of comments or letters.

#### For High Profile/Potentially Controversial Issues that are High Priority to WRIA 8

**When time allows:** Ideally when requests/issues arise that are potentially controversial and a high priority there is sufficient time for the WRIA 8 team to discuss the topic with the appropriate committees (Technical and/or Implementation Committee) and take a recommendation to the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council for action.

Example: A good example of this in 2008 was the SR520 widening project adjacent to lower Bear Creek. This project had the potential to negatively affect one of the highest priority habitat projects in a Tier 1 area for WRIA 8 and the City of Redmond wanted WRIA 8 support on the issue. We were able to discuss it at both the WRIA 8 Technical Committee and Implementation Committee meetings and put it on the agenda for the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council. The Council requested that WRIA 8 staff write a letter about the issue to the Governor on their behalf for the Chair and Vice Chair to sign. WRIA 8 staff worked with Redmond staff to draft a letter which did help influence the state to find a creative solution to help Redmond fund the restoration of lower Bear Creek.

**When time is not adequate:** When there is not enough time to fully vet an issue with WRIA 8 committees and/or the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council at regular meetings, WRIA 8 staff will contact the appropriate committee via email and seek consensus (via email or phone) on a response from members who are most actively participating (those that attend more than ½ the meetings over a 12-month period). For policy issues, this would be the WRIA 8 Implementation Committee and for technical issues it would be the WRIA 8 Technical Committee. WRIA 8 staff will also send an email to the full Council to inform them staff are initiating a process to work through the Implementation Committee and/or Technical Committee to decide whether or not to comment on a particular issue and to contact the Salmon Recovery Manager with questions/concerns.

On technical issues, the WRIA 8 Technical Committee will restrict its comments to technical issues and follow the Chinook habitat goals and recovery strategies outlined in the WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan.

If WRIA 8 jurisdictions and other partners are involved in the issue (e.g. it relates to a habitat project or activity in their jurisdiction), WRIA 8 staff will attempt to contact the WRIA 8 lead staff at that jurisdiction about the issue. WRIA 8 staff will also make an effort to reach WRIA 8 committee members who are most knowledgeable about the issue being discussed.

The WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Manager will review and approve comments, and get approval to submit comments from the Management Committee and the WRIA 8 Chair and/or Vice Chair. Draft comment letters will be emailed to the full Salmon Recovery Council to enable interested members to ask questions or state any concerns before final comments are submitted. Comment letters on potentially controversial and/or high priority issues will generally be signed by the WRIA 8 Chair and/or Vice Chair. WRIA 8 staff will report on the issue and the comments provided at the next scheduled WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council meeting.

If a topic is determined to be significantly controversial, WRIA 8 staff may choose to convene a special meeting of the Salmon Recovery Council to discuss draft comments and make a decision about whether or not to take action.

**This guidance is to be reviewed regularly by the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council.**