

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Date: December 18, 2003
Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Location: 2nd Floor Conference Room, Whatcom County Public Works
 322 N. Commercial Street, Bellingham WA

AGENDA:

1	Welcome
2	Introductions
3	Approve meeting summary from November 20, 2003
4	Update and status of Salmon Recovery Plan
5	Small Group Sessions a. What are the most important short-term actions that we can take in the next five years that will help meet long-term goals? b. What are the most important, high priority issues and actions for salmon recovery in the next 20 years?
6	Group Discussion
7	Next steps
8	Meeting Feedback

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

Name	Organization
Stakeholder Group Members	
Henry Bierlink	WRIA 1 Agricultural Caucus
George Boggs	Whatcom Conservation District
Jeremy Brown	Washington Trollers
Mary Dickinson	WRIA 1 Land Development Caucus
Kristin Fredericks	WSDOT
John Gillies	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Dale Griggs	Citizen
Richard Haard	Salmon Habitat Citizen Advisory Committee
Mark Henderson	Washington State Department of Ecology
Chip Hilarides	Georgia Pacific
David Hooper	NSEA Board
Jim Jorgensen	Puget Sound Anglers
Scott McCreery	Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee
Fred Polinder	Ag / FCZD CAC
Skip Richards	WRIA 1 Non-government Water Systems Caucus
Rebecca Schlotterback	Public Utility District #1 of Whatcom County
Vern VandeGarde	Bertrand CIDMP
Richard Whitmore	WRIA 1 Forestry Caucus

Member of Public / Alternate

Shannon Moore Washington Salmon Commodities Commission

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Members Absent

Leo Bodensteiner	Western Washington University
Jim Hansen	Salmon Habitat Citizen Advisory Committee
Ed Henken	WRIA 1 Diking / Drainage Caucus
Joe Kelly	Fourth Corner Fly Fishers
Hugh Lewis	Washington Trout
Roger Nichols	Salmon Habitat Citizen Advisory Committee
Todd Rightmire	Trout Unlimited
Joe Scott	Northwest Ecosystem Alliance
Mike Stoner	Port of Bellingham
Kristian Warfel	Washington Salmon Commodities Commission
Bert Webber	Salmon Habitat Citizen Advisory Committee

Guest

Steve Seymour	WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
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Staff to Stakeholders Group

Ned Currence	Nooksack Natural Resources
Treva Coe	Nooksack Natural Resources
Lisa Kaufman	Whatcom County Water Resources
Liz Marshall	Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
Scarlet Tang	Whatcom County Water Resources
John N. Thompson	Whatcom County Water Resources
Wendy Scherrer	Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED:

- Agenda
- Stakeholder Group Meeting Summary from 11/20/03
- Public Utility District No. 1 Press Release re Nooksack Basin Community Salmon Fund
- WRIA 1 Salmonid Recovery Plan Stakeholder Group Questions and Comments Table
- Excerpt from NMFS document defining "properly functioning condition" (PFC)
- Treva Coe and Ned Currence PowerPoint presentation re Salmonid Recovery Draft Plan
- Stakeholders Group 12/18/03 Meeting Follow-up form for written comments
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Pinks"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Chinook"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Native Char"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Coho"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Steelhead"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Chum"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Sockeye"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Cutthroat"
- Whatcom County Water Resources fact sheet "Facts about Kokanee"

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GROUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. Welcome

Wendy Scherrer welcomed the Stakeholder Group and set the agenda for the evening.

2. Introductions and Announcements

The attendees introduced themselves.

Rebecca Schlotterback distributed a news release regarding the new Nooksack Basin Community Salmon Fund. Community organizations, businesses, tribes, and local governments are invited to submit proposals for grants of up to \$30,000. The funding is provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Details will be available on the NFWF web site, www.nfwf.org/programs/nooksack.htm.

Scarlet Tang reported that Whatcom County Water Resources has developed a series of brief fact sheets about the salmonids in WRIA 1 (please see documents distributed). Anyone with questions or comments about the fact sheets, or who wants electronic versions, should contact her.

John Thompson has compiled a table of questions and comments from previous Stakeholder Group meetings. The table includes responses from the County. If members have additional questions for the County, or any comments about the table, they should contact John.

3. Approve Meeting Summary from November 20, 2003

There were no changes made to the summary by members of the group.

4. Recovery Plan Update

Scherrer noted that the original intention was to distribute a draft of the plan to the Stakeholder Group at this meeting, but that a complete draft was not yet ready. Instead, the primary authors of the plan, Treva Coe and Ned Currence, from Nooksack Natural Resources, will give an update on the plan (please see document distributed). Wendy noted that one of the meeting handouts was a green response form. She commented that one of the goals of the meeting was to discuss priority actions for salmon recovery. Members may submit suggestions on the green form. Comments may also be submitted electronically.

The Nooksack Tribe is contracted to develop a draft salmonid recovery plan for WRIA 1. An additional role is to coordinate the steering committee. The Tribe is one of the three WRIA 1 salmon co-managers of harvest and hatcheries, and also provides technical and policy input on land use (habitat) management. Coe and Currence are here tonight as contractors, although the Tribe will be resuming its co-manager role during review of the plan.

Plan outline:

- Introduction
- Goals
- Technical Background
- Actions
 - Management Strategy
 - Action Plan (habitat, hatchery, harvest, hydro, education, enforcement, integration)
 - Implementation (research plan, monitoring and adaptive management, education and outreach, funding strategy, implementation schedule)

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Status:

Groundwork has been completed: relevant studies and other information have been compiled, and some preliminary analysis has been performed. There are revised drafts of the introduction and goals sections. First drafts for the technical background and restoration strategy have also been produced. Still to be done are the drafts of the action and implementation sections. The Tribe's contracted work will be completed at the end of January 2004. However, it will still be a draft at that point, and will be on the table for discussion by both governments and stakeholders.

Technical Analysis: There is a general understanding of land uses, landscape processes, habitat conditions, harvest, hatchery management, and how they link together and affect salmonid populations. The Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) model is one method being used to look at the effect of habitat conditions on chinook. The EDT model takes Nooksack habitat conditions and the life histories of Nooksack chinook, applies biological rules (descriptions of how a habitat characteristic affects a life stage of chinook), and predicts the population's abundance, productivity, and life history diversity. NNR has used the EDT model results to prioritize reaches for restoration.

Three scenarios were modeled by EDT, including the following:

1. Historic conditions
2. Properly functioning conditions
3. Current conditions.

Properly functioning conditions or PFC is a term that was coined by NMFS (now NOAA Fisheries).

Definition: Properly functioning condition (PFC) is the sustained presence of natural* habitat-forming processes in a watershed (e.g., riparian community succession, bedload transport, precipitation runoff pattern, channel migration) that are necessary for the long-term survival of the species through the full range of environmental variation. PFC constitutes the habitat component of a species' biological requirements.

PFC indicators (parameters) can vary between different landscapes; for example, uplands and lowland rivers may have different thresholds for what constitutes a properly functioning condition.

Guiding principles: protect the baseline, restore habitat-forming processes, and sequence efforts to maximize benefits to priority species (in this basin, they are the ESA-listed species). Sequencing recognizes that restoring habitat-forming processes may take decades, so there are immediate actions that should be taken to help species whose populations are critically low.

Forks and tributaries: Processes include sediment supply (dominated by mass wasting events), hydrology, and riparian function and wood loading. Some conditions that need to be improved are habitat diversity (e.g., in the South Fork, there should be more large, deep pools), channel stability (e.g., confined channels are an issue in the North Fork), and high temperatures (particularly in the South Fork).

Mainstem and its tributaries: A major process loss is channel migration and riparian/wood functions. Conditions requiring improvement are channel and floodplain habitat diversity. In the trunks, riparian processes and hydrology are deficient and fragmented.

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Estuary/nearshore: shoreline armoring has disrupted sediment supply and routing, and the food web cycling has been altered. Conditions that need to be addressed are shoreline conditions, protection and restoration of salt marsh, eelgrass, and forage fish spawning habitats, and water quality problems.

Technical analysis is being used to identify and prioritize actions for achieving recovery. Governments and stakeholders must determine what they should and can do.

At the conclusion of the plan update, Scherrer stated that Highest Priority issues for us are in the forks, the main stem, and the estuary/nearshore and coastal drainages. Although the first draft is not going to be handed out tonight, we will get together in early March to present the plan to anyone from this group who would like to participate.

Questions about the presentation:

Q. EDT. Is it a database with every limiting factor, and the model manipulates them?

A. The basin was delineated into 128 reaches that chinook use based on similarities such as gradient, confinement, and tributary junctions; each reach on average was a couple of miles. Each reach was rated on 46 different habitat attributes.

Q. Do you run the model for each of the three scenarios (historic, PFC+, current)? Why historic for estuary instead of PFC?

Yes, the model was run using the three scenarios. The estuary modeling occurred on a Puget Sound basis and PFC for estuaries were not done at the time.

Q. Is fish passage being considered?

A. Yes. It is a huge issue in this basin, but for some species more than others.

Q. Confidence in EDT model? Has it been validated anywhere?

A. Some people are uncomfortable with EDT. It is a tool that we can use to identify priority basins for work. The strategy being developed will reduce the risks inherent in using EDT; for example, we aren't working in only the top-rated reach. Rather, we're using it as a guide for sequencing protection and restoration activities, so that we maximize benefits in the short-term. Some of the predictions, such as productivity per spawning pair, are proving to be accurate based on the empirical data from our chinook populations. EDT model results regarding limiting factors make sense. In both the Duwamish and Snohomish: current conditions have been validated.

Q. Are results basin by basin?

A. By reach within the drainage being studied. The smaller the scale, the more uncertain the results (ie there is more certainty looking at the basin scale than the reach scale.) In the future, it may be used to run various restoration or recovery scenarios.

Q. What about expanding our understanding of saltwater habitats? Outgoing smolts, for example, don't seem to be staying in the nearshore as long as they have in the past. Is EDT just focusing on freshwater?

A. The geographic area does include shorelines and the nearshore.

Q. What will it take to get from current conditions to properly functioning conditions? How big is the gap between where we're at, and where we're trying to go?

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

A. It depends where you're looking at the basin. In general, the gap is bigger in the lowlands than in the uplands, but we have a long way to go in general.

Q. With the Forests and Fish Agreement, have they projected whether the upper basin can meet the wood needs downstream?

A. No, they did not do that kind of analysis. The riparian buffers have been established and riparian conditions should be much better over time, but we don't know things like if land density is limiting individual tree growth (retarding recovery of riparian areas) and the potential for downstream transport of wood from upstream sources.

Q. Does EDT factor in forest hydrology, and age of forest?

A. EDT integrates habitat conditions and population performance. Those factors include hydrology and basin condition and are captured in the changes between historic and current conditions.

Q. Does EDT take hydrology into account, such as peak flows and velocities?

A. No, it doesn't do so directly, but EDT is not the only tool in the toolbox. However, the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Project instream flow work is taking this type of data into account, including historic hydrological regimes. In addition, hydrological effects on redd survival and impacts to salmonid productivity are being studied through a SRFB grant by the Nooksack Tribe.

Q. EDT is the initial tool for analysis. What are the other tools that will be used to help improve our understanding? What is the mechanism for ensuring that we revisit assumptions and strategies, based on what is actually happening?

A. Ultimately, population performance will give us our validation. We've already rerun EDT once with updated data on attributes and life histories. The plan will include a strategy for research, monitoring, and adaptive management. EDT is the tool we're using right now to look at the relative magnitude of different issues for chinook, but it is not the only tool being used. EDT is a tool for guiding what actions we can take initially to gain the greatest chinook population benefit, but by focusing on restoration habitat forming processes over the geographic range of our salmonids we have assurances that we will be successful.

Q. What timescale will be used to determine the success of recovery?

A. Habitat restoration will take decades, at best. For example, it takes a large tree to stay put in the main channel, and in many areas it will take a long time to grow trees of that size where they can be recruited.

Q. There are many factors outside of local issues that affect salmon recovery, such as global warming.

A. Yes. The plan will focus on those factors over which we have local control while recognizing those factors that are external.

5. Small Group Sessions

At the first meeting, members received a document on actions for a salmonid recovery toolbox. Using the toolbox and their knowledge, the group spent a half-hour discussing ideas for voluntary actions that should be considered, for both the short- and long-term, in three small groups based on geographic areas. The geographic areas discussed were: nearshore/marine, main stem and tributaries, and forks. Facilitators captured the following highlights of each small group discussion.

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

What are the most important short-term actions that we can take in the next five years that will help meet long-term goals?

Nearshore / Marine:

- Genetic survey of both listed populations, perhaps initiate a captive brook program (South Fork early chinook)
- Eelgrass restoration (e.g. address substrate issues)
- Sediment loss & transport
 - Remove bulkheads and other obstacles to alongshore transport
 - Identify feeder bluffs
 - Identify areas that fish use, such as outmigration pathways
 - Examine if diversion of flow from Lummi Bay to Nooksack River (Bellingham Bay) has caused sedimentation problems
- Study general biodiversity, such as forage for juveniles and timing with outmigration
- Connectivity - removal of bulkheads or pilings, e.g., near Mt. Baker Plywood; Squalicum Creek blockage at the mouth.

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Main stem & tributaries (Lowland)

- Floodplain restoration
 - Establish places to reduce velocities "slow release"
 - Understand instream flows / hydrology better
 - Understand root causes, not just use band-aid approach
 - Decide where to slow down / speed up water
 - Integrate WRIA 1 / USU models
- Reverse ratio of studying / → action (some in the group felt the opposite is the case)
- Make big plan in the next five years for the whole watershed, outlining big long-term actions and short-term actions
 - Paint the picture / big watershed picture
 - Role of humans and natural habitats
- Dakota Creek watershed
 - Riparian restoration - buffers
 - Protection (Acquisition, alternatives to development)
 - Fencing
 - Invasives [Non-native plants]
 - Siltation
 - Re-forestation
 - Development
- Main stem
 - Deal with floods better
 - Set back levees and dikes, make channel wider
 - Identify opportunities to reconnect flood plain
- Monitoring
 - Smolt trapping
 - Fish assessment
 - Egg → fry survival
 - Spawning [Adult escapement and Survival]
 - Set production goals based on fish biology
- Double Ditch (Peppin in Canada) restoration
- Fish Trap Creek
 - Acquisition?
- Minimize use of models, base on field data or local knowledge
- Culvert / passage projects
- Wetland mitigation banking
 - Prioritize where (WRIA 1 watershed planning process)
 - South of Lynden? Kamm Creek
- List of priorities for WRIA 1
 - When
 - Where
 - How much
- Balance of planning, action, and monitoring
- Determine what is in lowland tributaries year-round
- Reconnect wetlands and swales

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Forks

- Fish passage - must correct downstream blockages first (sequencing)
 - RMAPs (Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans) on commercial forest lands
- Large woody debris - especially important in forks since won't stay (not enough large key-piece sized wood) in lower mainstem
- Sediment
 - Forest roads doing better; maintenance an issue (the issue)
 - Education on how to detect and correct forest road maintenance problems
- Over-regulation of forest and agricultural lands spurring subdivision of land
- Allow management of riparian zones to meet restoration goals
- Landowner-driven management (for example, a Watershed Improvement District for the forks)
- Build trust - Interdisciplinary Team concept / benefits of landowners and diverse experts working together
 - Create forum to interact to find solutions, not fault

What are the most important, high priority issues and actions for salmon recovery in the next 20 years?

Nearshore / Marine

- How nearshore development affects fish and habitat
- Modify zoning and land use planning
- Improve models re: productivity and nearshore conditions
- Better understanding of PFCs and nearshore functions
- Industrial / municipal discharges, e.g., consider effects of NPDES permits, and technological or political advances that could move industry towards zero discharge

Main stem & tributaries (Lowland)

- *Group did not get to this section*

Forks

- Respect private property rights, work with landowners;
- Create ownership in solutions;
- Create some reward for fish produced by private restoration efforts
- Transportation corridor analysis and implementation by WSDOT and Whatcom County similar to WSDOT's North Fork Corridor Analysis;
- Ensure transition from short to long-term fixes

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6. Group Discussion

Facilitators displayed the lists showing the groups' discussion as above.

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

7. Next Meeting Date and Agenda

Members voted whether to hold a meeting in January. The majority voted in favor of submitting comments on the draft in writing rather than meeting in person. However, there was enough interest in "keeping the ball rolling" that an informal meeting will be scheduled for sometime in January for anyone interested in a working session to help speed development of the draft. The next official meeting of the Stakeholder Group to go over a draft will probably be the first week in March, although it could possibly be held end February if draft materials are available.

8. SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

Scherrer emphasized that ongoing public input is encouraged for this process. Wendy said that the job of the Stakeholder Committee as a voluntary group is to do what they can to review the draft plans in March through April and that by June the plan will identify priorities for WRIA 1.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

Meeting Feedback

Comments that three attendees submitted in writing on the green forms after the meeting are compiled below according to the two main topics and six other questions on the form.

What are the most important short-term actions that we can take in the next five years that will help meet long-term goals?

Respondent 1: Stop dreaming about fantasy river habitat for fish and look at the real problems with real science. And dump the politics. Stop the bullying by tribes. This leads to bad ideas and science. We all have to work as equals. Respect property rights. Stop harvesting. Look more into the roll of the impacts of ocean conditions. Prioritize the fish resource. Fish passage.

Respondent 2: Continue with habitat restoration, preservation. Prevent continued degradation of habitat (including riparian buffer, floodplain, wetlands, hyporheic zone, etc.)

Respondent 3:

- Establish stable funding for habitat efforts by NSEA, WCD, WID, e.g. Ten Mile Creek. These groups are doing needed work.
- Integrate activities into watershed planning so can prioritize, include County actions that can compliment / enhance efforts.
- Coordinate County / stakeholders lobbying efforts to effectively garner more "external" money. State / Federal / Foundations.
- Identify low hanging fruit i.e. projects / activities easiest and economical for benefit should be first. Work on hardest, most expensive, least benefit should be secondary.

What are the most important, high priority issues and actions for salmon recovery in the next 20 years?

Respondent 1: Respect of property rights. Look for private solutions not governmental solutions. The past is over. We will not be able to recreate it. Get rid of the notion we can bring all fish back to all streams. Get real. Have manageable buffers (plant trees and be able to harvest them in those areas). This would be less wasteful of our precious land and more palatable to landowners.

Respondent 2: Balance human needs with restoration activities. For example, coordinating differing interests (agencies, private interests) toward the planning goals.

Respondent 3: Manage urban residential growth in rural areas.

General comments on meeting and materials:

1. Can we provide other materials that would be helpful to you?
 - A draft report, more information on EDT.
 - Electronic copies of species fact sheets.
2. Comments on presentations:
 - I would have liked to have seen more information on EDT.
 - Pretty good.
3. Issues you would like to have addressed in future meetings:
 - Need to see if raised in "plan."
4. Questions:

**WRIA 1 SALMON RECOVERY PLAN DEVELOPMENT
STAKEHOLDER GOUP
MEETING SUMMARY**

- How will you bridge the gap between the proposed plan and actually implementing the plan?
5. Suggestions:
- Think more instream, less outstream.
6. Other comments
- This process scares me. Too touchy feely. Little substance and science. Tribal and State biologist have too much input for their lack of real knowledge on all the water systems. They are babes in the woods and biased. Only do what is needed. Separate wants from needs.