



2015 Legislative Priorities for Puget Sound Watershed Health and Salmon Habitat Recovery

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

Updated: September 2014

Federal Priorities

- **Support an appropriations request of at least \$65 million for the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations for FY 2015 and FY 2016.** This would maintain the current funding level. These funds allow NOAA to award grants to Washington State, Tribes and local watershed partners to implement salmon recovery priorities. These are the grant funds WRIA 8 directs through the annual Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant round process. Habitat restoration enabled by these funds is consistent with the Action Agenda for Puget Sound recovery and Tribal habitat priorities.
- **Support the Puget Sound Recovery Act, which will designate Puget Sound as a “Great Waterbody”, making it a formal Clean Water Act program,** establishing an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Puget Sound Program Office, and making the Sound eligible for additional annual funding to implement priority restoration efforts and protect water quality. In addition, request support for defending and maximizing federal funding for Puget Sound protection and restoration through other programs, such as the EPA National Estuary Program.
- **Support funding for the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to implement critical prioritized infrastructure repairs and updates to the Hiram M. Chittenden (Ballard) Locks.** These repairs and updates are immediately necessary for continued safe operation of the Locks for navigation, maintaining lake levels (needed for the SR-520 and I-90 floating bridges), and providing safe passage for ESA listed Chinook salmon.

Request: Encourage Corps Headquarters to provide adequate operations and maintenance funding for identified prioritized projects on the Corps' list of Locks infrastructure improvements developed in 2012. To date, Locks managers have been slowly implementing these improvements as limited funding allows. More funding is needed to make critical repairs in a timely manner.

WRIA 8 encourages the Washington State Congressional delegation and other regional leaders to share their concern about the Locks' condition with Corps leadership in Washington, D.C. and request the Corps to increase operations and maintenance funding for critical Locks infrastructure improvements.

State Priorities

Capital Budget:

- **Support \$140 million for the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund**, capital funding request. PSAR funds support implementation of the highest priority habitat protection and restoration projects throughout Puget Sound. The request includes two components: 1) \$30 million divided among Puget Sound watersheds for a habitat projects grant round, and 2) \$110 million dedicated to fund a prioritized list of specific large, high-priority capital projects submitted by Puget Sound watersheds. Funds are derived from State general obligation bonds (RCW 77.85).
 - WRIA 8's \$1.4 million allocation in the 2013-2015 biennium helped fund the following priority projects (all projects have substantial local match):
 - Cedar River floodplain acquisition and relocation of residents out of harm's way to enable future floodplain restoration in unincorporated King County.
 - Riparian area stewardship on the Cedar River, including controlling invasive knotweed and replanting with native plants.
 - Issaquah Creek riparian and in-stream habitat restoration.
 - Nearshore creek daylighting and salt marsh restoration in Edmonds.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THESE PRIORITIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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- Side channel restoration on the Sammamish River in Bothell.
 - In 2014, WRIA 8 partnered with City of Renton to secure an additional \$150,000 PSAR project development grant for Renton to conduct a habitat restoration assessment and preliminary project design in the lower Cedar River.
 - A portion of this funding also supports local watershed capacity for project development and implementation.
- **Support request of up to \$40 million in general obligation bonds in the capital budget for the state portion of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant program to protect and restore salmon habitat.**
- **Support the \$50 million Floodplains by Design capital budget request.** In the 2013-2014 biennium, the legislature allocated \$33 million to the Department of Ecology to support a list of multiple benefit floodplain restoration and management projects. As part of this allocation, King County received a \$4.1 million grant to support completion of the Cedar River Rainbow Bend floodplain restoration project and assist with relocating residents of a mobile home park as part of the Riverbend floodplain restoration project. In the 2015-2017 biennium, Ecology will request \$50 million for a prioritized list of floodplain management projects. WRIA 8 supported development of a King County and Seattle Public Utilities proposal to acquire floodplain properties in priority reaches of the Cedar River and develop final design of the Riverbend floodplain restoration project.

Operating Budget:

- **Support request for \$770,000 in state general funds in the operating budget to support and continue the role of salmon recovery Lead Entities** in recruiting, reviewing and prioritizing community-based salmon restoration projects for submittal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for funding. This will return the funding to a 50-50 state to federal match, making Washington State more competitive for federal funding. State funding is provided in the Recreation and Conservation Office operating budget to match federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) funding from NOAA in the 2015-2017 biennium. Over the past

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few years, the state's portion of the match has been reduced 50% and has been backfilled using federal PCSRF funds. This reduction in state match makes Washington less competitive with NOAA for federal funding. Reinstating the state dollars would make Washington more competitive to receive a greater share of PCSRF funding. For the past 13 years, WRIA 8 has received a \$60,000 Lead Entity grant, as part of this funding, to support project development, grant coordination, and tracking implementation.

Policy Legislation:

- **Support continued efforts to explore new watershed-based funding authorities to support multiple-benefit projects that address salmon habitat protection and restoration, water quality, stormwater management, and flood management.** Since 2011, recognizing the limited funding available to implement salmon recovery, WRIA 8 supported and participated in cross-watershed discussions to identify alternative funding mechanisms to implement multiple-benefit watershed priorities, including but not limited to salmon recovery habitat restoration, stormwater management, and flood management. These efforts and discussions are on-going and may result in future legislation.

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