

# WRIA 8 Update and Committee Reports

September 18, 2014

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- **Puget Sound Regional Update** – The **Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PS SRC)** last met on July 24. Agenda topics included a presentation on the results of Phase 1 of the monitoring and adaptive management project, discussion and approval of a \$140 million 2015-2017 biennium Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration capital budget, update from the regulatory subcommittee on its process to review Shoreline Master Programs for four Puget Sound counties in terms of how they impede or affect salmon recovery, update on steelhead recovery planning. The PS SRC meets next on September 25.

The **South Central Action Area Caucus** last met on June 11. The meeting agenda included an update from the Puget Sound Partnership on approval of the 2014 Action Agenda update, presentation on the Building Cities in the Rain project to identify ways to meet challenges with infill development in urban areas and associated stormwater management regulations, and discussion of the Kokanee Work Group's proposal to incorporate their priorities into future updates to the South Central Action Area Caucus Group's local priorities.

- **WRIA 8 outreach and communications staff support** – WRIA 8 hired Polly Freeman as a temporary part-time staff to support education and outreach for the ILA renewal and 10-year plan update, and to coordinate priority programs (Green Shorelines and riparian stewardship). Polly splits her time between WRIA 8 and the Snoqualmie Watershed team at King County. The position is for a year with the possibility of extension depending on available resources and outreach and education needs. Polly brings great experience to the work from her years working for the King County Community Outreach and Grants unit and recent freelance outreach and editing work, including several years coordinating WRIA 8's Salmon SEESon program in the summer/fall to promote opportunities for the public to view returning salmon in local streams.
- **Letter of support for Cedar River Floodplains by Design proposal** – WRIA 8 provided a letter of support for a joint King County and Seattle Public Utilities proposal to advance priority Cedar River floodplain acquisition and restoration (including final design of the Riverbend floodplain restoration project) as part of the process to develop a prioritized project list for a \$50 million Floodplains by Design 2015-2017 biennium capital budget request to the legislature. The letter is included in the meeting packet.
- **Letter of commitment to participate in Cedar River Corridor Plan development process** – WRIA 8 sent a letter to the King County Flood Control District's Cedar River Corridor Plan project manager to express commitment to partner and participate in development of the plan and how WRIA 8 expects to be engaged, including as a member of an advisory committee that will be created. The letter also conveys support for the Flood Control District's proposal to the National Park Service for planning assistance in the recreational aspects of the plan development process. The letter is included in the meeting packet.

- **Letter from King County Councilmember Larry Phillips to Col. John Buck, Army Corps of Engineers Seattle District Commander, requesting an update on priority Ballard Lock infrastructure improvements** – Councilmember Phillips sent Col. Buck a letter requesting an update on the Corps’ list of priority infrastructure improvement projects, including costs estimates and implementation timelines, as well as an assessment of potential impacts to the surrounding community if these improvements are not implemented. This letter builds on WRIA 8 support for implementation of the priority projects to improve and ensure adequate fish passage. The letter is included in the meeting packet.
- **Update on 2014 grant rounds** – The funding recommendations approved by the Salmon Recovery Council on July 17 consisted of projects being submitted for both Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) and Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) funds. The two PSAR projects are moving through a process referred to as “early action.” Both proposals were approved by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board’s Technical Review Panel and will be presented to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for decision at their September 18 meeting. Final SRFB proposals were submitted to RCO by the August 15 deadline and are currently being reviewed by the Review Panel. A status update is expected in October, and the SRFB’s funding meeting is scheduled for December 3 – 4.

The list of Cooperative Watershed Management projects and programs approved by the Salmon Recovery Council on May 15 were presented to the King County Flood Control District’s Executive Committee on July 30. On August 18, the Executive Committee approved a recommendation that the Flood District’s Board of Supervisors approve funding for the grants at their next meeting. The date of this meeting is to be determined.

- **King Conservation District proposed annual per parcel assessment increase and work program** – On August 1, King Conservation District (KCD) submitted a proposal to the King County Council to increase the annual per parcel assessment to \$10, to support a proposed expansion of KCD’s work program. KCD will provide an update at the November WRIA 8 Implementation Committee and Salmon Recovery Council meetings.
- **Legislature-directed review of watershed based groups** – In the 2014 state legislative session, the legislature passed a proviso to the Puget Sound Partnership’s 2015 supplemental budget to conduct a review of watershed groups, including salmon recovery Lead Entities, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, Puget Sound local integrating organizations, Marine Resource Committees, Hood Canal Coordinating Council, and others. The Partnership is tasked with making recommendations on how to improve watershed groups’ contributions to Puget Sound recovery. The Puget Sound Partnership has solicited information from watershed groups, will conduct a series of interviews with a sample of groups, and will submit a recommendations report to the legislature by December 1. As part of the initial information gathering phase of this review effort, WRIA 8 submitted significant documentation of our operating guidelines, structure, priorities, etc. WRIA 8 staff will continue to track this topic closely and keep the SRC apprised, especially as recommendations emerge.

- **Salmon SEEson** – Salmon SEEson materials – website, poster, and flyer – are updated and available for promoting this eighth year of the program. Posters are being posted around the region, materials are out to all the partners and others, and KC Public Affairs will send out a press release any day. Additional salmon-spotting sites for this year include Lake Sammamish State Park and two spots on the Duwamish River in the Green/Duwamish Watershed, our neighbor to the south. The Saving Water Partnership continues to help support and cross-promote Salmon SEEson.
- **Salmon Recovery Tour** – Invitations have gone out and plans are underway for the annual WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour, slated for October 10 from 9:00am – 3:00pm. The tour will begin at the Locks to highlight the urgent need for salmon passage and infrastructure improvements there, and will also feature the Mapes Creek daylighting to Lake Washington in South Seattle, the dam removal upstream of the hatchery on Issaquah Creek, and the relocation and enhancement of 3,500 feet of Lower Bear Creek. As in past years, the target audience for the tour is Congressional staff, state legislators and staff, and SRC members.
- **Chinook/sockeye return numbers** – By the second week of September, about 90% of WRIA 8 **Chinook** salmon have passed through the locks. We had a surprisingly low return this year – only around half the 15-year average and well below the co-manager forecast. For **sockeye** salmon, 99.9% of the run has passed through the locks by now – and 2014 numbers are extremely low. The co-managers estimate that around 65,000 sockeye have passed through the locks. For comparison, by the same time last year there were about 180,000 sockeye estimated through the locks.

There is no definitive information on the cause of these lower-than-forecast salmon returns, but researchers expect that a new study under way looking at early marine survival in Puget Sound will provide some answers.

- **2015 Salmon Recovery Council meeting schedule and locations** – The Salmon Recovery Council meets six times a year, from 3:00 – 5:15 p.m. on the third Thursday of every other month, beginning in January. Bellevue City Hall will not have meeting space available in 2015 due to planned construction. WRIA 8 staff is exploring alternative central meeting locations, including the Department of Ecology Northwest Regional Office in Bellevue. The 2015 meeting schedule is as follows – please mark your calendars!:
  - January 15
  - March 19
  - May 21
  - July 16
  - September 17
  - November 19

## **WRIA 8 Committee Reports**

- **WRIA 8 Technical Committee** – Technical Committee was on hiatus during the summer as members concentrated on field work. The Technical Coordinator worked on data processing and analysis of the WRIA 8 habitat status and trends project, to support EPA grant products, adaptive management, and the WRIA 8 Implementation Progress Report (in progress).
- **WRIA 8 Implementation Committee** – The Implementation Committee met on September 9. Meeting agenda topics included a presentation by King County Rivers Section staff on the Cedar River Corridor Plan development process, the working draft ILA renewal, the draft 2015 WRIA 8 federal and state legislative priorities, and agenda topics for the September 18 Salmon Recovery Council meeting. The Committee next meets on November 4.
- **Green Shoreline Steering Committee Meeting** – The Steering Committee did not meet since the last SRC meeting. WRIA 8 recently hired Polly Freeman to support communications and outreach priorities, including Green Shorelines. Polly will work to promote existing Green Shorelines information materials and coordinate with the Green Shorelines Steering Committee on next steps for Green Shorelines efforts.