

WRIA 8 Updates and Committee Reports

November 21, 2019

- **Puget Sound Regional Update** – The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PS SRC) last met on September 26. The meeting focused on a presentation and discussion of the Funding Subcommittee’s recommendation for an approach to support increased funding for salmon recovery, discussion of the 2021-2023 Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Large Capital Projects RFP, a presentation from Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission on stream temperature impairment data in Western Washington, and discussion of the content for a letter from the PS SRC to the Orca Task Force to re-emphasize salmon recovery priorities that should be integrated into the Task Force’s year two recommendations. The PS SRC meets next on November 21. Diane Buckshnis, Edmonds City Councilmember, and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz represent WRIA 8.
- The **South Central Action Area Caucus** (Local Integrating Organization (LIO)) last met on September 25 and November 6. The meetings focused on LIO engagement with EPA and the 2020-2025 regional funding model for National Estuary Funding to Puget Sound Near-Term Actions, selecting a near-term action to allocate the LIO’s \$100,000 in direct funding, and discussing opportunities to coordinate and integrate efforts to reduce shoreline armoring, especially in engaging local governments to support implementation and compliance with Shoreline Master Program regulations. Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz currently represents WRIA 8.
- **Snohomish County’s status as a WRIA 8 cost share partner** – Snohomish County Executive, Dave Somers, transmitted his proposed 2020 budget to the County Council on September 24. The Executive’s budget includes funding, as part of a proposed surface water management rate increase, for Snohomish County to re-join the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council as a cost share partner. Several WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council members and partners communicated with County Councilmembers to support this funding in the County’s 2020 budget. On October 23, Diane Buckshnis (Edmonds Councilmember), Eric Adman (Sno-King Watershed Council), and Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz testified at a County Council public hearing on the 2020 budget in support of the funding for the County to return as a WRIA 8 partner. On November 12, the Snohomish County Council approved the 2020 budget, including funding for the County to return as a WRIA 8 cost share partner. WRIA 8 staff will work with Snohomish County staff and the County Council to determine next steps for them to rejoin the WRIA 8 interlocal agreement and designate a representative to the Salmon Recovery Council.
- **2020 WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council Meeting Schedule** (*see full schedule in meeting packet*) – In the coming year, the Salmon Recovery Council will continue to meet on the third Thursday of every other month, starting in January, from 2:00-4:15p.m. The first meeting of the year will be on January 16 at the Department of Ecology’s Northwest Regional Office in Bellevue.

- **Recent tours highlighting project implementation** – WRIA 8 convened and/or coordinated with partners on the following recent project-focused tours:
 - Bird Island Shoreline Enhancement – WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council members Mark Phillips and Ryan McIrvin joined Hillary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands, to tour and celebrate the Bird Island Shoreline Enhancement project in Gene Coulon Park at the southern end of Lake Washington. The southern shores of Lake Washington, near the mouth of the Cedar River, are an important area where the young salmon rest, eat, and grow before moving out through the Ballard Locks and into Puget Sound. Because much of the shoreline on Lake Washington is developed with hard bulkheads, areas of natural shallow shoreline are few and far between. In 2017, the State Department of Natural Resources completed habitat restoration work at Bird Island, which removed over 100 tons of concrete and metal debris from the shoreline, enhanced over 25,500 feet of shoreline, planted over 2,600 native plants and trees, and improved a boardwalk and educational signage to highlight the area’s cultural and environmental importance. WRIA 8 directed Cooperative Watershed Management grant funding to support the project.
 - Ballard Locks Stoney Gate valve and machinery replacement – On October 22, over 25 WRIA 8 partners and Congressional staff from Sen. Cantwell, Rep. Jayapal, and Rep. DelBene’s offices toured the dewatered Ballard Locks with the Army Corps of Engineers. Seeing the Locks dewatered is impressive, but what made this tour unique was being able to see the replacement of the 102 year old large lock filling culvert valves, gates, and machinery currently under construction. This was the highest priority project on the Army Corps of Engineers’ prioritized list of facility improvement projects they developed in 2012. Replacement of large lock filling culvert valves, gates, and machinery was also the highest priority project for fish passage at the Locks. The improvements will allow the large lock to be filled at variable speeds, reducing the potential for salmon to be sucked into the filling culverts and scraped along the barnacle-encrusted sidewalls. WRIA 8 was part of the coalition of stakeholders who advocated to Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C. and members of Congress in 2018 to secure a \$13 million appropriation for this work.

The tour also included seeing the real-time replacement of the emergency closure crane and the new smolt slides up close, which have been removed for the season. The Corps emphasized that while it is great the large lock filling culvert valves, gates, and machinery are being replaced, there are several additional unfunded priority facility repairs, including:

- Rehabilitate/replace the large lock gates
- Repair or replace the saltwater drain intake, including temporary fish exclusion structure
- Replace the small lock filling culvert valves and gate machinery
- Replace emergency closure system for the small lock
- Replace saltwater barrier

The Corps has funding to advance designs for these projects, which positions them for construction funding in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. These construction funding needs are priority WRIA 8 federal legislative priorities, with emphasis on repairing or

replacing the saltwater drain intake and fish exclusion structure.

- Cedar River floodplain restoration – On November 5, WRIA 8 convened a tour of Cedar River floodplain restoration projects for State Senator, David Frockt (46th District), and State Representative, Bill Ramos (5th District), to provide an opportunity to see the projects on the ground and learn how the projects achieve multiple objectives, how the projects work together within a watershed-based salmon recovery context to provide necessary habitat, and how the projects advance regional ecosystem restoration goals supporting salmon and Southern Resident Orca. The tour included site visits to the Riverbend Floodplain Restoration project and Rainbow Bend Floodplain Restoration project, and a presentation on Seattle Public Utilities’ Royal Arch Floodplain Reconnection project. Besides the two state legislators, participants included representatives from Congresswoman Schrier’s office, staff from the State Senate Ways and Means Committee, Puget Sound Leadership Council, King County management, Puget Sound Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, and WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council Vice Chair, Mark Phillips. Both state legislators were very engaged and seemed impressed with the work, multiple-benefit approach, and how these projects contribute to salmon recovery. Sen. Frockt noted he is interested in possibly featuring these projects in a future Ways and Means Committee study session.
- **Technical Committee comment letter on proposed rule change to eliminate harvest restrictions for non-native predatory fish** (*see letter in meeting packet*) – The WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan identifies predation by predatory fish as a primary limiting factor for salmon recovery. In October, the WRIA 8 Technical Committee submitted a comment letter in support of a WDFW proposed rule to liberalize catch limits for bass, walleye, and channel catfish. The rule would eliminate harvest restrictions on these three nonnative warm water piscivores (fish-eating fish) “in all anadromous waters of the state in order to reduce the predation risk to salmon smolts” including Lakes Washington and Sammamish. The proposed rule is an outcome of Substitute House Bill 1579, passed by the Washington Legislature earlier this year in part to implement recommendations from the Governor’s Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force to increase abundance of Chinook salmon, benefiting the endangered Orca population.
- **2020 WRIA 8 Grant Round** – The 2020 WRIA 8 grant round will officially open on December 4. In the 2020 cycle, WRIA 8 will consider proposals for Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR), and King County Flood Control District Cooperative Watershed Management (CWM) grants. Approximately \$3.6 million will be available across the three programs. More information is available on the WRIA 8 funding webpage: <https://www.govlink.org/watersheds/8/funding/default.aspx>. Important dates are as follows:
 - Applicant workshop – December 16, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., King Street Center
 - Notice of intent to apply deadline – January 8
 - SRFB/PSAR application deadline – February 12
 - CWM application deadline – March 12

- **Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee status** – Following the passage of the Streamflow Restoration Act by the state legislature in 2018, the WRIA 8 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee (WREC) was created to develop a plan for offsetting potential impacts to instream flows resulting from new permit-exempt domestic wells. The WREC has met monthly throughout 2019, with work primarily focused on growth projections and developing estimates for consumptive use associated with anticipated new permit-exempt wells. Once these estimates are finalized (1st Quarter 2020), the WREC will shift focus to identifying projects to include in the plan that will offset projected consumptive use and create a net ecological benefit.

- **External Funding Opportunities** – In addition to WRIA 8 grants, several funding sources with a nexus to salmon recovery are either currently accepting proposals or will be accepting proposals in the near future. These include:
 - Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board – Proposals due January 15, 2020
 - Floodplains by Design – Pre-applications due January 31, 2020
 - Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants – Opens February 3 and closes March 31, 2020
 - Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account – Proposals due May 1, 2020
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund – Proposals due May 1, 2020
 - Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Proposals due May 1, 2020

Contact Jason Wilkinson for more information: jason.wilkinson@kingcounty.gov, 206-477-4786.

- **E-news** – The October 23 WRIA 8 E-newsletter included information about the tours of the Bird Island Shoreline Enhancement project and the dewatered Ballard Locks, Salmon SEEson, salmon returns, Lake Sammamish Kokanee fry release, King Conservation District’s proposed five-year program of work and funding plan, funding opportunities, and events and news stories. Please send ideas for the December edition of E-news to Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz at jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov by December 6. E-news distribution now includes over 900 recipients.

WRIA 8 Committee Reports

- **WRIA 8 Technical Committee** – The Technical Committee met on October 9 and November 13. The October meeting included a discussion of artificial lighting impacts, standards, and recommendations to support salmon recovery. WRIA 8 partners have expressed interest in developing a set of common-sense artificial lighting recommendations. To kick-off this initiative, two leading fisheries scientists, Dave Beauchamp (Western Fisheries Research Center, USGS) and Roger Tabor (USFWS), presented their research demonstrating impacts of artificial lighting on juvenile outmigration and predation rates in the Lake Washington basin. Lauren Urgenson, Technical Coordinator, provided a presentation on artificial lighting basics and existing standards in the watershed. The

Technical Committee discussed information needs and next steps. There was agreement that artificial lighting impacts to juvenile salmon migration and predation rates are an important and often overlooked constraint in salmon recovery. Next steps are for Lauren to synthesize existing scientific information on artificial lighting in WRIA 8 in a “best available science” document. This document will serve to communicate impacts of artificial lighting to our partners. The document will also serve as the basis for a technical memo the Technical Committee will develop describing our artificial lighting recommendations to support salmon recovery.

The November Technical Committee meeting included a presentation by Dr. Peter Lisi, WDFW, synthesizing 20 years of monitoring data using passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags that WDFW inserted into juvenile Chinook at the smolt traps in Bear Creek and the Cedar River. These PIT tagged fish provide insight into juvenile salmon migration timing, potential exit routes through the Ballard Lock system, and relative survival within and among years. The presentation suggested that lower detection rates at the Ballard Locks have a strong environmental association with warmer spring conditions and increased water clarity in the lake. The Technical Committee also reviewed an alternatives analysis for restoration of Laughing Jacobs Creek and identified 2020 monitoring and assessment priorities for the watershed.

In December, the Technical Committee will review a refined scope of work for the Lake Washington Ship Canal (LWSC). In 2018, the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council approved allocation of \$27,500 for proposed work focused on temperature and dissolved oxygen issues in the LWSC. The refined scope of work will propose specific chapters for a “state of knowledge” report and tactics to support stakeholder collaboration. Once the Technical Committee evaluates proposed refinements, the Technical Coordinator will submit the plan to the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council for further discussion and approval.

- **WRIA 8 Implementation Committee** – The Implementation Committee met on November 5. Meeting topics included general WRIA 8 updates; presentation of a proposal by the King County Mitigation Reserves Program to use a portion of the Rainbow Bend project area to build on existing restoration, presentation on Lake Sammamish Kokanee and the status of emergency recovery actions, discussion and feedback on a draft WRIA 8 communications and outreach strategic framework, and review of agenda topics for the November 21 Salmon Recovery Council meeting. The Committee will continue to develop a WRIA 8 communications and outreach strategic framework to identify objectives, key audiences, and priority actions to coordinate messaging, guide WRIA 8 investments, and inform community partner programs. A final draft strategic framework will be presented to the Salmon Recovery Council for approval in 2020.