

Salmon recovery actions are based on sound science



Scientific staff— both WRIA 8 staff and the Technical Committee comprised of scientists from partner agencies — are key to the implementation of the WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan. Science staff give valuable input to grant funding and implementation decisions, respond to technical questions from Council members and others, review regional science communications, present updates to Council, and represent WRIA 8 in various technical forums. Most importantly, monitoring, research and coordination inform and guide decision-making so that WRIA 8 salmon recovery efforts are based in sound science.

MONITORING CHINOOK ABUNDANCE, PRODUCTIVITY, SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND DIVERSITY: WRIA 8 science staff and the Technical Committee track how endangered Chinook salmon are faring as conservation efforts move forward. WRIA 8 awards annual grants to support work performed by King County and its partners to collect and interpret adult spawner and juvenile outmigrant data and use it to identify population trends and recommend any course corrections needed to the Salmon Conservation Plan.



PHOTO: HANS BERGE, KING COUNTY DWRP

FOCUSING RESTORATION PROJECTS ON OUR HIGHEST PRIORITIES: To make sure that restoration projects do the most good for salmon and salmon habitat, WRIA 8 science staff and the Technical Committee created a project scoring approach now used by the Project and Funding Committee. Using this approach, project proponents can better integrate their goals with the Plan’s technical hypotheses and priorities, and funders can be more confident that their support targets the watershed’s most important needs for salmon.



PHOTO: ROGER TABOR, USEFWS

INSTIGATING CRITICAL RESEARCH: The WRIA 8 Technical Committee helped secure funding to commission a 2005 study investigating the genetics of Chinook salmon in the watershed. The findings helped refine WRIA 8’s salmon recovery strategy early in the planning process.

INTEGRATING HARVEST, HABITAT AND HATCHERY GOALS TO RECOVER SALMON (“H-INTEGRATION”): WRIA 8 science staff facilitated and hosted a multi-year effort that brought the Technical Committee together with harvest and hatchery managers to define the most important actions needed across these three “H’s” to recover sustainable salmon runs.

(continued on reverse)

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Between 2005 (above, left) and 2009 (above, right), houses and roads replaced forest along a tributary to Bear Creek.

TRACKING LAND COVER CHANGES THAT AFFECT SALMON: With a 2010 Puget Sound Partnership grant, science staff commissioned a report tracking forest cover change in WRIA 8 between 1991 and 2006. The report showed that forest cover within the County’s Urban Growth Area declined more than 20% in that period (see photos above), and that between 2005 and 2009, impervious areas in riparian zones increased in almost all studied sub-basins. This finding spurred the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council to establish the “Trees for Streams” riparian stewardship strategy of outreach to private landowners, in partnership with committed non-profits, to help restore streamside properties. An update to the report will be included in the 10-year WRIA 8 Implementation Progress Report.

MONITORING THE HEALTH OF OUR STREAMS: WRIA 8 science staff leveraged a small monitoring program (funded by the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council in 2009-2010) into a four-year, \$1M U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant awarded to King County to document the health of the stream systems, to investigate relationships among land cover, hydrology, habitat and biological systems across varying levels of urbanization, and to provide information to support adaptive management of the WRIA 8 Chinook Conservation Plan. Results from the multi-year project will be available in early 2015.

CHECKING OUR PROGRESS: MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT: With the Puget Sound Partnership and other partners, WRIA 8 science staff translated the WRIA 8 Chinook Conservation Plan into a “common framework” for monitoring and adaptive management that addresses regional needs and recommendations. This framework and its list of prioritized indicators will help WRIA 8 more effectively measure and communicate progress and meet our monitoring and research needs strategically.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Visit the WRIA 8 website at www.govlink.org/watersheds/8/default.aspx or contact Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz, WRIA 8 Watershed Coordinator, 206-477-4780, jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov

