

WRIA 9 Update

August 4, 2015, 2015

Good News Items!

2016-2025 ILA Approvals

Burien, Seattle, Tukwila, Kent, Des Moines, and Auburn have approved the new ILA as of this date, and several cities have the ILA on their Council Agendas for consideration this and next month.

Yellow Bus Tour

From all accounts the 2015 YBT held on July 14th was a big success and excellent feedback from attendees (total of 56). Highlights of the YBT will be provided at the August 13th meeting of the Watershed Ecosystem Forum. Overall, it's my sense there is a dramatically elevated interest in WRIA 9 and Duwamish River in particular by federal, state, and local officials.

Over \$10 million in Grants Awarded to WRIA 9

Recent funding news includes over \$1.5 million in grant awards to WRIA 9 from the King County Flood Control District (all proposals of the WRIA 9 Watershed Ecosystem Forum were funded) and \$8.55 million awarded to WRIA 9 floodplain reconnection projects by the Department of Ecology's Floodplains by Design program (King County Boeing Levee/Russell Road Improvements and Porter Gateway Levee setback).

Salmon SEEson

The ninth annual Salmon SEEson effort is gathering steam and the program to promote salmon watching opportunities continues to expand. This year, several sites in the Green/Duwamish Watershed will be added to the roster of locations where individuals and families can try to spot returning salmon beginning in September and lasting through the holidays. While hot, dry conditions this summer may affect salmon runs, we hope that we can use the program to keep folks posted with news of salmon sighting into fall.

On the State and Regional Fronts

Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PSSRC)

- Approved Draft *Common Indicators*, for WRIAs to consider in their Monitoring and Adaptive Management (M&AM). Beginning this fall, WRIA 9 (and other WRIAs) will select and incorporate Common Indicators into their Chinook Miradi files and incorporating monitoring protocols for the Common Indicators. This effort will be supported with funding (about \$25,000 to each WRIA) by a State allocation to the Puget Sound Partnership to support Chinook M&AM*. Elissa Ostergaard and Kollin Higgins participated in the staff group that identified the Common Indicators. WRIAs 8 and Skagit watersheds are developing pilot monitoring plans for the Common Indicators that will be used as templates for application in other WRIAs. The templates are expected to be completed by the end of September this year.
- Obligated nearly \$190,000 of unspent funds of the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) program as follows: Technical support to contract with scientists to provide project consistency review

and four-year work plans--\$42,000; Data management support to WRIAs--\$80,000; PRISM improvements for tracking the usage of PSAR capital funds--\$30,000; PSAR program support (0.2 FTE)--\$35,300; and WRIA PSAR support--\$42,500 (this allocation was NOT recommended by PSP staff and added by the PSSRC).

- The Puget Sound Action Agenda Strategic Initiatives are being updated in 2016/17. The three Strategic Initiatives are: stormwater; habitat; and shellfish. The PSP will work with three transition teams for each Strategic Initiative that will review and recommend actions for implementation. The PSSRC will lead development of the Chinook Implementation Strategy which is scheduled to begin in September this year and completed by the end of 2016 with an updated Regional Recovery Plan for Chinook salmon.

*Of the \$600,000 2015-2017 State Budget approved for implementing Chinook M&AM in Puget Sound, \$400,000 is for Common Indicator Monitoring Plan development in 2016, and WRIA Priority Indicator Monitoring Plan development (as capacity allows) for 2016 through 2017. Another \$200,000 is being allocated to state groups for various M&AM products, including Coaching for each WRIA, Quantitative Goals, Monitoring Protocols, and a Retreat and Workshops.

South Central Action Area Caucus Group/Lead Integrating Organization (LIO) for WRIAs 8, 9, 10

- The focus of this group over the past few months has been a discussion of Puget Sound Ecosystem Pressures, Stressors, and Vital Signs as a means of determining the most important things affecting the health of this part of Puget Sound. The Caucus Group will be developing two and five year implementation plans for Chinook salmon recovery priorities. This work will inform the update of the Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan for Puget Sound and the WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan update. The time period for these updates seemingly aligns from 2016 to 2017.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency is revamping the method by which federal EPA funds to implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda to align with the priorities established by the 5 LIOs of Puget Sound, including the South Central Action Area, and moving away from providing the funding to State agencies to determine funding allocations.

State Funding and Other Legislation Affecting WRIA 9 (See attached summaries of 2015/17 State Budget and Legislation)

On the Watershed Front

Green/Duwamish Watershed Strategy/Watershed Advisory Group

- A Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) kickoff meeting was held May 15, 2015 in Auburn. An orientation and overview of the Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS) was provided, small group discussions held that identified actions to protect or improve air, land, and water of the Green/Duwamish, the WAG charter was approved, and a discussion was held of equity and social justice. A meeting of the WAG is scheduled for September 16th. See attached flyer for more information.
- I attended a “regional challenge meeting” on biodiversity on June 15th. One of the key questions discussed was, “What are the most important actions to keep the amount and quality of open space

to ensure no biodiversity loss and ecological services in the watershed?” with a focus on how the Watershed Strategy and ROSS could enhance biodiversity of the watershed. Economics, health, and equity are other “regional challenges” being addressed by the Watershed Strategy.

- I met with Ikuno Masterson, ROSS Lead, on July 22nd and 30th to understand more about the WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan and its linkages to ecosystem services, biodiversity, decision-making and governance structure, and priority actions. We also began preparations for her presentation to the Watershed Ecosystem Forum on August 13th.

Lower Green River System-Wide Improvement Framework

- The King County Flood Control District (FCD) will be seeking another 6-month extension (current extension expires in August this year). FCD Supervisors have been working with the King County Executive’s office on a means to getting to “yes” on SWIF policies, such as the Resource Planning Areas, Vegetation Management, and Shading. No meetings of either the Technical Advisory Committee or the Advisory Council have been held since early this year and since the Notice of Intent was filed by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.
- The mediation of the Lower Russell Road levee setback design is complete, and a design team is working on a levee setback that accommodates multiple benefits for fish, flooding, and water quality, as well as other wildlife and open space considerations. The cost of implementing the project is, therefore, more significant than other less beneficial setback designs. The cost of the setback will likely be of concern to the Flood Control District in approving the final design, but it is hoped that the considerable amount of benefits beyond flood control will enhance leveraging of funding.

WRIA 9 Programmatic Survey

The 2015 WRIA 9 Implementation Survey was sent out last Thursday, July 23rd, to the 17 local governments of WRIA 9 and to partner non-profits that are implementing programs of the 2005 WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan. The survey was designed using Survey Monkey and is focused on programs only, not policy. We asked that the survey be completed by September 3rd. The results will provide a benchmark on how jurisdictions are implementing program recommendations of the Salmon Habitat Plan and help inform its update. Kathy Minsch of Seattle and Tyler Patterson of Tacoma served on the team that helped us craft the survey.