

WRIA 9 Salmon Recovery Manager Report

August 3, 2017

This is Salmon Central Season in the Green/Duwamish

- Adult Chinook salmon are in Elliott Bay and beginning movement up the Duwamish.
- Rearing time is now in the Lower Green for Chinook sub-yearlings, yearlings, and smolts.
- Steelhead and coho salmon juveniles are rearing in the Lower Green.
- Adult pink salmon were traveling in the Green River during the week of August 21.

Salmon SEEson Kicks Off

The 11h annual Salmon Seeson program is underway, coordinating and promoting salmon watching opportunities for the public throughout King County. A third site for viewing salmon was added in WRIA 9 this year—the newly restored and public access improved Duwamish Gardens.

WRIA Teams Moving Office Location

In September, the WRIA 9 team, along with the teams for WRIA 8 and the Snoqualmie, are moving locations on the 6th floor of King Street Center. I have requested as part of the move that the WRIA Forums/Council be provided with greater visibility and recognition in the building, from the parking garage to the office location. For example, clear identification of the salmon recovery groups in directory listings and signage.

WRIA 9 2017 Budget Second Quarter Report

Overall, actual expenditures by the end of June this year were 49% (percent of actual expenditure vs budget), which is expected at mid-year.

Regarding the WRIA 9 2017 work plan, the schedule for updating the Salmon Habitat Plan (Plan) is delayed by an estimated six months (completion date from mid-2018 to the end of 2018). The Plan Update, however, is not sitting idle. Abby Hook of Hook Environmental, a capable consultant, was hired (with cost savings due to the vacant Habitat Plan Manager position) to keep the technical aspects of the Update moving along. Abby is facilitating completion of the technical products to support the Plan Update and support the work of the Implementation Technical Committee.

- Recruitment of the WRIA 9 Planning and Technical Coordinator is nearing completion. I expect to have the position filled and started by September.

Lower Green River Basin Steward Hired

King County has hired a Lower Green River Basin Steward to accelerate implementation of the Salmon Habitat Plan (such as Green-the-Green tree planting) and stewardship in this “weakest link” portion of the watershed. The new steward, Katie Beaver, began working July 31st.

Lower Green River Acquisition Option presented to Kent

At the request of Kent Councilmembers, I worked with King County in April and early May to provide the City of Kent with an option for selling a portion of the City’s municipal golf course to a land conservancy. Ultimately, another option was approved by the City Council which included selling the land, located on the Lower Green River, to a developer to build a 500-unit apartment complex called “Riverbend”. The King County option would have preserved the property as open space and provided an opportunity for a levee setback that would have linked a downstream and upstream restoration projects.

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Lower Green River Corridor Plan

The Flood Control District and King County Water and Land Resources Division are geared up to begin the Lower Green River Corridor Plan, but the scope and schedule remains ambiguous, including the participation and expectations of WRIA 9.

Climate Change Presentation to City of Tukwila

Upon request, Kollin Higgins will be giving a presentation on the impacts of climate change on the watershed and salmon recovery at an upcoming Tukwila City Council meeting. He will provide a more site specific and focused information on the impacts that could be most relevant to the area of Tukwila in the watershed. Kollin gave a similar presentation at the May meeting of the Watershed Ecosystem Forum; it is valuable information for decision makers across the watershed.

Desimone Oxbow Acquisition

The Desimone Trust has leased the property known as the Desimone Oxbow site of the Duwamish River to a major national developer to develop the property. Boeing has been renting the property for a recreation facility, but they are not renewing the lease when it expires at the end of this year. I am coordinating among King County, land trusts, Tukwila, Desimone Trust, and the business community to identify options and paths forward for restoring habitat on the property which is located in the Duwamish Transition Zone, one of the most critical areas to restore habitat in the watershed.

Chinook Implementation Strategy and the Puget Sound Action Agenda

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (PSSRC) met on July 27th to consider a request by the Tribal interests to include bold, innovative actions that will accelerate the recovery of salmon, and include the bold actions in the Puget Sound-wide Chinook Implementation Strategy and Puget Sound Action Agenda. The Tribe's recommendations included actions that could significantly affect land use and permitting processes and their authorities, water quality and quantity standards, predation and other mortality factors, funding, monitoring, climate change, and oil spill prevention. The PSSRC approved, with changes and caveats, most of the Tribal recommendations, however, the bold actions that addressed local government land use and permitting authorities and processes were not approved.

Washington Salmon Coalition Meeting in Chelan

June 6-8, I attended a meeting of salmon recovery cohorts from throughout the state in Chelan. The meeting was required training as part of operating grants WRIAs receive from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to carry out salmon recovery planning. Climate change implications on salmon recovery were a significant portion of the training, with case study sessions on the Snohomish, Upper Columbia, Skagit, and Chehalis. As always, there was much agenda time for funding discussion. A fundraising feasibility report commissioned by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office did not offer anything new, rather confirming that there isn't enough funding throughout the state to implement and adaptively manage salmon recovery. No solutions were discussed.

State Capital Budget—Not Adopted

With the State Legislature not adopting a capital budget for the next biennium, the future of implementation of salmon recovery across the state is in disarray, both funding for recovery operations and building habitat projects. As I did for the last Report, I'm including the table below, "WRIA 9 Project

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Portfolio” to highlight the importance of State and Federal funding to implementing the Salmon Habitat Plan.

WRIA 9 Project Portfolio

Project	Amount	Phase	Location
Riverton Creek Flap Gate	295,000 ¹	Final design and construction	Duwamish, RM 6.6
Downey Farmstead	5,689,109	Construction	Lower Green, RM 21.4
Lower Russell Road	15,473,030	Construction	Lower Green, RM 17 - 19
Lower Green Acquisition	10,000,000	Acquisition (restoration will be a subsequent phase)	Lower Green, between RM 20 and RM 25
Mc Sorley Creek Pocket Estuary and Armoring Removal	1,600,000	Final design	Mainland nearshore
Lowman Beach Armoring Removal	5,000,000 ²	Final design and Construction	Mainland nearshore
Revegetation	1,000,000	Implementation	Middle Green
Teufel Rearing Habitat Improvement	200,000	Feasibility	Lower Green, RM 20.8
Duwamish Easement	<i>tbd</i>	Acquisition (revegetation will be subsequent phase)	Duwamish, RM 6.9
Desimone Oxbow	28,000,000 ³	Acquisition	Duwamish, RM 6.0
Mauzy Island Aquatic Reserve	600,000	Acquisition (armoring removal will be a subsequent phase)	Mauzy Island
Upper Watershed Strategy Development (Program U-1)	200,000	Planning effort to develop long-term comprehensive project list	Upper Watershed (RM 72 – 88.3)
TOTAL	\$68,057,139		

¹Funding amount requests a cost increase. Project awarded \$551,000 in 2016 grant round.

² Karen’s estimate based upon other similar nearshore armoring removal projects; waiting to confirm with City of Seattle.

³ Amount reflects the assessed value; appraised value expected to be higher.

U.S. Congressional Puget Sound Day-on-the-Hill

Following attendance of the Puget Sound Day-on-the-Hill in early May, WRIA 9 sent 300 letter to the Republican and Independent members of Congress, thanking them for supporting the inclusion of Puget Sound and salmon recovery funding in the 2017 budget continuing resolution. The letter also asked for the Senators and Representatives to support specific Puget Sound provisions in the 2018 budget. The letter was the recommendation of Senator Maria Cantwell whose perspective is that the Republican contingency of Congress was and will continue being key to Puget Sound federal legislative priorities. Recently, for example, Senator Patty Murray was able to garner Congressional support to include \$65 million in the 2018 budget for the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund.

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U.S. Government Accountability Office Review of Restoration

At the request of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is examining federal, state, local, and tribal efforts to restore Puget Sound, including how efforts are coordinated. Review of restoration efforts is occurring in other National Estuary Program areas as well, such as the Chesapeake and San Francisco Bay areas. In late May, at GAO's request, WRIA 9 hosted site visits of restoration sites along the Duwamish River and at Seahurst Park. These sites provided GAO with examples of large, multi-year, multi-benefit projects that required numerous partners and funding sources. A GAO report to Congress is expected in 2018.

Saying Goodbye

I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to two of the most instrumental people to the success of WRIA 9 as an influential regional organization that champions "Making Our Watershed Fit for a King", Mayors Steve Mullet and Joan McGilton. To me, I am a better and scrappier person because of them.