

PUGET SOUND DAY ON THE HILL

MARCH 25, 2015



For decades, the Federal, Washington State, Tribal, and local governments have worked together through cooperative partnerships to restore the health and productivity of Puget Sound. Despite these significant efforts, Puget Sound is degrading at an alarming rate.

Water pollution, sediment contamination, habitat decline and reduced water flow continue to cause devastating effects to the marine life, causing declines in shellfish, salmon, marine birds, harbor porpoise and orca populations — threatening economies and putting tribal treaty rights at risk. This decline has caused changes to fishery practices, closure of swimming beaches and an increased number of endangered species petitions. Today, many Puget Sound species are at risk or vulnerable to extinction, including 56 birds, 37 fish, 15 mammals, and numerous invertebrates and reptiles.

1 **PUGET SOUND IS AN ESTUARY OF NATIONAL AND TRIBAL TREATY SIGNIFICANCE**

Puget Sound is the nation's largest estuary by water volume; it reaches north to the Canadian border, west to the Pacific Ocean and east to Mt. Rainer. Puget Sound's geographic span and biodiversity is exceptional, but its value goes beyond the ecological. Puget Sound is a productive economic engine, spurring vast recreational and commercial opportunities.

- ▶ Washington leads the nation in the production of farmed shellfish, with an annual value of more than \$107 million, giving rise to employment for more than 3,200 people and contributing approximately \$270 million to the economy.
- ▶ The volume of cargo at the Ports of Tacoma and Seattle represents the third largest in North American ports.

- ▶ Tourism in Washington, much of it connected to marine activities, is a \$17.4 billion industry that supports nearly 154,500 jobs.
- ▶ Washington is the second most diverse agricultural crop producing state in the nation. In Puget Sound alone, crops value \$1.15 billion per year.

Puget Sound is home to 17 treaty tribes, each of which have treaty-reserved rights to the resources in the region. These precious resources not only provide opportunities for tribal members to harvest resources for food and income, but also meet cultural and spiritual needs.



2 RECOVERY EFFORTS YIELD RESULTS BUT DAMAGE STILL OUTPACES RECOVERY

The Puget Sound Action Agenda, which encompasses the ongoing protection, restoration and recovery work in Puget Sound has yielded measurable, science-based results. For example:

- ▶ More than 25,700 acres of habitat have been protected and 70 miles of streams and rivers restored since 2007.
- ▶ In a single year (2010), 565 restoration projects were advanced, resulting in more than 7,000 jobs.
- ▶ Since January 2012, there has been a net improvement to 1,823 commercial shellfish harvesting acres.

Unfortunately, the rate of damage still exceeds the rate of recovery. While Puget Sound was once home to diverse populations of salmon, those salmon runs are now just 10 percent of historic levels. Some runs have fallen to *less than 1 percent* of historic numbers. Habitat destruction

has devastated Chinook and other salmon species. These losses threaten tribal treaty rights. The recovery of salmon to sustainable levels will support the harvests of both treaty and non-treaty fisheries.

Years of past damage, our tremendous population growth and infrastructure that must be rebuilt over time, combined with emergent issues, are all part of the challenge. The Action Agenda, the region's long-term plan for a healthy Puget Sound, prioritizes reducing pollution from urban stormwater runoff, protecting and restoring habitat, and re-opening healthy shellfish beds.

We request that the EPA Geographic Fund allocation to Puget Sound be fully funded, at least at the President's request of \$30 million. We also request that the Administration and Congress work to increase federal investment in future years to address the remaining funding gap and support the region's long-term recovery plan.

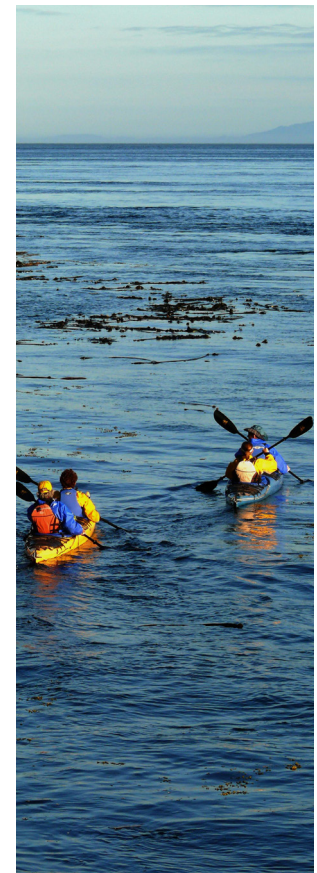


3 GREATER ALIGNMENT OF FEDERAL PARTNERS WITH EXISTING EFFORTS IS CRITICAL

Currently, the Puget Sound Partnership is coordinating the efforts of more than 750 public and private partners invested in Puget Sound recovery. These partners collaborate to identify, prioritize and fund recovery efforts critical to the long-term viability of the ecosystems, economy and communities in this region. Additional coordination of federal actions and investments is required to optimize these efforts, to ensure that the federal-tribal trust responsibility to the region and its resources is fully met and upheld, and to steward Puget Sound in a way that is commensurate with its national significance.

The Administration has recognized the need in the past for enhanced federal coordination and focus to protect other great bodies of water, including the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay. The Puget Sound region requires greater collaboration between and among several federal entities and other partners to achieve recovery targets.

We request that the Administration and Congress join together to increase coordination of federal Puget Sound recovery efforts, including establishing an office to spearhead alignment of federal efforts with existing state, local, tribal and private partners.



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