

WASHINGTON COAST SUSTAINABLE SALMON PARTNERSHIP
Regional Plan for Salmon Sustainability
Concept Paper

The Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership (WCSSP), is partnering with the four Coast Region Lead Entity Groups (LEGs) and other partners, including the Wild Salmon Center (WSC), to develop a Regional Plan for Salmon Sustainability within the Coast Region. The Lead Entity Groups include:

- North Pacific Coast Lead Entity (WRIA 20)
- Quinault Nation Lead Entity (WRIA 21)
- Grays Harbor Lead Entity (WRIAs 22/23)
- Pacific Lead Entity (WRIA 24)

The tenor of the plan will be a collaborative, ecosystem-based effort by WCSSP and its partners that will focus on common needs, bridge differences by developing solutions, and achieve broad agreement and support. It will reflect the values and priorities of the communities within the five Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs). Moreover, an intended by-product of the Regional Plan is to strengthen and complement local Lead Entity strategies.

General Project Approach

The General Project Approach below reflects the discussion of participants at the January 21, 2009 Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership meeting. These discussion points will guide the plan development process and frame the elements of the final product.

1. Vision and Goals

The foundation to the Regional Plan will be its Vision and Goals for Salmonid Sustainability. Whereas recovery plans are driven by the federal Endangered Species Act, the Washington Coast Regional Plan will be a visionary, innovative document that meets the needs held in common by the Coast Lead Entities.

Dovetailing with the vision and goal setting process will be the identification of measureable objectives for evaluating success within the Coast Region ecosystem.

2. Clear Science

The Regional Plan will rely on a framework of best available science to support community-driven approaches to salmon sustainability on the coast.

It will evaluate existing data to assess salmonid stocks and limiting factors that affect their viability or ability to contribute the goals and objectives of the region. The planning process will share science-based data with the communities within the lead Entities to gauge community expectations and help set priorities for salmon sustainability throughout the region.

The planning process will inventory and make data available on-line to ensure easy and widespread access to it.

3. Ecosystem-Based Planning Scale

It is important for the plan to convey within and beyond the region that the Washington Coast forms a unique ecosystem within the Pacific Northwest that is critical to the future of salmonids in this state and in the Pacific Northwest.

Presently the Washington Coast Region and its four LEGs have a relatively small voice in comparison to the Puget Sound and Columbia Basin Salmon Recovery Regions. This can hamper getting the key message out about the benefit of public investment in the protection of high-quality habitats; that is, it is far easier, more likely to be successful, and less expensive to maintain good habitat than to recreate or restore degraded habitat in highly urbanized or altered landscapes and ecosystems.

Until the Washington Coast story reaches the larger audience, it will receive far less attention, and subsequently, fewer resources than other regions. However, by collaborating to develop a Regional Plan that promotes addressing issues at an ecosystem-wide scale, the Coast Region and its LEGs will raise awareness of their importance to Washington's salmonids and the long-term sustainability of their wild stocks. This higher profile will promote delivery of greater resources locally as the Coast Region proves it can provide higher return for dollars spent.

Additionally, integrating an ecosystem approach into their salmon recovery strategies may provide each LEG with greater insight into their own habitat restoration and protection efforts and priorities.

4. Local Scale

The approach and structure for the Regional Plan is intended to strengthen local efforts and emphasize collaboration among LEGs. It will not supplant or supersede individual Lead Entity strategies.

The design of the planning process will ensure that LEGs maintain control of setting goals and priorities for salmon sustainability within their respective

WRIAs. It will do this by building upon local strategies and emphasizing regional approaches that complement them.

During the Regional Plan development process, the application of common assessment and analysis tools may encourage one or more Lead Entities to amend their strategies and local priorities. Such planning process decisions will remain locally determined.

5. Assessing Stock and Habitat Status and Identifying Limiting Factors

A key component of the Regional Plan development process will be to review and assess stock and habitat status on an ecosystem scale.

Each Washington Coast LEG currently has its own strategy for restoring and protecting habitat. This diversity is important given the biological, cultural, geographic, and political differences of each WRIA within the coast-wide ecosystem. These unique, locally responsive strategies increase certainty of their implementation in a context with diverse specific circumstances.

Despite the strength this diversity brings to salmon sustainability along the Washington Coast, it does complicate collaboration in one way. The diversity in the needs assessments used to develop each strategy makes it difficult to discuss and assess the results of these efforts in relation to the coast-wide ecosystem.

Development of common assessment and analysis tools will be a collaborative effort of WCSSP and the four LEGs and representatives of other agencies and organizations who can contribute to this process. Once there are universally accepted assessment and analysis tools available, individual LEGs will then apply the common tools within their own WRIAs. WCSSP, WSC, the LEGs, and the Project Facilitators will assist with applying the common assessment tools.

Using a common scientific framework for assessing and analyzing conditions within all five WRIAs also will allow the LEGs to collaborate on common projects and communicate their progress effectively to outside resource providers. Furthermore, having common assessment and analysis tools among the four LEGs will make long-term monitoring and reporting easier on an ecosystem scale.

Common assessment and analysis tools will also allow the WCSSP and LEGs to implement their habitat strategies in concert with the co-managers who are responsible for harvest and hatchery strategies.

Finally, application of assessment tools will reveal those data gaps that exist in individual WRIs or are in common across the larger region.

6. Strategies for Protection

The Regional Plan can contribute to many local efforts at implementing protection strategies by emphasizing their link to the greater coastal ecosystem. A series of projects that carry regional significance and that are properly sequenced and packaged are likely to be more attractive to funding agencies and organizations.

Collaboration in regional planning will also help LEGs in cross-pollinating ideas and approaches to create innovative projects that enhance their regional and local benefits and the knowledge base within the region.

7. Integrated Strategies

The co-managers frame salmonid harvest and hatchery strategies typically from both regional and individual population perspectives. On the other hand, the LEGs develop habitat strategies, with the assistance of the co-managers, largely without a deliberate and direct tie-in to harvest and hatchery strategies. It is unknown at this time how the lack of integrated strategies affects wild salmon sustainability within the Coast Region.

The Regional Plan process will allow the WCSSP and LEGs to understand the harvest and hatchery strategies of the co-managers and assess local habitat strategies within an integrated 4-H framework. An improved understanding of how habitat strategies integrate with hatchery and harvest strategies may lead to a better understanding of the regional needs for sustaining wild salmon. The resulting dialog also may benefit the co-managers by allowing them to consider habitat strategies as they work to improve their hatchery and harvest strategies.

8. Implementation Prioritization

The Regional Plan will look for common factors affecting local stocks, watershed systems, and the larger region, and rate them by their level of impact to Washington Coast salmonids.

In addition to strategies, actions, and related projects, the Regional Plan will set out a monitoring program and identify which data gaps are most important to address.

9. Funding and Recipes for Measuring Progress

The Regional Plan will develop a funding package for any further planning or monitoring needs and for plan implementation. This will include a review and prioritization of all funding mechanisms and sources: federal and state government, nonprofit foundations, donors, and in-kind. The plan will present estimated costs and timeline for achieving its goals.

It will be important for the WCSSP, LEGs, and outside funders, that the Regional Plan establish a method for measuring progress in implementing the plan and achieving plan goals and objectives. Showing progress is essential for ensuring a long-term funding stream. This effort ties in with the objectives established for measuring progress in attaining the plan's vision and goals.

10. Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is critical to keeping the Regional Plan valid, effective, and on track. The Regional Plan will establish an adaptive management process to test plan assumptions on a regular basis and set up a process for integrating new science and responding to community values and circumstances.

Plan Development Process

Creating the plan will involve two phases of work.

Phase 1 is a technical information gathering and analysis process that will serve as the foundation to the Regional Plan. It consists of the following steps:

- 1.1 Collecting and organizing existing data from each Lead Entity area on salmonid stocks, habitat assessments, regional hatchery and harvest policies, and hydropower issues.

Outcome: A "data library" of information made available through the WCSSP website that also includes all subsequent reports and documents created through the Regional Plan process.

- 1.2 Form a Regional Technical Committee to develop coast-wide common assessment tools for analyzing stock and habitat status. The regional technical team will consist of representatives from each of the four Coast Region LEGs, plus technical experts from governmental agencies, nonprofits, and academia.

The assessment model must be acceptable to the WCSSP and all four Coast Region LEGs. Once accepted, the regional technical team will develop a facilitated approach for its application within and by each Lead Entity Group.

The direction set by the technical team on assessment tools and an assessment model will create a framework for developing a written characterization of the Coast Region ecosystem that eventually will become part of the Regional Plan.

Outcome: A report on common assessment tools and the assessment model for review and use by WCSSP and a document characterizing the Coast Region ecosystem

- 1.3 The Regional Technical Committee will have subcommittees focusing on examining regional hatchery, harvest, and hydropower issues. Their role involves interpreting existing policies, understanding how they relate to habitat, and communicating their findings to the WCSSP and the LEGs. Eventually, these subcommittees will assist WCSSP and the LEGs in integrating harvest, hatchery, and hydropower into their coast-wide and LEG planning efforts during Phase II.

Outcome: A report detailing hatchery, harvest, and hydropower issues in the Coast Region for review and use by WCSSP.

- 1.4 Each LEG technical team will apply the stock and habitat assessment tools to its watershed(s). This process will also document data gaps.

Outcome: Four Lead Entity Group reports on the status of stocks and habitat, including identification of data gaps

- 1.5 Optional Adaptive Management Step: Given the application of the new assessment tools, LEGs may choose to revise their strategies to reflect new data and reset priorities.

Outcome: Revisions to Lead Entity strategies

- 1.6 Design and conduct a standardized community outreach program within each LEG to share results of the assessments and collect citizen opinions on the results.

Outcome: A minimum of two community outreach events within each WRIA and a report outlining citizen opinions.

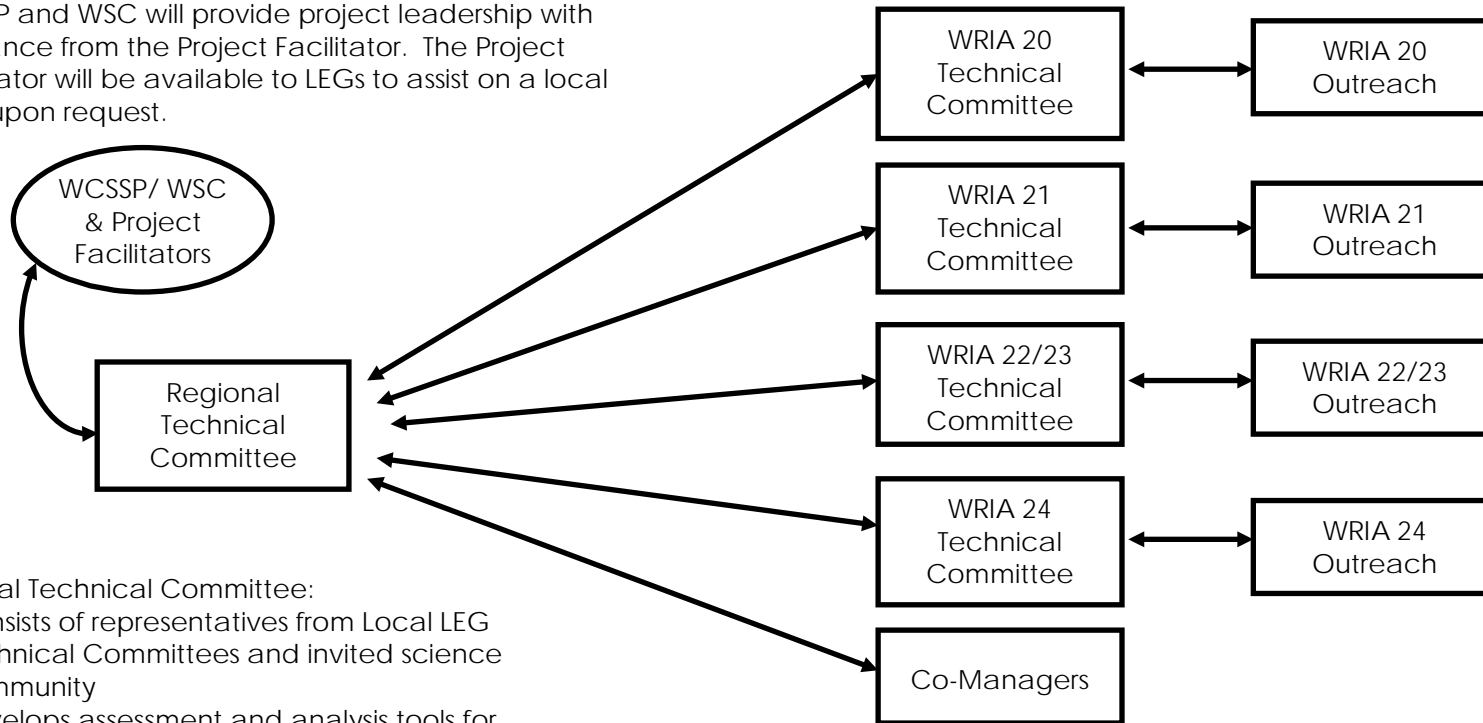
- 1.7 The Regional Technical Committee will analyze the assessments prepared by the LEGs identifying commonalities in habitat restoration and protection needs and data gaps. The Regional Technical Committee will also collate coast-wide priorities and document the commonalities and differences.

Outcome: Report identifying common habitat restoration and protection needs, local project priorities, and data gaps

Phase 1 of this project aims at integrating the majority of the Needs Assessment prepared by the Wild Salmon Center, in concert with the WCSSP and Coast Region LEGs. Phase 2 will complete the Wild Salmon Center grant by prioritizing landscape-scale conservation measures.

Diagram of Phase 1 Planning Process

WCSSP and WSC will provide project leadership with assistance from the Project Facilitator. The Project Facilitator will be available to LEGs to assist on a local level upon request.



The Regional Technical Committee:

- Consists of representatives from Local LEG Technical Committees and invited science community
- Develops assessment and analysis tools for approval by WCSSP and application by each LEG
- Assists Local LEGs by helping them review and integrate harvest and hatchery co-manager strategies with their local habitat strategies

- Each LEG will first provide feedback on the assessment tools and then apply them with assistance from the WCSSP, WSC, and the Project Facilitators
- The outcome of using the assessment tools may lead to Local LEGs to revise their strategies/actions
- As LEGs complete assessments, local community outreach efforts will entail sharing with and collecting information from citizens
- The communication between the Regional Technical Committee and the LEGs must be constant and two-way to ensure the Regional Plan and LEG strategies have a consistent technical basis

Phase 2 is the policy setting stage of the Regional Plan – that is, identifying how the four LEGs intend to work together to meet common needs and further the protection and restoration of the Coast Region ecosystem.

This entails setting a regional vision and goals for salmon sustainability, developing regional conservation objectives and strategies, and identifying prioritized regional restoration and protection actions. The steps to this phase include:

- 2.1 Form a Regional Policy Committee consisting of representatives from the four LEGs, state and governmental agencies, and nonprofit conservation organizations. The first step of the Regional Policy Committee is to create a common vision and develop draft goals for salmon sustainability for the Washington Coast Region.

Outcome: Formulation of a Regional Policy Committee and development of a vision and draft goals for salmon sustainability.

- 2.2 Subcommittees for habitat, integration, and adaptive management will formulate appropriate regional objectives and strategies based on the overall vision and draft goals.

Outcome: Individual reports on potential habitat, integration, and adaptive management objectives and strategies

- 2.3 The Regional Policy Committee will integrate the work of the subcommittees and review/edit to ensure consistency of objectives with the vision and draft goals and across the strategies.

Outcome: Development of a consolidated, first working draft report that includes the vision and draft goals and habitat, integration, and adaptive management objectives and strategies

- 2.4 The Regional Policy Committee will work with the co-managers to ensure that habitat and integration objectives and strategies complement existing hatchery and harvest regional and population-specific objectives and strategies. This may create a dialog that generates adjustments to all objectives and strategies.

Outcome: Presentation of draft report to co-managers, discussions on the integration of the draft report and Regional Plan with regional hatchery and harvest objectives and strategies, and development of a second working draft report.

- 2.5 The Regional Policy Committee will then identify regional actions and projects to achieve objectives and implement strategies. This process will also include identifying specific steps for an adaptive management process.

Outcome: Development of actions and project list and adaptive management process steps

- 2.6 A community outreach process will test the work of the Regional Policy Committee up to this point to determine community support for the vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and actions/projects promoting salmon sustainability within the Coast Region. Depending upon the outcome, the Regional Policy Committee may need to amend some of the previous work.

Outcome: A minimum of two community outreach open house events and follow-up events as needed within each WRIA to share the initial findings of the Regional Plan and ask for opinions and ideas on its content.

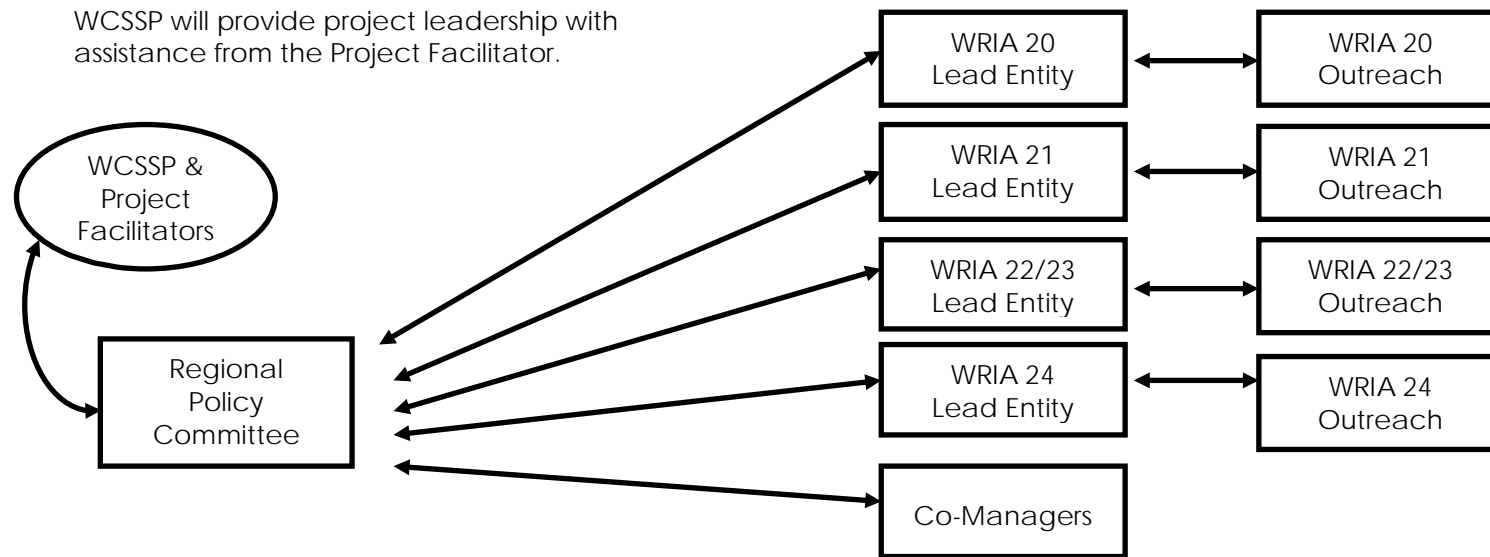
- 2.7 The Regional Policy Committee will integrate outcomes from the community outreach process and prepare a first draft document for distribution to all WCSSP partners to review and provide comments.

Outcome: First draft document for WCSSP and co-manager review and comment

- 2.8 The Regional Policy Committee will review and respond to all WCSSP and co-manager comments and requested changes. A revised draft will then go out to WCSSP for final review, revision as needed, and adoption.

Outcome: Final draft Regional Plan for WCSSP adoption

Diagram of Phase 2 Planning Process



The Regional Policy Committee:

- Consists of representatives from WCSSP and LEG Citizen Committees and invited participants
- Develops draft vision, strategies, and project lists

- The communication between the Regional Policy Committee and the LEGs must be constant and two-way to ensure the Regional Plan and the LEGs' strategies are complementary
- There will be a community outreach program to test the acceptance and validity of the plan's vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and actions/projects
- WCSSP, with feedback from the Lead Entities and Co-managers, will be responsible for adopting the Regional Plan