



LARRY PHILLIPS

Chair
Metropolitan King County Council

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CLERK
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

June 10, 2005

King County Council
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Dear King County Councilmembers:

Enclosed for King County Council consideration and adoption is a motion endorsing the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan. WRIA 8 encompasses the Lake Washington, as well as the Cedar and Sammamish River ecosystems.

King County has a long, and thankfully successful, history of being a leader in the effective management of our great natural resources, including protection of water quality, preservation and restoration of habitat and open space, flood hazard reduction and, now, salmon conservation. In the 1950s, Lake Washington became overtly polluted by untreated sewage. By 1958 many lake beaches were closed to swimming due to health concerns about water quality. In response, city and county voters passed the Metro Clean Water Proposal in 1958, which approved the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle and authorized the new corporation to issue bonds and to administer a comprehensive sewage treatment program. Today, Lake Washington supports a variety of water and recreational activities, including boating, swimming and fishing as a result of that generation of citizens' call to action.

In 1987, King County instituted a surface water management program that, through a series of basin plans and inter-jurisdictional agreements, recommended and implemented comprehensive watershed based capital, regulatory and incentive based actions to protect basins from flooding and erosion, and restore ecological health in King County. Today, implementation of these plans means we are effectively managing changes in storm and surface water runoff and providing erosion control associated with land development.

In the mid 1990's, the County embarked on an ambitious program, Waterways 2000, that built upon these earlier efforts for managing aquatic resources in King County by identifying and prioritizing basins with regionally important natural resources. The Waterways 2000 program provided financial and community support for the acquisition and long-term protection of critical natural resources through purchase, current-use taxation programs, and other incentives for land and resource preservation. King County incorporated these preservation methods pioneered by the Basin Planning and Waterways 2000 programs into the effective management of its watersheds. As a consequence, thousands of acres of critical habitat have been protected for present and future generations.

In 1994 King County, Seattle, Bellevue and our suburban cities began working together through the Regional Needs Assessment process to agree that fish habitat, water quality and floods must be managed

at the watershed level to be effective, and established in 1996 inter-jurisdictional forums to manage planning and an action agenda for these elements.

Subsequently, the National Marine Fisheries Service adopted a rule in June, 2000 prohibiting the "taking" of any of 14 groups of salmon and steelhead listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in response to the significant declines in counts of salmon species and their regional habitats. In response, regional leaders, including many from King County, initiated efforts to address the listing through planning for conservation of salmon habitat and identification of and response to resource needs. Among these were efforts at cooperation and coordination among concerned interests at appropriate geographic levels, including transformation of watershed forums to Watershed Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) planning entities consistent with RCW 90.82, Tri-county planning involving King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties and their respective cities, and the Shared Strategy Coalition at the Puget Sound-wide level of planning.

The Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Steering Committee was established in 1999 under the Washington Salmon Recovery Act (RCW 77.85) to develop a plan to recover listed species in the WRIA 8 Watershed, which is shared by King and Snohomish Counties. The Steering Committee is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-stakeholder committee composed of city and county elected leaders, concerned citizens, scientists, and representatives from business and community groups, water and sewer districts, and state and federal agencies. Under the state Salmon Recovery Act authority, the Steering Committee and its working committees developed the scientific basis for the WRIA 8 plan (the conservation strategy), prioritized actions to restore and protect salmon habitat, and developed a collaborative approach for implementing these actions. Plan development included the implementation of early actions consistent with available science and extensive public involvement and input throughout the five year planning period. Previous planning work products included production of a limiting factors report, near term action agenda, and the proposed long-term plan. The members of the Steering Committee and their staff are to be commended for their significant efforts in the development of this significant plan.

During this time, the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed WRIA 8 Forum, consisting of 27 member municipal jurisdictions, provided leadership and funding to support the Steering Committee and staff efforts that produced the plan to recover listed species in the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed. The draft plan was approved by the WRIA 8 Forum on May 26, 2005. To help support salmon recovery, the plan features a scientific framework, a start-list of priority actions, comprehensive action lists and a funding strategy, all recommended to be implemented and adjusted through an adaptive management approach. The citizens of King County will benefit through implementation of the plan through improved water quality, flood hazard reduction, open space preservation and conservation of our region's salmon legacy, as well as by the protection of the quality of life and economic vitality of the area.

The Plan highlights some of the public and private partnerships that set the foundation for future community accomplishments. It further recommends a multi-pronged strategy that combines tools that can be applied basin-wide, with specific capital and programmatic actions within sub-basin strategy groups. The Plan discusses implementation strategies and costs, estimating total 10-year regional costs for implementing plan priorities over the next 10 years at \$170 million.

The attached proposed motion indicates King County Council support for continued work with public agencies and organizations to implement the Plan, through:

- Continued participation in the WRIA 8 Forum;
- Working in cooperation with Forum members to monitor the results of plan implementation and adjust actions through an adaptive management strategy;
- Implementing restoration and protection projects in unincorporated King County;
- Facilitating achievement of habitat protection milestones in the King County portion of the basin;
- Implementing policies, programs and regulations consistent with the intent of the Plan;
- Providing technical assistance, stewardship, education and incentives; and
- Providing technical resources for monitoring and observation of habitat actions and overall plan implementation.

Full implementation of the Plan is dependent upon:

- Federal agency adoption of the Plan as an operative element of their Puget Sound fishery recovery strategy;
- Federal agency agreement to take no direct enforcement action against King County;
- Federal agency endorsement of the Plan and its actions, and defense of the Plan against legal challenges;
- Federal and state agency direct funding and monetary incentives to cover a fair share of costs; and
- Streamlined permitting of King County habitat restoration projects.

Finally, the motion notes that, where commitments might require future County appropriation authority, then such commitments are conditioned upon future appropriations by the King County Council.

The Plan is fully supported by the WRIA Steering Committee and the WRIA 8 Forum of elected officials, and represents the very best opportunity for salmon recovery and habitat protection in the watershed. It is a significant achievement in itself, one that we can all be proud to have been a part of in developing. The Plan's effectiveness, however, can only be a major contribution to the long term recovery of listed species in WRIA 8 and Puget Sound if it is implemented. If done, it will lead to an assured high quality of life and abundance of natural resources important to the people living in this watershed.

Following ratification by the King County Council and by councils of the other participating jurisdictions, the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan will be submitted to the Shared Strategy coalition for inclusion in the regional draft Puget Sound Recovery Plan. Chinook and bull trout are listed as threatened across the Puget Sound Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU). As such, the final recovery plan must cover this geography. The draft Puget Sound Recovery Plan will be submitted to the federal services for their review. It is expected to be approved by December 31, 2005. The Shared Strategy is a groundbreaking collaborative effort that is working to protect and restore salmon runs across Puget Sound. Shared Strategy engages local citizens, tribes, technical experts and policy makers and works with all the watershed groups in Puget Sound to build a practical, cost-effective recovery plan endorsed by the people living and working in the watersheds of Puget Sound. The Puget Sound Recovery Plan will incorporate all the watershed-based plans and include regional elements that need to be addressed across the full geography of Puget Sound.

King County Councilmembers

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Thank you for your consideration of this landmark plan for salmon recovery in the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed. I look forward to passage of the supporting motion at the earliest possible date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Phillips". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "P".

Larry Phillips, Chair
Metropolitan King County Council
King County Representative, WRIA 8 Forum

Enclosures

cc: Scott White, Chief of Staff
Shelley Sutton, Policy Staff Director
Anne Norris, Clerk of Council
Maura Brueger, Deputy Chief of Staff, King County Executive Office
Ryan Bayne, Council Relations Director, King County Executive Office
Pam Bissonnette, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Mark Isaacson, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD), DNRP
Joanna Richey, Assistant Division Director, WLRD, DNRP
Jane Lamensdorf-Bucher, Watershed Coordinator, WRIA 8
Richard Tucker, WRIA Services Unit Manager, WLRD, DNRP