

Item 2A

Meeting Date: March 2010
Title: Director's Report
Prepared By: Kaleen Cottingham, Director

Proposed Action: Briefing

Summary

RCO Partners with Puget Sound Partnership

As part of cost-saving measures, RCO will be creating a consortium with the Puget Sound Partnership to share certain office services in three areas: reception and mail distribution, graphic design, and information technology. This will save RCO about \$73,000 a year. There were discussions originally about sharing human resource management services, but doing so would have resulted in a cost increase for the Partnership. RCO will continue to manage grants and some pass-through funds for the Partnership. The grant management role may increase with expected additional funding from congress.

As part of the consortium with the Partnership, we have begun recruiting to fill a shared chief information officer (CIO) to serve both agencies. Both agencies had a vacant CIO position and decided to only fill one and use the shared position to manage the IT staff in both agencies. The recruitment began February 26 and closes March 5 with interviews set for the week of March 15. The two agencies will request an exemption from the hiring freeze to fill this important vacancy.

New PRISM Roll Out

RCO staff has been working fast and furiously to revise our PRISM database system for a March-April release that will bring many changes. The biggest change is that all grant recipients will be asked to provide new information that will help us better measure the results of grants. For example, they will be asked to tell us how many ball fields they built, how many acres of habitat they restored, or how many miles of trail were renovated. While these high-level measures have been in place for salmon grants, they will be new to conservation and recreation sponsors. Other significant changes include changing the way projects are categorized to be more descriptive of the work being accomplished and asking for higher-level cost information.

Staff Give Agency Two Thumbs Up

In the fall 2009, RCO staff participated in two agency surveys – a self-assessment and a statewide Department of Personnel survey. In the statewide survey, overall, RCO did

exceptionally well. RCO's average score was 4.17 out of five, compared with a statewide average of 3.84. Better yet, improvements were seen in every category compared to 2008's results. For the self-assessment, generally, staff rated RCO between "Good Progress" and "Solid Success" in the seven "ideals." Some other details:

- The percent of employees responding that they "didn't know" decreased overall.
- RCO made good progress and showed measured improvement in the areas that staff said needed focus the previous year.

Areas that staff said needed focus for the coming year are:

- Setting priorities
- Continue to improve processes
- Finding new and creative ways to use technology
- Continuing to improve communication internally and externally

RCO Launches New Web Site

In January, RCO launched a newly designed web site, and so far I've seen nothing but positive reviews. The site is cleaner, leaner, and more intuitive to use. It has several new features, including a place where we can share important information with grant recipients. We hope our sponsors and other customers will find it much easier to use and we welcome any feedback you might have.

Other Outreach Efforts

It seems I've been on the speech circuit of late. In January and early February, I made presentations to the following groups:

- The Washington Boating Alliance. This is a relatively new coalition of boating interests, from paddlers to yacht owners to the marine industry. I sat on a state agency panel at the alliance's annual meeting at the Boat Show. I noted the many contributions RCO has made to recreational boating over the years, including nearly \$100 million in grants for boating infrastructure statewide since 1964, original research on boaters' needs, and the development of the Web site www.boat.wa.gov. I reminded the attendees that they play a critical role as advocates. About 50 people attended.
- Washington Recreation and Parks Association's board meeting. I spoke about the various policy efforts we are working on, the upcoming grant application workshops, and the next grant round.
- Capital Land Trust. I spoke at an event hosted by the land trust where they recognized the RCO's involvement in efforts to acquire the old "Deckerville Swamp" in Mason County (with SRFB and WWRP funds).

- Ag-Forestry Leadership Program. This program is aimed at training the next generation of leaders in the various natural resource businesses and organizations. I was on a panel with the other natural resource agency directors where we described our agencies and looked out into the future to describe the budget and policy issues heading our way.
- I also made presentations at the Citizens for Parks and Recreation rally day and at the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition board meeting.

News from Sister Boards

Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)

The SRFB members met in February and made several key decisions. First, they approved a response to King County's proposed rules about engineered logjams. The response encouraged the county to balance habitat restoration and public safety issues. The SRFB also approved the grant manual for the 2010 grant round, approved an \$18 million target for the 2010 grant round, and approved \$50,000 for near-shore monitoring. The next day, several board members toured the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Estuary Restoration project site led by Jean Takekawa of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This was a great opportunity to see the site at high tide. In other news, the Governor recently reappointed Steve Tharinger as chair and Harry Barber as a member.

Washington Biodiversity Council

The Biodiversity Council is scheduled to meet March 10 at the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. The council is slated to sunset in June, and the agenda includes a discussion of efforts to ensure progress on the council's flagship projects after June, as well as progress on the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy overall. Staff also will present on two active projects: (1) developing a communication piece to summarize the work on the Biodiversity Scorecard, and (2) a project to create a catalogue of conservation tools for planners.

Washington Invasive Species Council

The council met in February and heard recommendations from work groups on education and outreach, policy, and emergency response gaps for the first 15 priority species. The council also was unanimous in its choice to seek continuation of the council and discussed how to proceed with reauthorization. Finally, the council added two new members: Puget Sound Partnership and Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

Washington Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health

There was no forum meeting in February, so staff has focused on tracking contracts and participating in meetings related to the forum's agenda, including a meeting with the Puget Sound Partnership to share ideas on how to promote a strong working relationship between the

forum and the partnership. Staff also continued to look for ways to standardize monitoring methods and make monitoring results more easily accessible on the Web.

Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO)

GSRO is continuing preparations for the 2010 *State of Salmon in Watersheds* report, which is due in December. The report will consolidate previous SRFB reports, the State of Salmon report, and salmon monitoring indicators and protocols adopted by the Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health. The report will be shorter than in past years, emphasizing statewide and regional-scale summary information. It will place less emphasis on actions and provide more up-front information on how fish and watershed health are doing.

Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

The lands group hosted the Annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum on February 3-4. The forum gave state agencies a platform to share information about habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals planned for the 2011-12 biennium and to coordinate grant requests. On the first day, agencies presented information and maps about potential acquisition projects. On the second day, the Department of Natural Resources invited discussion about how to improve the Trust Land Transfer process. Project presentations are posted on the lands group Web site at www.rco.wa.gov/boards/hrlcg.shtml. Project information will be updated and incorporated into a biennial acquisition forecast report due in June.