Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation

360/902-3000
360/902-3026 (fax)
email: info@iac.wa.gov

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

360/902-2636
360/902-3026 (fax)
email: salmon@iac.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE
1111 Washington Street SE
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

January 24, 2006

TO: SRFB Members and Designees

FROM: Steve Leider, Review Panel Team Leader

SUBJECT: REVIEW PANEL OBSERVATIONS ON THE 2005 (6TH) GRANT ROUND REVIEW PROCESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

On behalf of the 2005 (6th) Grant Round Review Panel (panel) I am pleased to provide to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board a summary of observations and recommendations based on the panel's experience with the 6th Round strategy and project review process.

After the close of the 2004 (5th) grant round, the panel provided to you similar comments and recommendations, some of which were addressed in whole or part in development of the 2005 round. Since last years' comments may still be germane, they are attached for your information and use (Attachment 1).

We hope both sets of comments will be of value to you as you consider approaches for future grant rounds.

Attachments
1. Observations on the 5th round strategy and project review process and recommendations for the future
2. Example summary table (Pend Oreille)

SRFB 2005 (6th) Round Review Panel
Summary of Comments and Recommendations

General

- **Recovery plan relationships** – clear articulation of the programmatic regulatory context in lead entity areas should be added to complement the basis for projects, project lists, and their evaluation/rating by the Review Panel (panel). These considerations may be addressed in recovery plans and could be added to strategies that do not address listed species.

  o Recommendation: The general relationships of projects to GMA/Critical Areas Ordinances (CAO) should be explored. What is the most appropriate way, if any, to use assumptions about CAOs (for context) in the project arena? Shortcomings may exist in regulatory processes where restrictions are not sufficient or variances are granted (e.g., continued floodplain occupancy or future shoreline development.), leading to use of limited Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) funds dollars for acquisitions when local regulations would otherwise protect the critical area(s).

  Habitat strategies and related actions were identified in recovery plans reviewed by the panel, but details on projects typically were not. Lead entities identified where projects were related to actions in recovery plans. However, recovery plans did not contain a level of specific design or implementation detail on individual projects equivalent to what the SRFB has used to evaluate benefit and certainty. In addition, the Technical Recovery Team (TRT) leaders stressed to the panel that they did not review or comment to planners on individual projects.

  o Recommendation: The SRFB should explore how they would like recovery plans to guide development and evaluation of project lists and the "fit" of projects to those lists, and to also explore how recovery plans related to the review and evaluation of projects in terms of benefit and certainty criteria.

- **Habitat work schedule** – this concept is attractive. As a project/list development and implementation scheduling tool it should be designed and applied spanning multiple grant rounds. What SRFB guidance is needed for development of habitat work schedules? How would they be reviewed and evaluated (e.g., part of the panel process to evaluate certainty, specificity-focus)?

- **Project emphasis** – the SRFB should emphasize funding projects that first and foremost address broader restoration and protection of watershed processes (i.e., causes of problems vs band-aid fixes). For example, rather than opportunistically protecting an eroding bank with log jams, a better alternative would be to strategically provide a conservation easement that allows the river to migrate and work on restoring riparian conditions.

  It may be that we are at a point in the progressive refinement of the SRFB funding process where lead entities are increasingly going to struggle in developing many of their high priority projects. Many of the high priority areas have significant infrastructural or political constraints to restoring natural process. Project sponsors and lead entities will have a tendency to produce simpler engineered projects, such

as LWD placement and rock weirs, rather than put in the difficult and highly speculative work of dealing with government agencies and private entities in the development of long-term restoration plans (i.e., plans that allow for estuarine restoration, channel migration, and natural habitat development). At this point, much work is needed for recovery plans and lead entities to provide specificity about how high priority actions are going to be implemented. Resources could be allocated to lead entities for them to specifically develop projects in high priority areas with the aim of restoring natural processes for the long-term.

The panel provided recommendations to the SRFB via memo in December 2004. Below are several comments that the panel would like to re-emphasize:

- **Regional and statewide prioritization** – It would be very helpful for the SRFB to identify statewide strategic priorities (e.g., priority populations, watersheds). Last year the panel wrote "Without clear priorities or goals across WRIAs or regions or species, it is difficult to compare across individual WRIAs that may have very different salmon populations and habitat restoration and protection issues. The sooner the Board can establish **statewide priorities,** *and clarify species priorities within regions* (italicized text added), the sooner local groups can focus their contributions on the best opportunities within their WRIAs with confidence that the investment in local projects is in balance with the rest of the state."

- **Complexity of planning** – "The **complexity** of biological, social, political, and economic circumstances across the state varies from lead entity area to lead entity area, *between lead entity strategies and regional recovery plans, and between regional plans* (italicized text added). For example, some lead entity areas are geographically relatively small, whereas others are quite large; and some lead entity areas have small human population sizes whereas others are highly populated, each having attendant benefits and challenges with regard to strategy development. *These variations also apply to regional recovery plans.* Other than considerations provided for in the first increment of funding (e.g., credit for the number of listed species; the number of nearshore/rive miles; project list developed at the scale of a regional organization), the relative complexity and difficulty faced by lead entities *and regional recovery plans* was not specifically accounted for in the review *or allocation* process. Doing so would provide an improved context for the evaluation of strategy focus, *strategy quality* and fit of project lists *to strategies and plans.*

  Recommendation: We recommend that the Board consider developing and incorporating in the review process a means to evaluate and address the relative difficulty or complexity faced by lead entities strategy *and recovery plan* development and implementation."

- **Workshops** - convene workshop(s) to allow lead entities, project sponsors, and regional recovery organizations to compare experiences and tools that would improve projects and strategies submitted to the SRFB. Workshops might be particularly valuable for project sponsors and lead entities to focus on proper project development and tools or options for implementing restoration projects.

Review process

- **Review panel project field visits** – early pre-application project site visits by the panel should be mandatory, to clarify project details and gain early input from the panel to lead entities and project sponsors.

- **Continuity across grant rounds** – demonstrating continuity and progress across grant rounds should be part of the application and review process. The SRFB and lead entities should develop approaches to elucidate how new lead entity strategy or project ranking processes have built on past activities, to help demonstrate (and evaluate) the progression of advances made each year (or lack of same).

- **Projects of concern (POCs)** – it would improve efficiency if the panel identified potential POCs early in the review process that, even if some additional information could be supplied by the lead entity or project sponsor, would effectively not change the final status of the project as a POC. In those cases the panel would be obligated to clarify the rationale for their determination. Given the extraordinary amount of panel time devoted to alleviating POCs, resolution of them should be tightly managed. The applicant should be able to provide enough information in a pre-submission meeting and two follow-up meetings.

- **New ratings** – the SRFB should consider developing a new evaluation category and/or narrative to identify especially strong (1) <u>projects</u> and (2) <u>project lists/portfolios</u> based on all SRFB rating criteria on a consistent statewide basis (those that are especially beneficial to salmon and certain). The panel would include this information in their report to the SRFB after reviewing and evaluating <u>all</u> projects submitted.

- **Assessment of assessments** – a better understanding is needed of what assessment work has been done, what has not been done, how much is enough for SRFB purposes, and what kinds of assessment work best for each project type. An "assessment of assessments" would assist the SRFB understand these issues, and should lead to improved guidance to lead entities and the panel on remaining assessment needs and opportunities. In addition, the SRFB should use more specific criteria and guidelines for assessments so that they focus on diagnosing the cause of problems, rather than evaluating current conditions or trends.

- **Consistency** – as part of their process the panel should retain review all results to ensure they are calibrated to SRFB criteria and are consistent across the state, prior to finalization.

- **Technical Recovery Teams (TRTs)** – panel activities should continue to build strong communication and coordination with NOAA TRTs.

Projects

- **Benefit and certainty criteria** – benefit and certainty criteria should be reviewed and refined to improve the consistent and transparent application of them in identifying POCs. In particular, criteria should stress that projects should restore natural processes unless significant infrastructural or political constraints preclude such long-term restoration.

The review and evaluation would benefit from further clarification of Evaluation Criterion #13 ("if the project's main focus is to support other needs such as... property protection or water supply"). Criteria could be revised to simply state that bank protection projects are ineligible unless sediment source control <u>at that particular location</u> is a top priority in the lead entity strategy or recovery plan. Likewise, water supply projects should only be eligible if the resulting savings of water will actually increase instream flow in downstream salmon habitat where low flow is identified as a top priority, through water right trusting or some other quantifiable basis.

- **Project information** – identifying only POCs leaves the SRFB with no information from the panel on the relative quality of projects that are not POCs. For example, what are the best projects among those that are not POCs? The results of project reviews should be expanded to include information on levels of project quality other than POCs. This information may be of use to the SRFB in addressing projects that are "on the cusp."

- **Partial fish passage barriers** – the benefits from projects addressing partial barriers can be relatively low even when analysis based on formal fish passage criteria indicate a fish passage problem exists. The SRFB should consider what the best approach is to address partial barriers in the context of formal passage criteria. More specific project evaluation criteria for partial barriers could be developed that require project sponsors to show that partial barriers are significant hindrances at a critical migration time(s), or that juvenile seeding of upstream habitat is significantly affected by the barriers.

- **Research projects** – some projects were deemed by the panel to be good research projects, but not necessarily restoration projects. Benefit and certainty and other criteria or tools do not allow these to be well flagged for consideration, as such. The SRFB should decide if it wants these projects to be identified, and if so, how.

- **Summary table** – the application guidance should provide a template for lead entities to help them concisely summarize each project on their list and how each project relates to SRFB rating criteria, priorities, and ranking criteria (see examples of good formats used in 2005 by Pend Oreille (Attachment 3) and WRIA 1 - Nooksack).

- **Monitoring** – the SRFB should clarify the relationships of SRFB monitoring to project proposals and strategies. This clarification and an overview of SRFB monitoring should be included in future panel orientation sessions. The SRFB should ask the panel to identify projects that would be especially attractive candidates for focused monitoring work, and why.

Strategies and fit of lists

- **Strategy quality** – the SRFB should explore whether an approach to review and evaluation of strategy quality can be developed for use for all lead entities.

- **Certainty** – this rating category was new for the 6th grant round and was needed to evaluate strategy quality. To the extent that strategy quality continues to be evaluated in the future, this rating should be retained because of its fundamental importance in an understanding the relative technical rigor of the basis for strategies and project lists.

  Recommendations to improve the panel's evaluation of "certainty" include: review and refine definition of an excellent rating as needed; ask how well lead entities have described what is available (e.g., empirical data, information, modeling), and the extent to which what is available was actually applied in development of the strategy. It would help to refine the definition to make it more relevant to strategies.

- **Prioritization** – further SRFB clarification/guidance should emphasize that greater specificity and focus is manifested by finer and finer scales of prioritization (e.g., species/stocks, actions, areas, community issues).

- **Watershed processes** – criteria and definitions need to be tweaked to eliminate any confusion about whether processes to be considered are natural or artificially induced.

Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation

360/902-3000
360/902-3026 (fax)
email: info@iac.wa.gov

Salmon Recovery Funding Board
Attachment 1
360/902-2636
360/902-3026 (fax)
email: salmon@iac.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE
1111 Washington Street SE
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

December 17, 2004

TO: Salmon Recovery Funding Board Members and Designees

FROM: Steve Leider, Review Panel Liaison and Team Leader

SUBJECT: OBSERVATIONS ON THE 5TH ROUND STRATEGY AND PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

On behalf of the 5th Round Review Panel (including Technical Advisors) I am pleased to provide to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board the attached summary of observations and recommendations based on the collective experience of the Panel with the 5th Round strategy and project review process.

We hope these comments will be of value as you consider approaches for future grant rounds.

Attachment

**Observations and recommendations from the Review Panel
on the 5th round strategy and project review process**

This report summarizes the collective observations and recommendations of the 5th round Review Panel and Technical Advisors, based on their experiences with the process.

Overall, we believe that the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's (Board) 5th round process is an improvement over previous rounds. Having lead entities describe their strategies for identifying and prioritizing projects makes it easier to see how the limited available funding is being invested in strategic priorities. We feel the general approach of evaluating strategies and the fit of project lists to strategies had value in making funding decisions.

General Questions

The 5th round strategy and project review process was intended to represent a transition from past grant cycles. It is reasonable to expect that future processes will continue the transition theme. Below we have identified several overarching questions that will likely affect the Board's review processes in fundamental ways in future grant rounds. This emphasis of the report responds primarily to the last three questions. We recognize that answers to questions like the first two could fundamentally alter the scope and approach of the Board's review process, beyond the recommendations included here.

- The 5th round represented a transition from simple evaluation of individual projects toward an approach aimed addressing a portfolio of projects in the context of explicit lead entity strategies. Continuing the transition theme, how will the efforts of the lead entity strategies and project lists be expected to relate to and contribute toward recovery needs and priorities at broader scales (e.g., regional salmon recovery plans for Evolutionarily Significant Units or Distinct Population Segments)? What effect will recovery plans have on lead entity strategies and the Board's review needs?

- Does the Board intend that future review processes be used to directly evaluate the quality of strategies and/or the quality of project portfolios? Those tasks were intentionally not assigned to the 5th round. Depending on the answer to the first group of questions (above), will the review function have been (or will it be) performed by other reviewers (e.g., Technical Recovery Teams, Independent Scientific Review Panel operating in the Columbia River Basin)? What about areas of the state that may not be covered by other reviewers (e.g., coast)?

- Should additional guidance be provided through documents like *A Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development* or other grant application materials (e.g., see recommendations below regarding nearshore, watershed processes, community interests)?

- Should some review elements and definitions be revised or added (see discussions below: e.g., consider adding a "difficulty/complexity" rating)?

- Are there opportunities for the review process to be streamlined, without reducing the level of accountability needed by the Board (e.g., see recommendation below to reduce level of effort at spring meetings)?

Review Process: Comments and Recommendations

For reviewers, the 5th round involved several phases. All phases relied on staff support for logistics, planning, and information upon request. Phases of the review process that are described in more detail below:

1. Spring Review Panel meetings - All lead entities chose to participate in the optional spring meetings with the Panel. These meetings consumed a considerable amount of time and resources for all. The meetings were not intended to be used for evaluative purposes; instead, their utility was primarily to develop rapport, exchange preliminary information and guidance on strategies, and clarify expectations.

> Recommendation: *We had mixed feelings about the utility of these meetings, and suggest the time allotted to these meetings be reconsidered and rebalanced, reducing it and shifting more time to document review, group evaluations, fall meetings/fix-it loops, and preparation of group reports and documents (see recommendations below also). Use of limited time in the spring could also be applied to training for all lead entities Board approaches, strategies, and evaluation criteria for the upcoming grant round.*

2. Technical Advisor project field visits – Most lead entities took advantage of these opportunities for onsite consultation with Technical Advisors about individual projects. In general, the experience showed that project quality improved and the likelihood of projects being identified as "projects of concern" in final documents was lessened. Field visits and direct contacts seemed to work better than dialogues using exchange of written information alone. It is important to note that regardless of whether lead entities opted for these field visits, the Technical Advisors were still obligated to review and evaluate all projects, even if such evaluations were based only on written materials submitted as part of the application process. The "projects of concern" approach left the Board with no evaluation of the quality of each project portfolio.

> Recommendations: *We suggest retaining this element in subsequent rounds, and further suggest the Board consider making it a requirement, to bolster information exchange and reduce misunderstandings that may arise from being constrained by document reviews only. Further, we recommend that early and subsequent project meetings focus on those projects that local groups feel are weakest. These "pre-screened" projects would receive emphasis, obviating the need to review a majority of projects that were technically sound.*

3. Review of documents – Due to the number of lead entities and the sheer volume of material submitted by each, reviewing all documents required significant time and effort by reviewers. Given the need for statewide consistency within the time available, there were constraints on the depth of reviews achieved. In addition, there were many variables operating concurrently that affected results of reviews. For example, the status of submitted strategies varied (some were being refined at the time of submission), as did the extent to which materials supporting strategies were identified, included, or

salient features were summarized or paraphrased. In addition, although responses to questions and strategy summaries were intended to encapsulate strategies and had the potential to streamline the review process, there was much variation in how lead entities responded to this element, hampering its utility statewide. Finally, reviewing strategies and strategy summaries electronically (on compact disks) was cumbersome for most of the Review Panel.

> Recommendations: *First, we suggest having more resources and time applied to this step to ensure a more satisfactory level of review and understanding by reviewers and lead entities. We also suggest that hardcopies of materials to be reviewed (not just compact disks) be provided to the entire Review Panel. To ensure consistency, we recommend that the evaluation be based on the same version of the strategy that is used by project sponsors and the lead entity in developing a project list, even if subsequent versions are developed later in the process. To minimize confusion that can result from having the same information presented in multiple places and to reduce the effort required of lead entities, we recommend that the evaluation be based on the complete lead entity strategy as it is presented to potential project sponsors. Strategy evaluations could be based strictly on the submitted strategy with supporting information attached (e.g., summaries could be limited to responding to questions that would not necessarily be addressed in strategies (explanation of the project review, rating, and ranking process and outcome)). Alternatively, evaluations could strictly evaluate the summary with a number of attachments (e.g., an outline of more detailed information supporting summary points, page references in the strategy, and rating/ranking of projects). The Review Panel acknowledges there are pros and cons to each approach.*

4. Early fall meetings – Lead entities were required to participate in these meetings to present their strategies and project lists to the Review Panel and Technical Advisors, clarify how those lists fit the strategy, discuss outstanding issues associated with projects that may have been identified as being of concern, and respond to questions from the Panel and Technical Advisors. <u>These meetings and the Panels' associated deliberations were crucial parts of the information gathering and evaluation process</u>. At this step preliminary document reviews of each Panel member were brought together with opportunities to receive clarification and emphasis from lead entities, followed by Panel deliberations and pursuit of consensus on ratings and narratives. It formed the key information exchange among all parties prior to development and release of draft reports and was a key step in the information gathering process for creation of the Panel's draft report. The preliminary evaluations of Panel members were heavily effected by their discussions with the lead entities, and among the Panel members themselves. Sometimes new and valuable information emerged for which no supporting documentation was included in application submissions.

> Recommendations: *If additional time were provided for review of submitted documents as suggested in #3 above, we further suggest more time be allotted for the group deliberation part of this phase – to better explore and resolve consensus, and aid in the preparation of the Panel's written materials on strategies and projects.*

5. Final fall meetings – These meetings with the Review Panel and Technical Advisors were convened after the Panel's draft report had been reviewed by lead entities, and at the request of individual lead entities. The purpose of the meetings was for lead entities to clarify for the Review Panel and Technical Advisors areas of concern or disagreement with the draft report, and to reduce misunderstandings, affording a final fix-it loop. Most lead entities took advantage of the opportunity to meet, and the Panel made a number of adjustments to their evaluations. Time was limited for each of the meetings. Time for ensuing discussion and report revisions by the Panel was especially constrained.

> Recommendation: *We suggest retaining this element but increasing the resources and time allotted for Panel deliberations after the meetings to ensure a higher level of clarify and consistency in final reports.*

6. Draft and final reports – The Review Panel and Technical Advisors prepared materials for draft and final reports with assistance from Board staff. Staff handled all formatting and distribution tasks. A common desire was for documents to be as consistent, complete, and understandable to lead entities (and the Board) as possible. Room for improvements exist.

> Recommendations: *We recommend that more time be devoted to report preparation and internal review. Devoting more time and resources to these tasks should increase the likelihood that the products will be useful to lead entities and the Board. Doing otherwise risks misunderstandings and reduced utilization of the information. Finally, we recommend that the role of "team leader" be retained, to provide a point-of-contact for the Panel, facilitation, and help with document preparation.*

General Comments and Recommendations

- Without clear priorities or goals across WRIAs or regions or species, it is difficult to compare across individual WRIAs that may have very different salmon populations and habitat restoration and protection issues. The sooner the Board can establish **statewide priorities**, the sooner local groups can focus their contributions on the best opportunities within their WRIAs with confidence that the investment in local projects is in balance with the rest of the state.

- **Nearshore** marine areas and issues are important to salmon and are dominant components for some lead entities and their strategies. There are lead entities whose areas function primarily as important migratory and rearing areas certain life stages of salmon. In that context, the Review Panel found that some lead entities had difficulty interpreting and applying *A Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development* (Guide) in the context of nearshore species, areas/actions, and processes. In addition, for some of these lead entities there may be limits to the information that is available, hampering strategy development as called for in the Guide. That said however, the concepts and approaches in the Guide (including habitat features and processes) are applicable and interpretable in the context of nearshore situations. It is possible to identify and prioritize species, habitat features, processes, and their inter-relationships in nearshore environments, though it requires some interpretation of the Guide to do so.

<u>Recommendations</u>: *We recommend that the Board consider bolstering the Guide to provide clarification to lead entities whose areas are dominated by nearshore environments. We further recommend that lead entities be encouraged to identify the target species and stocks, even if they spawn in other WRIAs, and the importance of the proposed nearshore improvements relative to instream habitat improvements for those species and stocks. There may be similar issues with other migratory corridors such as the Columbia River mainstem and Lake Washington, where the relative importance of improvements in the migratory corridors and improvements in the spawning rivers could be further clarified in terms of target species and stocks. Finally, it may be desirable to rank all nearshore projects as a group, with specific criteria related to the context of nearshore environments.*

- Almost all of the lead entity areas without **listed species** rated lower than other lead entity areas. The application guidance encouraged a multi-species approach, but the evaluation process didn't really support that as it continually asked for species or stock prioritization. If it is the Boards intent to force a prioritization for listed species that should be stated.

    <u>Recommendation</u>: *Similar to the nearshore issue, we recommend that the Board clarify its intent regarding a listed species versus multi-species focus.*

- The application materials requested a considerable amount of documentation from lead entities for review by the Review Panel. Although very similar and conceptually well aligned, the specific wording of **questions** the Review Panel was asked to use to make its rating determinations (per Appendix D of Manual 18) was not exactly the same as that of questions to which lead entities were asked to respond in their application materials (e.g., strategy summary). This lead to somewhat inefficient alignment between the responses to questions the Panel was evaluating and responses to other questions. In addition, but no less important, is that some lead entities appeared to be unfamiliar with the Board's definitions of "excellent" for some rating categories the Review Panel was to use. Efficiency and effectiveness of review would be enhanced to the extent questions lead entities are asked to respond to are the same as those being evaluated, and to the extent all evaluation criteria are commonly understood.

    <u>Recommendations</u>: *To reduce the potential for confusion and to reduce the burden on lead entities, we recommend that the evaluation be based on the complete existing strategy documents used by project sponsors and the lead entity to create project lists. If lead entities are asked to respond to evaluation questions or use a summary, then we suggest those questions be thoroughly reviewed and tweaked/revised for consistency with review criteria, standards, and evaluation forms as appropriate, and focus on information not necessarily already in strategy documents (e.g., explanation of the project review, rating, and ranking process and outcome).*

- Related to the bullet above, being able to review information in a **standardized format** would greatly enhance reviewers' ability to produce consistent results across the state. The Panel received a very wide range of document formats, levels of detail, and supportive information. This variety decreased reviewer efficiency, and increased the risk of lead entities feeling that essential information provided to the Panel was not used or overlooked by the Panel. We recognize that requiring information in a standard format will require additional work on the part of lead entities, above and beyond what they need to do to develop strategies and prioritized project lists.

  Recommendations: *We recommend that the Board consider (1) development and use of standard formats and templates for lead entities to use in submitting requested and evaluated information, and that these be the basis for evaluations; or (2) increasing the time allocated for document review (see recommendation under #3 – Review of documents above) so that the reviewers have adequate time to review and evaluate materials in diverse formats.*

- **Supportive documentation** or information was sometimes not well described, especially where its use was critical to the lead entity strategy or list prioritization exercise. Lead entities occasionally referenced a key document or analysis (on one hand) or attached it (on the other). It would help if lead entities routinely included summaries of salient aspects of key references and analyses in the process of articulating rationales in their strategies, for the benefit of project sponsors as well as the Board.

  Recommendation: *We suggest that the Board encourage lead entities to include a clear presentation of the rationale behind their strategy within the strategy itself, and any other materials submitted for review. This may include use of summary tables, maps and concise summaries of key supporting documents and analyses.*

- The **complexity** of biological, social, political, and economic circumstances across the state varies from lead entity area to lead entity area. For example, some lead entities areas are geographically relatively small, whereas others are quite large; and some lead entity areas have small human population sizes whereas others are highly populated, each having attendant benefits and challenges with regard to strategy development. Other than considerations provided for in the first increment of funding (e.g., credit for the number of listed species; the number of nearshore/rive miles; operation at the scale of a regional organization), the relative complexity and difficulty faced by lead entities was not specifically accounted for in the review process. Doing so would provide an improved context for the evaluation of strategy focus and fit of project lists.

  Recommendation: *We recommend that the Board consider developing and incorporating in the review process a means to evaluate and incorporate the relative difficulty or complexity faced by lead entities strategy development and implementation.*

Additional Information Needs

- Evaluation of the fit of project lists to strategies was frequently hampered by the inadequacy of information reviewed on **scoring and prioritization** systems lead entities used. During presentations, the Review Panel frequently asked for more transparency in describing the rationale for how projects were technically scored, how they were scored by citizen's committees, and how the two were involved in achieving a final ranked project list. The most useful information included concise project-by-project responses to the fit-to-list questions and summary/composite score sheets.

  Recommendation: *We recommend that the Board routinely request from lead entities more information (e.g., scoring sheet templates, scoring summary) to help reviewers understand the approach and rationale for prioritization steps leading to submitted project lists. More specifically, we recommend lead entities provide the rationale and documentation for how citizen's committee discretion was used in project rankings, providing more transparency for evaluation of how project lists fit with strategies.*

- Occasionally a lead entity strategy or presentation included information that identified **projects and assessments that were funded in previous rounds.** The Review Panel found this information of considerable value in understanding how issues of prioritization were reflected in lead entity strategies and project lists. It helped reviewers understand how strategies are being implemented in a longer-term context (including how much more project or assessment effort might appropriately be needed).

  Recommendations: *We recommend that staff provide the Review Panel with a summary of past projects and assessments for each lead entity as context for the review. We also recommend that information be requested from lead entities about the relationships between projects that are proposed for funding and any previous projects and assessments, identifying where significant connections exist as a routine component of strategy and project list review.*

- It was very difficult for the Review Panel to clearly understand **how assessment projects on lists have or will lead to projects.** Where assessments exist on project lists, the Review Panel felt the need to understand whether the assessment stemmed from previous assessments, or if the project requested represented an entirely new assessment.

  Recommendations: *We recommend that the Board consider developing a mechanism to track assessment projects and any linked series of assessments. We further suggest that background on assessment be provided as a component of the strategy and project list review, to include relevant past assessment projects, needs for additional assessment work, and identification of projects that have or are expected to stem from past assessments.*

Specific Comments on Evaluation of Individual Projects

- **Acquisitions** represent a diverse array of projects and the information used in their evaluation is similarly diverse and very complex.

    Recommendation: *We recommend development of criteria to help technical evaluation of acquisitions on a more standardized basis. These criteria should be designed to lead to better understanding of the extent to which habitat to be acquired is currently fully functioning and/or needs extensive restoration; the timeframe in which responses or improvements in habitat functioning are expected; and the continuity of the proposed acquisition with other protected or functioning habitat.*

- **Permits** are typically required before projects can be constructed. We observed that funding for permits was provided for some projects prior to receipt of a favorable funding decision by the Board. This means that investments in permits for projects that are not funded will not be realized.

    Recommendation: *We recommend that the Board clarify the extent to which permitting is expected to be a design expense.*

Specific Comments on 5th Round Strategy Rating Categories

Specificity and Focus
- *Species and Stock Priorities* – The extent to which the status of <u>all</u> species or stocks in a lead entity area was clearly described had a large influence on ratings. It appeared at least as important that lead entity strategies identify and articulate the rationale and context for their <u>highest priority</u> species, whether or not such are listed under the ESA. Some lead entities emphasized listed species whereas others emphasized multispecies approaches.

- *Prioritizing Habitat Features and Watershed Processes* – At this time, strategies generally do a much better job of clearly identifying and prioritizing habitat features, than they do of explicitly identifying and prioritizing watershed processes with their conceptual and empirical foundation. Moreover, even where strategies identified habitat features they rarely made explicit linkages to underlying (causal) watershed processes. It may be helpful to develop technical guidance to further assist lead entities in addressing watershed processes, and in making linkages between habitat features to those processes. This could include addressing the strengths and limitations of how EDT analyses and results relate to watershed processes. Finally, combining both habitat features and watershed processes into a single rating made it difficult for lead entities to achieve "excellent" ratings.

    Recommendation: *We recommend the Board consider separating this rating into its two component parts, and to resolve how much emphasis should be placed on developing linkages between habitat features and watershed processes.*

- *Prioritizing Actions and Geographic Areas* – This category met with variable responses with respect to matters of scale, where specificity and focus tended to increase as the scale of resolution decreased. The Review Panel tended to acknowledge increasing specificity through identification of multiple and finer geographic scales. Relatively few strategies actually prioritized actions but most prioritized geographic areas to some degree.

    > Recommendation: *We recommend the Board clarify expectations to lead entities regarding the importance of issues of scale and how they affect the focus and prioritization of actions and areas.*

- *Prioritizing Community Issues* – The considerations for ratings of this category were very complex and a very high standard was established for a lead entity to achieve an "excellent" rating. Most lead entities took a general approach, emphasizing their outreach efforts and their process to building general support within their lead entity area. Relatively few took the very difficult and politically risky additional step of identifying specific issues or areas that not only have a good level of support, but also the substantial limitations, all leading to articulating a focused and prioritized strategy to address those limitations.

    > Recommendation: *We suggest the Board clarify whether the intent in this category is to address community issues and include a community issues strategy, or simply to develop a community outreach process that leads to support for a project list. If the former, it may be of value to lead entities and the Board to provide additional guidance for development of strategies to address maintenance of community support where it exists, and to build it where it doesn't.*

Fit of List
- *Actions and Geographic Areas* – Achieving an "excellent" rating criteria for this category fails to allow for situations where most/all projects can legitimately address other than priorities that are "highest." Admittedly rare now, in the future there may be lead entities that have addressed all the highest priorities. The process should allow and encourage moving to the next lower priorities as the highest ones are adequately addressed, and where circumstances present clear and significant obstacles to addressing them at the current time. There may be more flexible standards such as "highest remaining priorities."

- *Fit of Project Ranking* – The Review Panel found ratings for this category were not consistently meaningful, because of the variability in the focus and specificity of strategies. In some cases ratings reflected how lists fit to well focused strategies, but in others project lists were able to "fit" well to strategies that were vague and unfocused, or the Review Panel was unable to discern differences between project rankings due to the lead entity project evaluation process. This reduces the value of this rating applied statewide. It is important to note however, that narratives for this category contain meaningful information.

<u>Recommendation</u>: *We recommend that the "fit of project ranking" category should be reviewed and modified. It may be useful in the future to apply this to strategies that are clear and focused as an added measure, but not to apply it to strategies that are not clear and focused.*

- *Summary Narratives* – In a very brief and qualitative way, these narratives attempted to simply recap the breadth of other rating categories. As such the summary narratives may be redundant and not add much value, without considerable expansion.

	Granite Creek Assessment #05-1443 N RANK#1	Cedar Creek Culvert #05-1448 R RANK#2	Indian Creek Yates #05-1447R RANK#3	Tacoma Creek Passage #05-1445 R RANK#4	South Fork Tacoma Passage #05-1446R RANK#5
PRIORITY AREA	#1 HIGH	#4 HIGH	#8 HIGH	#2 MEDIUM	#2 MEDIUM
PRIORITY LIMITING FACTORS	#2,3,4,5,6 & 7	#5	#2 & 3	#2	#2
PRIORITY STOCKS	# 1BT #2 WCT	# 1BT #2 WCT	# 1BT #2 WCT	# 1BT #2 WCT	# 1BT #2 WCT
PRIORITY ACTION	#2 (TOP UNFUNDED)	#2 (TOP UNFUNDED)	#1 & 4	#3	#3
CURRENT LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT	MODERATE SCORE = 8 OF 10	MODERATE SCORE = 8 OF 10	HIGH SCORE = 7 OF 10	MODERATE SCORE = 6 OF 10	MODERATE SCORE =6 OF 10
ABILITY TO PROMOTE FUTURE SUPPORT	SCORE = 9 OF 10	SCORE = 9 OF 10	SCORE = 7 OF 10	SCORE = 6 OF 10	SCORE =6 OF 10
PRIORITY COMMUNITY INTERESTS	POSITIVE = 5 OF 6 SCORE = 9 OF 10	POSITIVE = 4 OF 6 SCORE = 8 OF 10	POSITIVE = 4 OF 6 SCORE = 7 OF 10	POSITIVE = 3 OF 6 SCORE = 5 OF 10	POSITIVE = 3 OF 6 SCORE =5 OF 10
JUSTIFIABLE USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS	SCORE = 10 OF 10	SCORE = 7 OF 10	SCORE = 8 OF 10	SCORE = 5 OF 10	SCORE =4 OF 10