



**GOVERNOR'S SALMON RECOVERY OFFICE
& COUNCIL OF REGIONS
COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING**

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN | MAY 2014



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this communications plan is to assist Washington state's seven regional salmon recovery organizations to continue to build support for and coordinate the implementation of locally written, federally approved, scientifically credible recovery and sustainability plans for at-risk salmon and steelhead (six of them for ESA-listed salmonids).

This communications plan, with message framework and a findings and recommendations report, should be of additional assistance to other members of Washington state's infrastructure for regionally led salmon recovery: the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO) and Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO); the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB); and the Lead Entities, now organized as the Washington Salmon Coalition (WSC), which work within regions to coordinate and implement on-the-ground salmon recovery projects.

The plan was developed by Pyramid Communications and based on workshops, meetings, interviews, research, and our own experience with salmon recovery in the state of Washington. Our work was guided by a communications working group assembled by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office: Brian Abbott (GSRO); Jeff Breckel (Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery Board); Derek Van Marter (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board); Alicia Lawver (Puget Sound Partnership); Darcy Batura (WSC); Susan Zemek (RCO); Nancy Biery (SRFB); and Jennifer Quan (WDFW). Additional assistance was provided by Alex Conley (Yakima Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board); Jeanette Dorner (Puget Sound Partnership); Miles Batchelder (Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership); Scott Brewer (Hood Canal Coordinating Council); and Steve Martin (Snake River Recovery Board). Methodology is described in the attached Findings and Recommendations report.

OVERVIEW

Robust salmon migrating in healthy rivers connect the marine environment and the communities of our coasts to those of our mountains and high deserts. When the decline of multiple species of salmon caused the federal government to list them as threatened and endangered, the residents of Washington state got together to restore salmon—and the rivers, forests, shorelines, and other features of the natural world upon which they and we depend.

This collective and local response to federal ESA listings in the late 1990s was unprecedented. Washington state created a new infrastructure of regional salmon recovery organizations to coordinate the efforts of thousands of local professionals and volunteers working in concert with federal, tribal, and state agency scientists and policymakers to create their own regional salmon recovery and sustainability plans.

With the plans completed, the regional organizations have turned their focus to implementation. They review and make recommendations to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for projects submitted by Lead Entities that will help implement recovery. They have created well-respected processes for public participation. They partner with other organizations to conduct necessary science; they coordinate the efforts of multiple government agencies; and they monitor progress and work with the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office to report biennially to the Legislature and public. Funding for the regional organizations is sourced from the federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. Washington state competes with four other states for this funding. Some regions have begun to diversify their sources of financial support.

The story of this unique approach and new infrastructure was widely reported and well-known in the early years, when the ESA listings themselves were received as dramatic news, as was the decision to craft regional recovery plans. But in the 15 years since, as the regions and local leads have been implementing their plans, reporting on the story has shifted and become more about individual projects or threats, fights among interest groups, or questions about how much is being spent and when the work will be done. There's also a lot of confusion inherent in the salmon recovery story. It's difficult to explain why harvesting of listed species continues to be allowed; most people don't realize that there are different species of salmon and within those species, different Ecologically Significant Units that were listed. Very few understand the complications surrounding the use of hatchery fish to supplement fisheries and, in some cases, help rebuild naturally spawning populations. The general public also has limited understanding of the co-manager relationship between the treaty tribes and the State of Washington—another unusual government arrangement.

In part, this is because there was little perceived need on the part of the regions to keep telling this complex story. Efforts were successful: The lawsuits and economic upheaval predicted as a result of the ESA listings did not come to pass. Federal funding for implementation was all but assured by the federal congressional delegation, which understood the necessity of regional coordination to ensure funds were spent effectively. The regions left the storytelling to the partner organizations and individuals who undertook the salmon recovery projects, and to the representative state agencies to make the case for continued federal and state funding.

Fifteen years in, it's time to retell the story. Thousands of people across the state are working together to restore salmon, and recover and protect a Pacific Northwest in which all residents want to continue to live. County, legislative, state, federal, congressional, and tribal decision makers and their constituents need to know what the past 15 years' investments have delivered, and what multiple benefits will continue to accrue to the region, now and into the future, from an investment in the restoration of salmon and the unique landscapes and waterways they inhabit.

GOAL

To ensure continued support for scientifically credible, regionally led, locally implemented salmon recovery in Washington state so that we might enjoy abundant and healthy salmon populations, all the multiple additional benefits of functional ecosystems, and a Pacific Northwest we recognize into the future.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The recommended activities in this plan are designed to help regional directors and others in Washington's salmon recovery network work toward the following eight objectives and strategies:

OBJECTIVE #1: COMMUNITY MEMBERS KNOW THE MULTIPLE BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN SALMON RECOVERY.

Strategies:

- Articulate the multiple, tangible benefits of investment in salmon recovery, locally.
- Stay positive and future-oriented, but be clear about the cost of not acting.

OBJECTIVE #2: KEY DECISION MAKERS ADVOCATE FOR AND FUND REGIONALLY LED SALMON RECOVERY.

Strategies:

- Provide clear, consistent, usable updates to elected and agency officials, their staff, and their influencers, primarily those in the local media.
- Invite elected officials to salmon recovery projects to witness multiple benefits.
- Help regional stakeholders understand who makes decisions that impact recovery.

OBJECTIVE #3: LEAD-ENTITY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS REMAIN ENTHUSIASTIC, COMMITTED, AND RELIABLE.

Strategies:

- Ensure Lead Entity views are well-incorporated in regional decision-making.
- Create opportunities for recognition and celebration.
- Provide staff and volunteers with clear information and relevant communications tools.

OBJECTIVE #4: PRIVATE LANDOWNERS CONTINUE TO EMBRACE AND VOLUNTARILY IMPLEMENT SALMON HABITAT RECOVERY STRATEGIES.

Strategies:

- Provide a platform for landowners who undertake recovery projects to tell their stories.
- Foster improved dialogue and relationships between landowners and agency staff.
- Continue to support NGO partners working with private landowners.

OBJECTIVE #5: STATE AGENCY ACTIONS RELATED TO SALMON HEALTH ARE FULLY FUNDED AND MORE CLOSELY INTEGRATED WITH APPROVED REGIONAL RECOVERY PLANS.

Strategies:

- Educate all stakeholders on the need for full funding and implementation of hatchery reform principles of All-H integration and program change recommendations.
- Continue to encourage better integration at the regional scale of DNR, Ecology, and WDFW activities related to hatchery and harvest management, water quality and quantity, forest health, and other actions impacting salmon recovery.

OBJECTIVE #6: FEDERAL AGENCY OBLIGATIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED AND ARE WELL UNDERSTOOD BY AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.

Strategies:

- Provide a forum for federal agency staff to update communities on agency plans and responsibilities.
- Continue to include participation of federal agency staff in regional collaborations.

OBJECTIVE #7: RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRIBES AT THE REGIONAL SCALE ARE BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST AND SHARED ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Strategies:

- Understand and communicate tribal salmon recovery plans and actions.
- Help stakeholders better understand the co-manager relationship.
- Work with tribes at the regional scale to review recommendations for integrating habitat, hatchery, and harvest decisions for greater recovery benefits.

OBJECTIVE #8: PROFESSIONALS TASKED WITH SALMON RECOVERY SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE AND WORK TOWARD COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD OBJECTIVES.

Strategies:

- Coalesce as the network of salmon recovery professionals (RCO, GSRO, regional boards, SRFB, Lead Entities) created 15 years ago to identify and pursue shared priorities.
- Invest in better mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, and opportunities with WDFW, Olympia, and regional leaders.
- Use the message framework to frame the story of salmon recovery with shared values, identify the multiple benefits of investments in recovery, and then explain the projects and the financial asks.

PRIORITY AUDIENCES

Support from the following audiences is essential to achieve the key objectives and employ the identified strategies above, and the priority actions, which follow.

Tier one audiences are foundational. Once these are updated and on message, they can become effective messengers to influence tier two and tier three audiences.

TIER ONE

- The seven regional salmon recovery organizations (with tribal and county representatives)
- Lead Entities (Washington Salmon Coalition)
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- Governor's Salmon Recovery Office/Recreation and Conservation Office
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups
- Governor's natural resources policy staff

TIER TWO

- Washington legislative leaders relevant to salmon recovery
- Washington congressional delegation
- Washington Department of Ecology; Department of Natural Resources (DNR); and other state agencies impacting salmon recovery
- Fishing and other recreational organizations
- Local media

TIER THREE

- Private landowners
- Federal agencies, primarily the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Potential partners
- Civic and community groups (e.g., Rotary, faith, veterans, schools)

KEY MESSENGERS & MESSAGES

Regional salmon recovery boards, GSRO/RCO, Lead Entities, and the SRFB will need to identify within their own organizations who is primarily responsible for sharing the story of salmon recovery in Washington state.

It is recommended that all messengers use the attached message framework to introduce the specific content or points they want to convey—whether they are intended as informational or persuasive.

By framing local and regional or organizational messages in the same way, the impact of the story will be amplified. Multiple messengers should be understood as representing a movement of many, not just many messengers with many different stories or requests.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

The following four actions are recommended to implement the strategies and achieve the outcomes identified above. Individual actions may help implement multiple strategies.

1. IMPROVE INTERNAL NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS.

The Council of Regions and the WSC are important new elements for coordination and support, but the network as a whole needs and wants better synchronization and internal communication before it can best tell its story to others.

- Create a biennial system to identify and communicate shared statewide priorities—perhaps in tandem with the biennial State of the Salmon report—which would then lead to identifying target decision makers and empowering key messengers and influencers to carry forward requests and expectations.
- Improve WDFW and other state agencies' understanding of regionally led salmon recovery and better synchronize with the WDFW regional offices.
 - Meet with WDFW to scope a process for regional conversations about how habitat-recovery investments can work in tandem with hatchery and harvest decisions to recover at-risk salmonids.
 - Help educate legislative and congressional funders and the public about the need for fully funding WDFW salmon recovery programs, as well as regional salmon recovery organizations.
- Train key messengers (RCO, GSRO, SRFB, WSC) in the use of the message framework and how to tailor it to their needs.
 - SRFB, GSRO, RCO, and the regions all need to update their communications to reflect the unified messages outlined in the message framework.
- Prepare for the May 2015 Salmon Recovery Conference.
 - Present the message framework and communications plan, and conduct a message and communications training for interested participants.

2. STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF THE REGIONS TO LEAD.

Regional organizations are essential resources and conveners for the community of professionals and volunteers working on recovery and, increasingly, are viewed as trusted sources of information and safe places for conversation about natural resource issues of concern to the broader community.

- Regional directors and everyone associated with the organization need to be able to explain the purpose of salmon recovery and its multiple benefits for their communities.
 - Convene Lead Entities, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, and other partners to synchronize regional priorities.
 - Create regional and local messages using the message framework as the foundation.
 - Convene staff to identify communications expectations for the organization and for individual staff for the coming year, and write them into performance contracts.
- When regional board members, tribal leaders, and county commissioners speak with one voice in Washington, D.C., or Olympia, the power of their shared voices is unmatched.
 - Look for areas of agreement on regional recovery boards and create opportunities for them to share those with elected officials and other decision makers.
- Identify the top 20 influencers in each region who need to understand the value of the regional organizations and their partners. Commit to talk to or spend time with two of them each month.
- Provide forums with an appropriate level of formality and at a suitable scale for tribal leaders or staff to share their salmon recovery project work.
- Convene Lead Entities and other partners at a regional scale to understand the status of All-H integration (focus of conference) in each region, and develop questions and recommendations to take to the conference.
- Convene or co-host, as advisable, forums for the discussion of recovery-related issues of particular importance to the community.

3. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT EXTEND YOUR REACH.

Salmon recovery is a lifetime commitment and will require all of us to make changes. We need the support of relationships and community with all stakeholders to succeed.

- Participate in local recovery-related events in your communities. Create additional opportunities where possible and strategic.
 - Create a calendar of events that mimics the salmon's life history; organize or join others' celebrations of homecoming, spring planting of refugia, hatchery releases and out-migrations, and fishing.
 - Build alliances with local civic, business, veterans, first-responders, and faith-based organizations.
 - Visit a variety of recovery projects—on tribal, private, and public lands, at dams, and on farms; take partners with you.
 - Create a forum (online, via social media platforms, earned media or recognition event) for partners to tell their stories; share those stories with your network.

- Identify with project partners the best way to keep potentially affected residents informed consistently and proactively as large projects are being designed and before implementation.
 - Use social media, postcard mailers, radio talk show interviews, or other means of communicating that will most likely reach potentially affected stakeholders.

4. CREATE AND USE EFFECTIVE MESSAGES AND TOOLS.

Creating the necessary tools to effectively reach key audiences is essential. Tools that articulate agreed-upon messages in a simple, concise, and visually effective manner will go a long way to engage necessary audiences.

- Use the attached message framework across all mediums (materials, speeches, media, etc.) to introduce consistently the rationale, benefits, and organizational structure of salmon recovery in Washington state.
- Prepare and share necessary informational tools with partners and key messengers for target audiences, including:
 - Update the diagram that illustrates the relationships among Lead Entities, regional recovery organizations, GSRO and RCO, and the SRFB.
 - Expand the Lead Entities directory to include all members of the network and explain how the network functions.
 - Prepare infographic fact sheets for easy distribution online or in person.
 - Prepare briefing pages on local priorities that can easily be repurposed for electronic use.
 - Prepare simple maps that identify projects within the regions and highlight the migratory routes of at-risk salmon.
 - Post one- to two-minute video clips or links on regional organization, Lead Entity, and GSRO websites to enable people to see salmon and the excitement they generate up close.
 - Develop online, regional media packets with up-to-date, digestible content and contact information for reporters.
- Design, by region, social and earned media strategies tied to key local priorities.
- Consider a new logo, fonts, color palette, and design framework to hold and amplify the story and infrastructure of salmon recovery in Washington state.

TIMELINE

Communications efforts designed to achieve specific outcomes from specific events or decisions are most effective. Recognizing that regional recovery organizations have little capacity at present for communications and that most of the responsibility for this will fall to the directors, the following calendar is designed to help distribute the intensity of the effort over the next year.

Each of these milestones is an opportunity to use the message framework and, if developed in time, new visual aids, and print and online collateral.

Recommended new communications activities by regions are presented in bolded italics.

2014

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| May | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Compile information for the governor's biennial State of the Salmon report▪ Compile information on monitoring and capacity needs for GSRO▪ Communications plan delivered to GSRO and Council of Regions |
| June/July | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Regional recovery directors meet with staff and identify communications planning targets (audiences, messengers, needed training, events, materials) for their regions</i>▪ <i>Identify the top 20 people to whom you want to relay the salmon recovery message in the coming year; commit to one or two conversations per month</i>▪ <i>Visit recovery projects with key audiences</i> |
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Regional boards make recommendations for project funding to SRFB▪ <i>Regional recovery boards visit congressional delegation in district</i>▪ <i>Review communications strategies for potentially affected residents</i> |
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Visit salmon homecoming celebrations with key audiences</i>▪ <i>Salmon recovery network meets to determine shared priorities</i>▪ <i>Host regional forums as applicable and immediately impactful (e.g., issue-focused, built around release of a new federal agency plan, to highlight the work of a particular partner, or education/update)</i> |
| October | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Host an open house or a brown bag forum with a tribal partner to share the tribe's salmon recovery strategies/key projects with community partners</i> |
| November | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Draft the State of the Salmon report |
| December | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ SRFB announces funding decisions▪ Governor's budget released▪ <i>Regions highlight local projects and partners—holiday/year end recognition of new funding awards and project milestones of note</i> |

2015

- January
 - Governor's biennial State of the Salmon report (2014) released
 - GSRO and RCO organize state requests for 2015 federal funding
 - State legislative session begins—through April
- February
 - ***Convene working groups by region to review integration of habitat with hatchery and harvest decisions. How can we best use the May conference to tell our story and get what we need to be successful?***
- March
 - Western governors and others support of Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund delivered to Congress
- April
 - ***Finalize materials, messages, and presentations for the Salmon Recovery Conference***
- May
 - ***Salmon Recovery Conference*** hosted by SRFB through RCO and GSRO, with WDFW and Long Live the Kings: All-H integration is a major theme
 - ***Regional recovery boards visit congressional representatives and agencies in Washington, D.C., as able***

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Several of the recommendations in this communications plan may require further communications planning and expertise:

- Training the seven regional salmon recovery organizations, and RCO, GSRO, SRFB, and WSC to use the message framework
- Assisting the seven regional organizations to build tailored and more detailed outreach and media plans, audience maps, messages, and implementation calendars
- Assisting the seven regional organizations and/or the SRFB to develop funding strategies that will require more targeted communications strategies and tools
- Designing a visual framework for the salmon recovery network that would help convey connectivity, unity, organization, and professionalism, and instill confidence in partners, funders, critics, and the public
- Designing and producing collateral materials and online content for all members of the network (FAQs, infographic fact sheets, maps, network diagrams, backgrounders, etc.)

CONCLUSION

Federal ESA listings may have led to the advent of salmon recovery and its multiple benefits for our communities and our state, but the thousands of residents who've come together across the state to restore salmon and the natural systems upon which they and we depend are leading an effort to define the future. This process has been fortunate to have the right leaders for the right tasks at the right times. Today, with the implementation of locally drafted recovery plans underway and requiring sustained support, the directors of the regional salmon recovery organizations must step forward and coordinate a new telling of the salmon recovery story. Supporting them and the other members of the network of salmon recovery professionals and volunteers across Washington state is the aim of this plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- Message Framework
- Findings and Recommendations report