



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

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | MARCH 2014





INTRODUCTION

The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO), on behalf of the Council of Regions, contracted with Pyramid Communications to develop a communications plan to help the seven regional salmon recovery organizations, as well as other salmon recovery professionals and advocates, tell the story of salmon recovery and why it matters, more effectively. This document is a draft summary of key findings and recommendations toward that end, including:

- 1** Methodology
- 1** Inquiry
- 6** Recommendations and key audiences
- 11** Conclusion
- 12** Appendix
- 12 List of interviews
- 13 List of collateral reviewed

OVERARCHING GOAL

The state wide recovery and sustainability of salmon species and the habitats upon which they and we depend.

METHODOLOGY

The following summary identifies key findings and recommendations to guide development of a message framework and communications plan for the Council of Regions and Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. This summary is based on information provided to Pyramid Communications by salmon recovery leaders and others through the following:

- Communications workshop with the GSRO & Council of Regions communications working group
- 16 interviews with salmon recovery leaders, funders, and volunteers (see appendix)
- Review of websites, videos, recovery plans, reports, fact sheets, and other existing materials that presently tell the story of regional salmon recovery (see appendix)
- In-house Pyramid Communications expertise

INQUIRY

The inquiry phase of this project was framed by three questions:

- 1) We sought to clarify the ends toward which a communications plan should be constructed: What would success look like to the regional salmon recovery organization directors, primarily, but also to their partners in salmon recovery?
- 2) We also wanted to break those goals into more measurable outcomes toward which to target new strategies: How would we know we were making progress?
- 3) We asked what communications strategies and activities were currently in place: Who needs to know what? Which messages resonate across the regions?

The answers to these questions come primarily from our interviews (see appendix) and a workshop with the communications working group for this project assembled by GSRO, as well as our review of relevant communications collateral.



FINDINGS

Q1: IF THIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN IS SUCCESSFUL, WHAT WILL IT HAVE HELPED ENABLE YOU TO ACCOMPLISH?

- More Washingtonians would have a shared understanding of why regional salmon recovery is a priority
- Elected officials and others would know the importance of regional salmon recovery and continue to fund it
- Volunteers would remain enthusiastic, committed, and reliable
- Private landowners would continue to embrace and implement voluntary salmon habitat recovery, knowing they were delivering multiple benefits for their property and their community
- Professionals tasked with salmon recovery would speak with one voice and work toward commonly understood objectives
- Relationships between regional organizations, lead entities, and American Indian tribes would be positive and mutually supporting

Q2: WHAT WOULD NEED TO HAPPEN FOR THESE RESULTS TO BE REALIZED?

With this question, we identify some more measurable results toward which to target our communications strategies.

- Washingtonians would make the link between salmon recovery and our quality of life
- We would understand the connection between salmon and our identity as Northwesterners, Washingtonians
- Washingtonians would know in which salmon recovery region and watershed they live, and they'd understand the priority recovery actions for their region and watershed
- Washingtonians would believe it's possible to protect, recover, and restore salmon
- Elected decision makers would feel accountable to thousands of people across the state working toward the same goal: recovering healthy salmon populations and watersheds

- Washington State salmon recovery would remain grounded in local and regionally-led efforts by citizens
- County and other local governments would automatically consider salmon impacts when making decisions related to habitat—from growth management and shoreline master plans to permitting individual activities—and know who to call to get a good assessment of impact
- Federal agencies would be fulfilling their obligations to manage federal lands and implement federal laws in ways that help protect and recover wild salmon
- State agencies (primarily Washington’s Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, and Natural Resources) would want to integrate their activities at the regional scale more closely with regional salmon recovery organizations
- GSRO would have a closer working relationship with tribal governments and staff
- Tribal governments and staff would continue to work closely with regional organizations and lead entities to coordinate and implement priorities for salmon recovery

Q3: WHAT IS THE STATUS OF PRESENT COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS BY GSRO, RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE, AND REGIONS?

We wanted to examine how successful current communications efforts by GSRO, the seven regional recovery organizations, and the lead entities were toward achieving the key outcomes the practitioners had identified as necessary for success. The findings below are based on interviews about current communications activities and capacity, Pyramid’s review of communications materials, and our twenty-plus years of expertise working on salmon and communications in the Pacific Northwest.

- Most communications about salmon recovery provided by the GSRO and Council of Regions reads as if directed to NOAA for the purpose of demonstrating progress on implementing ESA salmon recovery plans. Messaging tends to:
 - Be technical or written in the language of ESA recovery plans (using phrases like, “limiting factors; riparian areas; ecosystem function” without definition)
 - Generally be limited to a description of the specifics of a particular project (the what, but not the why or the so-what)
 - Emphasize statistics (how many river miles restored) without baselines or context
- The media, and by extension general public, but also most non-professionals involved in salmon recovery find the salmon recovery story complex and confusing. Failure to provide context, connect dots, or frame a narrative lends to this.
 - If 1.6 million Chinook are returning to the Columbia River this year, aren’t we done? Why should it matter that they are hatchery Chinook? We need to tell the story of the necessity of wild stocks as brood for hatchery fish as well as critical to functional ecosystems
 - Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and GSRO do not generally receive media inquiries about salmon. These are likely going to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and individual American Indian tribes
 - General public education provided by GSRO is limited to press releases announcing Salmon Recovery Funding Board grants

- The GSRO video is engaging, high energy, and features lots of different faces intent on salmon recovery but is not yet reinforced by messaging or outreach/engagement activities
- The relationship between GSRO, RCO, and the regional recovery organizations/boards is not lent clarity by the current configuration of websites
 - The RCO has done the most to “brand” salmon recovery by incorporating the titles of GSRO and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board in its logo on some documents related to or used by those organizations
 - The GSRO is housed in the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office and has a page on the RCO website. The GSRO page serves as a good one-stop-shop for most relevant state-generated reports and policies related to salmon recovery. It provides additional links to:
 - *Region-specific landing pages and to the regions’ individual websites*
 - *The separate website established for the Governor’s State of the Salmon reports.*
 - A separate website hosts the Governor’s State of the Salmon in Watersheds reports, and it offers similar links and information about each of the regions. Recent standardization of reporting is helpful.
- Communications by regional organizations varies
 - The regional organizations each have their own websites. While the websites vary—some regional recovery boards are 501©3 organizations: one is a state agency; others are government entities or public-private partnerships—all appear to be directed primarily toward recovery project implementers and professional salmon managers or volunteers already familiar with this infrastructure of salmon recovery efforts
 - The seven regional salmon recovery organizations are required by the terms of their funding contracts with RCO to engage in communications and outreach activities, but activities are not defined, and they vary widely from region to region
- Capacity to develop and implement communications strategies is low
 - The SRFB is one of many multiple resource-related entities reliant on RCO for communications support; GSRO as an office within RCO is similarly dependent
 - None of the seven regional salmon recovery organizations has a full-time dedicated communications staff person, nor do the lead entities
- The lead entities have come together across regions to self-identify as “The Washington Salmon Coalition” (WSC) and this year have developed limited materials and messaging to enable them to speak as a group of many with a shared language and shared set of measures of success
 - The lead entities feel “The Washington Way” is one of their strongest messages with legislators
 - Language on lead entity printed materials tends to be statistic-heavy and inside-baseball
 - Participation in broader education efforts in Olympia is limited to a small group, including the WSC chair, primarily, though training and support has been offered to entice others

- Native American Tribes' contributions toward salmon recovery receive little mention on the GSRO or regional organization/board websites
 - As co-managers of the salmon resource, the state of Washington might be expected to reference that partnership through all of its agencies' communications
 - Tribes have membership on all of the regional recovery organization/boards; those relationships do not seem to be well understood by the general public

- There has never been a communications plan designed to integrate messaging across the state, among agencies, regional organizations, and lead entities, to generate a shared vocabulary, or to tie messaging and outreach activities to the pursuit and accomplishment of particular outcomes for salmon recovery
 - Because the messaging is so diverse, a legislator hearing from fifty salmon recovery advocates may be less impressed by the size and relative power of that constituency than overwhelmed by having to choose among fifty different requests for assistance
 - This is a relatively new need—we used to have the Chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations carrying this for the state at a time when the Congress was making line-item appropriations. We continue to have the leadership support of our senior U.S. Senator, but support is uncoordinated

- Current messages and communications activities among different professionals are not coordinated, consistent, or reinforcing
 - While most Native American tribes in Washington participate in the regional recovery organizations and boards and several are designated as lead entities, their additional communications activities and messaging may complicate these shared endeavors
 - Sport fishing groups are delivering additional sets of messages—from those who self identify as “wild fish advocates” who argue against hatchery fish of any stripe to those who advocate a significant increase in hatchery production and management of hatchery fish for the purpose of increased recreational fishing and its contributions to the economy
 - There is a need to tell the story of how state and tribal co-management of hatchery and harvest improvements is beginning to be integrated with habitat recovery and how it needs to continue



Pyramid offers these draft recommendations as a starting point for conversation. We based them on our understanding of the targets and outcomes our interviewees identified as critical, as well as on our review of communications activities and products currently in use by GSRO and the regional recovery organizations/boards and lead entities. We have also drawn on our collective experience working on communications and salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest for two decades.

EMPOWER REGIONAL SALMON RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS/BOARDS AND LEAD ENTITIES TO LEAD US THROUGH THIS PHASE OF SALMON RECOVERY

- While governors, Native American tribal chairs, ambassadors, congressional appropriators, U.S. senators, and county executives were out front and vocal when the task was to get in front of Endangered Species Act listings and develop our own plans for recovery, fifteen years into implementation it will be regional and local leaders who can best tell our shared story and motivate change
- To build a groundswell, educate a new generation, hold local decision-makers accountable for changes necessary to restore our watersheds to levels of health adequate to restore salmon and provide the benefits we expect, we need to support local and regional leaders to communicate the changes that will be made and implemented at the local, municipal, and county scale. They,
 - Embody the Washington Way
 - Provide our best forum for land use negotiations, involving county officials and private landowners
 - Can engage WDFW and Ecology to help them integrate their activities with local habitat recovery efforts for maximum benefit
 - Enjoy tribal membership and support

WE NEED TO UPDATE LOCAL PARTNERS ON REGIONAL SALMON RECOVERY STATUS

- Each region should consider the best way to convene locals and elected officials at that scale to re-frame the story of salmon recovery, share what's been accomplished to date, and be candid about what needs to be done

MESSAGING NEEDS TO CONNECT THE DOTS BETWEEN SALMON RECOVERY AND MULTIPLE BENEFITS TO OUR COMMUNITIES, OURSELVES

- We hike swim, boat, fish, enjoy the views, rely on the clean air and water that healthy rivers and streams, forests, wetlands, estuaries, and shorelines provide us and which are necessary as well for salmon
- River banks planted for salmon strengthen hillsides, allowing plants and trees to grow alongside streams provides more habitat for birds and insects important to farmers and filters pesticides or street pollutants when it rains. Streams reconnected to flood plains provide flood control; streams cooled by vegetation provide refuge from warm temperatures
- Stable streams increase property values, and the healthy rivers and forests necessary for salmon support robust economic contributions by fish and wildlife-dependent industries (fishing, recreation, tourism, hospitality), particularly benefitting rural communities

MESSAGING NEEDS TO REMIND US OF HOW CENTRAL THE FACT AND IMAGE OF HEALTHY SALMON IN OUR WATERSHEDS IS TO OUR IDENTITY AS NORTHWESTERNERS

- This isn't Kansas. We live in a place marked by big geography, dynamic ecological systems, charismatic animals, big mountains and rivers, ocean and rain forest and high desert. We live in rural areas, farming and fishing communities, and in vibrant urban centers. And salmon swim through all of them
- Most of the Pacific Northwest American Indian tribes are salmon tribes. Honoring, celebrating, and harvesting salmon shapes their religion, culture, and art and in turn shapes that of the entire region. Many of the images, colors, and forms we immediately recognize as "Pacific Northwest" come from salmon-dependent cultures

RECRUIT MESSENGERS WHO ARE NOT SALMON PROFESSIONALS AND HELP THEM TELL THEIR STORIES

- Salmon recovery stories can get stale. Fresh voices from landowners who have seen their property values increase as a result of habitat improvements on their lands; veterans groups who've embraced new fish and wildlife recreational opportunities; faith communities who have embraced salmon habitat as an act of stewardship; rotary members who volunteer for salmon, school kids whose salmon reports can be posted on-line—look for new faces and voices to tell the story

LOOK FOR WAYS TO MAKE SALMON RECOVERY A WAY FOR YOUR COMMUNITY TO CONNECT AND SHARE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE.

- "Salmon fatigue" may be more of an issue for professional salmon managers who've been at this since the beginning (15 years since first listings) than for the general public. Consider:
 - Hundreds of people fill a theater in downtown Tacoma to watch a salmon film series
 - Issaquah Salmon Days is a premiere tourist attraction—thousands of people shut down a city to visit a hatchery and a bit of restored stream to see and celebrate the return of salmon each fall. Find a way for real-life encounters with salmon for more people

REGIONAL LEADERS NEED TO BE ABLE TO SAY AND PRIORITIZE WHAT HAS YET TO BE ACCOMPLISHED—AS A COUNCIL

- Acknowledge what we've done—created this unique extraordinary infrastructure, created our own recovery plans with scientists and community members, government policy staff and private landowners, tribes, and the dozens of different stakeholder groups who see salmon through one particular lens or another. But we're not done. Make a fair statement about hatchery, harvest, pollution, development, and passage issues. Break it out by region—for Puget Sound and parts of southwest Washington, development is a huge pressure. Not so much in Upper Columbia. There, the issues are...On the coast, we...

TO ACHIEVE RECOVERY GOALS, WASHINGTON'S SALMON PROFESSIONALS MUST IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS INTERNALLY

- Consider a policy summit similar to what the Washington Environmental Council does once a year, where they pull together across the environmental community and identify what their priorities are. Consider a forum that would include Lead Entities, RFEs, SRF Board, RCO, and GSRO, WDFW
- Coming together around shared objectives and requests for funding will necessitate agreement on priorities and better integrate efforts; it will also provide up-to-date messaging
- The regional recovery organization boards are experiencing turnover—newly elected county commissioners, tribal chairs, etc. New participants bring fresh perspectives and opportunities to refine message

LEAD ENTITIES ARE CRITICAL OUTREACH ENGINES AND NEED SUPPORT

- The lead entities are a potentially significant unified statewide voice. We need lead entities to help regional recovery organizations build relationships across jurisdictions to make tough choices
- Rural areas can feel like they're carrying the burden for urban ones on salmon recovery; less so when they have a lead entity that speaks for them

FEDERAL AND STATE SOURCES OF FUNDING ARE STILL OUR MOST RELIABLE AND GENEROUS SOURCES; WE NEED TO MAINTAIN, STABILIZE, AND INCREASE THEM WHILE DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES

- We need to better explain the relationship between funding and recovery
 - This is an investment: We're preserving a way of life and building resilience for the future
 - Widespread support across every region of the state and every economic sector
- There's a perception that salmon habitat is well funded, and compared to other species protection, it is; but we are far short of what we need to accomplish what is recommended in our recovery plans
 - Senator Murray leads the fight to secure salmon-related federal funds, but the public doesn't really know about this effort, much less that the money is not guaranteed

- Every region should have the capacity to tell its story to appropriators and other funders, describe its piece of the statewide effort to safeguard our watersheds, preserve ecosystem function, recover endangered species, and build resilience for our communities in the face of a changing climate

DESPITE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND FOR SALMON, THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS INCONSISTENTLY EDUCATED ON THE BASICS OF CONSERVATION BIOLOGY, THE LINK BETWEEN SALMON AND THE HABITAT THAT SUSTAINS THEM AND US

- A consistent, repetitive approach to ecosystem education and conservation biology is needed; partner where possible with local educators
- Most of the messaging right now focuses on listed species—but even the salmonids not on ESA lists are under threat because all of our watersheds are under threat. We need to know what to manage for as much as what to manage against
- Help people understand: We want to restore fully functioning natural systems that will bring back salmon populations on their own
- We want to change behavior, give people ways to live differently on the land, make different choices—understand the connection between taking a bus to work and lessening the diesel runoff into a shoreline where juvenile salmon go to rest and feed
 - Consider a state-wide poll to fully assess the public’s knowledge and perspectives on salmon recovery, watershed health, ecosystem function, climate change resilience
 - Look for opportunities to build identity and ownership at the watershed scale: this is my watershed; where I live, where I get water to drink, water my garden, where I work, where I play
 - A message to the 60% of Washingtonians who have moved here from somewhere else: Washington isn’t trashed yet. You left somewhere else to come here; why?
- To live here you need to engage to preserve the quality of life that drew you here and defines this place
- Salmon recovery is an exercise of citizenship

COLLATERAL MATERIALS SHOULD BE VARIED BUT TARGETED TO SPECIFIC AUDIENCES

- People love seeing fish; video is an effective way to demonstrate before and after, connection, change, excitement; short video clips on line are a good investment and many people can now take them with their phones
- Coordinate messaging between print, web, social media, and video productions to reinforce
- Materials don’t need to be glossy or expensive; let the story and the examples do the work
- More specific recommendations on this topic will be provided in the Communications Plan

A STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE THE GENERAL PUBLIC WOULD BE VERY EXPENSIVE TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN; TARGET MESSAGING TO KEY DECISION MAKERS AND INFLUENCERS



PRIORITY AUDIENCES

Priority audiences are those groups or individuals with the authority and responsibility and capacity to make decisions that will directly benefit or hinder progress toward key objectives. Targeting outreach, relationship-building, education, and messaging to these audiences is the most effective use of limited resources. Tier One audiences with time and attention become key messengers.

TIER ONE

- The seven regional salmon recovery organizations (with tribal and county representatives)
- Lead Entities (Washington Salmon Coalition)
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- GSRO/RCO
- 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 and Congressional delegation
- WA Department of Ecology; DNR; and other state agencies impacting salmon recovery
- Fishing and other recreational organizations
- Local media

TIER THREE

- Private Landowners
- Federal agencies, primarily NOAA, USFS, USFWS, EPA, and Army COE
- Potential partners
- Civic and community groups, eg: Rotary, faith, veterans, school



CONCLUSION

This findings and recommendations report will serve as the basis for development of a communications plan and message framework. This suite of documents is designed to assist, primarily, the seven regional salmon recovery organizations. It should also serve the other members of Washington's salmon recovery network, chiefly, the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, the Washington Salmon Coalition (Lead Entities), and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

This project is guided by a Communications Working Group assembled by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office,

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- Derek Van Marter, *Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board*
- Nancy Biery, *Salmon Recovery Funding Board*
- Darcy Batura, *Washington Salmon Coalition*
- Alicia Lawver, *Puget Sound Partnership*
- Susan Zemek, *Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office*
- Jennifer Quan, *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*

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- Jeanette Dorner, *Puget Sound Partnership, Salmon Program Manager*
- Miles Batchelder, *Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership*
- Scott Brewer, *Hood Canal Coordinating Council*
- Steve Martin, *Snake River Recovery Board*

INTERVIEWS

Brian Abbott, Executive Coordinator, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office

Phil Anderson, Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Miles Batchelder, Executive Director, Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership

Darcy Batura, Chair, Washington Salmon Coalition

Nancy Biery, member, Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Jeff Breckel, Executive Director, Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

Scott Brewer, Executive Director, Hood Canal Coordinating Council

Alex Conley, Executive Director, Middle Columbia (Yakima Basin) Salmon Recovery Board

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Jennifer Quan, Lands Division Manager, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

Derek Van Marter, Executive Director, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

Jacques White, Executive Director, Long Live the Kings

James White, Program Manager, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board Program

Susan Zemek, Communications Director, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office

REFERENCE MATERIALS

WEBSITES

- Recreation and Conservation Office (including GSRO and Regional Organization landing pages)
- State of the Salmon Report
- 7 Regional organizations
 - Hood Canal Coordinating Council website <<http://hccc.wa.gov>>
 - Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board website <<http://www.lcfrb.gen.wa.us>>
 - Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board website <<http://www.ybfwrp.org>>
 - Puget Sound Partnership website <<http://www.psp.wa.gov>>
 - Snake River Salmon Recovery website <<http://snakeriverboard.org/wpi/>>
 - Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board website <<http://www.ucsrp.com>>
 - Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership website <<http://www.wcssp.org>>

RECOVERY PLANS:

- Lake Ozette (coast region) Sockeye Recovery Plan
- Lower Columbia River Bull Trout, Chinook, Chum, Coho, and Steelhead Recovery Plan
- Middle Columbia River Bull Trout and Steelhead Recovery Plan
- Upper Columbia River Bull Trout, Chinook, and Steelhead Recovery Plan
- Hood Canal Summer Chum Recovery Plan
- Puget Sound Chinook Recovery Plan
- Snake River Steelhead

OTHER MATERIALS:

- State of Salmon in Watersheds 2012 report
- State of Salmon: Restoring a Washington Icon video
- Millie Judge report to NOAA on Implementation of Puget Sound Chinook Recovery Plan
- Funding for Salmon Recovery in Washington State, Dennis Canty report
- The Washington Way 2006 report
- Extinction is Not an Option 1999 report
- Lead Entity Directory
- Various agency, regional and lead entity briefing documents, fact sheets, hand outs

PREPARED BY PYRAMID COMMUNICATIONS

