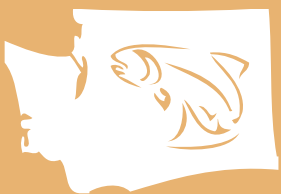




Washington Salmon Coalition

Advocacy Handbook

A Guide for Communicating with Lawmakers



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WASHINGTON SALMON COALITION ADVOCACY HANDBOOK

PREAMBLE

Communicating with state legislators and other elected officials is important to maintain and increase policy and funding support for salmon recovery. Regular outreach to legislators educates them about the importance of salmon recovery and the ongoing efforts in local watersheds. There is much that salmon recovery leaders can do within their existing capacity, especially making sure their elected representatives and staffs are informed about the successes of the salmon recovery effort.

The information that follows is intended to help your organization, members of your board of directors, and your volunteers think differently about their advocacy roles, so they can be more effective voices for salmon and habitat recovery. This guide is also intended to allay fears about what is appropriate and/or legal legislative outreach activity. Since your organization is paid from public funds you cannot lobby; however, you can provide information that helps our elected officials to effectively lead. It's part of the job.

“Since your organization is paid from public funds you cannot lobby; however, you can provide information that helps our elected officials to effectively lead.”

WASHINGTON STATE BUDGET 101

“BUDGET-OLGY”: BIENNIAL BUDGET PROCESS

Many of the Washington State Coalition (WSC) salmon recovery priorities involve an element of funding. Understanding the budget process and terms will help Lead Entities be clear in their communications about these priorities. Both the federal government (via NOAA) and Washington State allocate funds to salmon recovery. A description of the federal Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) can be found in the Lead Entity Guidance Manual. The Washington State legislature appropriates funds through their biennial process through budgets to the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and other state agencies. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) publishes a guide to the Washington State Budget Process that further describes the process and budget details. Much of the content that follows is from the OFM 2014 “A Guide to the Washington State Budget Process”.

“Understanding the budget process and terms will help Lead Entities be clear in their communications about these priorities.”

BIENNIAL BUDGET SCHEDULE

Each biennium the legislature enacts budgets that take effect July 1 of each odd-numbered year (see Table 1. for the biennial budget process). The approved budget can be modified in “off” years through revisions referred to as a supplemental budget.

Table 1. The process for preparing and approving a biennial budget includes the following:

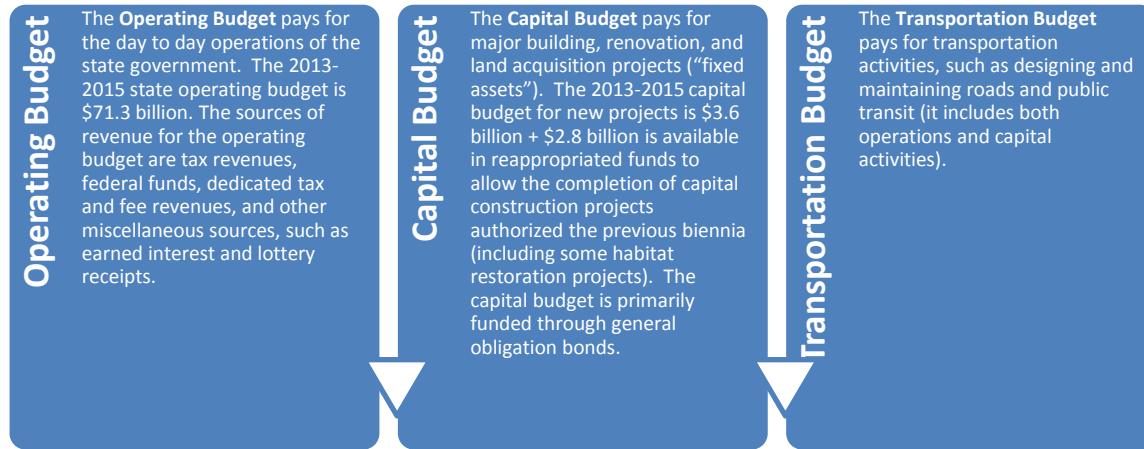
BIENNIAL BUDGET SCHEDULE	
JUNE	Office of Financial Management (OFM) issues budget instructions to state agencies
SEPTEMBER	Agencies submit budget requests, coordinated by OFM
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER	OFM review and Governor’s decisions
DECEMBER	Governor proposes budget to legislature
JANUARY	Legislature convenes
APRIL/MAY	Legislature passes budget
MAY/JUNE	Governor signs budget
JULY 1ST	New budget takes effect

Note: Once the Governor’s budget is published, state agencies must restrict their communications to the Governor’s, rather than their proposed, budget. Private citizens may still advocate for amendments to the Governor’s budget (additions or deletions).

BUDGET DIFFERENCES

The legislature must also approve the use of federal funding by state agencies such as the annual allocation of Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Funds. The state budget is divided into seven categories of services. Natural Resources include expenditures for environmental protection and restoration, including salmon recovery. Natural Resources made up 2.3% of the budget in 2013-2015. There are three state budgets that serve different functions and have different revenue sources (Figure 1). The WSC priorities include both the operating budget (AKA general fund) and the capital budget.

Figure 1. Table of the three state budgets and the functions they serve.



REAL WORLD EXAMPLE

When comparing the state budget to your own finances, consider that the Operating Budget is like your checking account with deposits coming in (revenues) and expenditures going out (expenses). The Capital Budget is more like your home equity loan, where you are given money up front to pay for a large expense and over time you must pay back the cost plus interest over time. This becomes a debit of the state, and constitution limits the amount of state general obligation debt that may be incurred. Because these are general obligation bonds (bonds whose repayment is guaranteed by the “full faith and credit” of the state), these funds must be used to acquire or improve an “asset” (value of ownership that can be converted to cash). In other words, you should not pay your grocery bill with your home equity loan and the State should not use bonds to pay for non-asset expenses like staffing.

DO’S AND DON’TS OF LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH & MESSAGING

AS LEAD ENTITY COORDINATORS USING GENERAL FUND DOLLARS, WE MAY:

- **Educate** on various issues and their impact.
- **Testify** before a legislative committee and provide information about potential impact of the legislation.
- **Meet with a non-legislative group**, such as a school board, the state board of health, a chamber of commerce, a civic club, police chief, a trade association, etc.
- **Host** or attend appreciation luncheons, breakfasts, legislative wrap-up sessions and the like.
- **Sponsor a candidates' forum**, as long as you do not endorse a candidate or take a position on an issue to be voted on, such as a referendum or constitutional amendment.
- **Inform legislators** about the results of nonpartisan analysis, study or research.
- Inform collaborative members about legislation.

- **Write a letter** that provides general education on an issue, but does not include a call to action on specific legislation.
- **Answer** fully and directly if asked about a specific bill by an elected representative or their staff.

AS LEAD ENTITY COORDINATORS, **WE MAY NOT:**

- **Participate or intervene in, directly or indirectly, any political campaign** on behalf of any candidate for public office. This includes both partisan and non-partisan races.
- **Support, oppose or endorse, in any way, any candidate** who is running for a public office.
- **Ask a legislator to vote** for or against a particular bill.
- Ask a collaborative member to contact their legislator and **ask them to vote for or against** a particular bill.
- Send a letter to legislators and **ask them to veto a bill**.

EDUCATION VS ADVOCACY VS LOBBYING:

Education includes information such as a program description, goals, current budget, people served, accomplishments and impacts, etc. Anyone can educate decision-makers and citizens about the importance of policies, legislative or budget issues.

Advocacy is a catch-all term covering many forms of “speaking up.” Community education, giving testimony at a public hearing, talking about a program or issue you believe in, joining a lawsuit to force land use reforms are all forms of advocacy.

Lobbying occurs when you support or oppose a specific candidate or elected official or a specific piece of legislation (including budgets and appropriations bills).

- Lobbying is a one kind of advocacy, and a very specific one: communication with elected officials or their staff that is intended to influence specific legislation. It refers to “specific legislation” AND reflects a view on that legislation.

EDUCATION: Does not make value judgments or seek legislative action.

ADVOCATING: Conveys a value in a general sense. “Clean air is good, and we should protect the environment.”

LOBBYING: Makes a value judgment and does seek specific legislative action.

EXAMPLE:

Let's say a WA State Budget bill is proposed that allocates \$15 million towards SRFB projects instead of the \$40 million requested. If you, or your collaborative, meets with your legislator to talk about salmon recovery funding, you are lobbying if you say, "Don't vote for the bill." You are not lobbying if you say, "We are concerned about the potential impact of reduced funding on the effective and timely implementation of recovery plans.”

ANOTHER EXAMPLE:

If you talk to your State Senator about large wood and the role it plays in habitat restoration, and mention a wood project in their area that has been effective, that is advocacy. If you say “that is why we want you to vote for HB 1234” the conversation has become lobbying.

DEFINITIONS: DIRECT LOBBYING VS. GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

Lobbying comes in two forms: **DIRECT** and **GRASSROOTS**.

DIRECT LOBBYING can be either:

- Communicating your views on pending legislation to an elected official or a member of their staff; or,
- If you are part of a membership organization, asking your group’s members to contact their legislators about a pending budget or bill (Urging a position on ballot initiatives and referenda is also included here because in these cases the voters are the ones casting the vote for or against a specific piece of legislation so urging the voters to vote a particular way is the same as urging a position when speaking with an elected official.)

“While paid from public funds, you cannot lobby, but, you can provide information to help elected officials understand how decisions could impact salmon recovery efforts.”

GRASSROOTS LOBBYING is a little different. It covers attempts to influence specific legislation by encouraging the general public to express a view to their legislators. It counts as grassroots lobbying if it:

- Refers to specific legislation;
- Reflects a view on that legislation; and
- Encourages readers/listeners to take lobbying action with respect to that legislation.

That last item, the “call to action,” would either:

- Urge contact with an elected official
- Give the elected officials’/staffs’ address, phone, ways to contact;
- Include a postcard or petition, or
- Identify legislator(s) as opposed or undecided, as being the reader’s legislator, or a member of a key committee dealing with the legislation.

EXAMPLE:

TEST - Advocacy or Lobbying? House Bill 1234 would provide protection for private landowners from the downstream impacts of Large Woody Debris projects. Potential actions,

1. Call your representative and ask them to vote for the bill = **lobbying**.
2. Tell coalition members that this bill exists and encourage them to take action = **grassroots lobbying**.
3. Tell coalition members and other partners that this bill exists = **advocacy**.

4. Tell state and local officials how the bill would impact the implementation of salmon recovery = **advocacy.**

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETINGS

Check your local representative’s website to see what is important to them. Think about logical ways to align our work with their top priorities. Know what legislative district you reside in and familiarize yourself with any current legislation. Send a letter to your senator or repetitive requesting a meeting (see sample letter below).

SAMPLE LANGUAGE TO REQUEST A MEETING:

Dear Senator/Representative _____,

On behalf of the [Your Organization], I would like to request a meeting with you on January 22 to discuss the status of our efforts to restore, enhance, and protect salmon and their habitats in your district. Attending the meeting will be:

- [Name, Title, Affiliation]
- [Name, Title, Affiliation]
- [Name, Title, Affiliation]

As you may know, Lead Entities are the backbone for locally-based recovery efforts, bringing together Tribes, federal and state agencies, local governments, citizens, non-profits, business, and technical experts to make local decisions. We coordinate projects that represent an investment in local and rural economic development through family-wage job creation and retention. Your constituents benefit from our approach to salmon recovery as it keeps decisions rooted in our communities and not in the hands of the Federal government.

Please contact me at either XXX-XXX-XXXX or [email address] to confirm our appointment. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss our work and how we can help you stay on top of emerging salmon recovery issues as you work with your colleagues on statewide policies and legislation.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title, Affiliation]

SAMPLE PREP CARD FOR YOUR MEETING:

When you are able to set up a meeting with a legislator, don’t worry, you have all the tools and information you need! Plus, you will only have a very short time to meet – by the time you introduce yourself, share you handouts, let your Citizen’s talk (if you have the opportunity to bring them along), and hit on a few local projects, you’ll be done before

you realize it. The key and take home message for your meeting is that you are making face-to-face contact and that you are a well-connected person in your watershed that the legislator or their staff can contact about salmon habitat recovery or other watershed related topics.

❖ **Print your Grab and Go: Legislative Outreach Information Card (See Appendix B)**

GUIDANCE ON LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

GUIDANCE ON LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH FROM THE 2011 SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING REPORT:

In the longer term, salmon recovery leaders should consider building alliances with other conservation leaders to advance salmon recovery needs. The successes achieved by the Environmental Priorities Coalition and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition illustrate the benefits of powerful alliances. Efforts to secure an endorsement for salmon funding needs in the annual environmental priorities process would be a good first step in building a stronger coalition behind salmon recovery.

Use the existing capacity among salmon recovery lead entities, regional recovery groups, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, and other state agency partners to maintain existing federal and state fund sources by:

- Keeping their state and federal **elected officials and staff informed** on salmon recovery activities and successes in their areas.
- **Coordinating briefings** and preparation of educational materials for use with state and federal elected officials.
- **Using the existing capacity** of jurisdictions and organizations involved in lead entity and regional recovery organizations to support salmon recovery funding.
- **Integrating these responsibilities into the deliverables** in GSRO contracts to support lead entities and regional recovery groups.

The Washington Salmon Coalition and Council of Regions should upgrade their capacity to participate in state and federal budget processes by:

- **Tracking legislation and budget actions** during legislative and Congressional budget processes.
- Coordinating the preparation of **informational materials** for state and federal elected officials during legislative and Congressional budget processes.
- **Developing alliances** between the salmon recovery community and other environmental coalitions, including the Environmental Priorities Coalition and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition.
- **Seeking endorsement** for salmon funding needs in the annual budget priorities of the Environmental Priorities Coalition.
- Considering **retaining a coordinator** to assist with these efforts.

GENERAL GUIDANCE ON THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS FROM THE STATE'S WEBSITE:

[HTTP://WWW.LEG.WA.GOV/PAGES/HOME.ASPX](http://www.leg.wa.gov/pages/home.aspx)

Every year the Legislature meets to engage in the process of public decision making. The objective is to reach consensus on a wide range of issues affecting every citizen and the future prosperity of Washington State. The process involves cooperation to make critical decisions in everyone's best interests. We have chosen representatives to carry out the difficult task of determining which laws and policies will best serve these interests. However, to effectively

perform their job, legislators rely heavily on input from many different sources. They receive a great deal of technical information from their staffs, state agency personnel and professional lobbyists. Yet, much of what they actually decide depends on the views, interests and preferences of the citizens who elect them. This is precisely how the legislative process was designed to work. It is based on a close, open and positive relationship between elected officials and the citizens whom they represent. You can actively participate in the legislative process in a variety of ways. Select the method that allows the fullest expression of your personal interest and commitment, but follow some basic steps.

KNOW HOW THE PROCESS WORKS

For your individual participation to be most effective, a basic understanding of the whole legislative picture is essential. If there is something you do not understand about the process, ask someone who can provide an answer. Here are some resources:

- Call the Legislative Information Center at 360.786.7573.
- Call your legislator's office.
- Read the [How a Bill Becomes](#) a Law page (or watch [I'm Just a Bill from Schoolhouse Rock](#)).
- Learn [how to read](#) a bill.
- See the OFM-published "[A Guide to the Washington State Budget Process](#)" (latest published June 2014).
- Read the [Legislative Overview](#) page.
- Listen to or watch broadcasts of committee hearings to see how they are conducted. All committee hearings are broadcast live in streaming audio over our internet website and many hearings are televised live on [TVW](#).

MAKE YOURSELF THE EXPERT

Before you address an issue, do some homework. Know the whole issue: who it affects, what others feel about it, how it will influence future trends, and any other information you are able to gather. Thorough research allows you to present your viewpoint with confidence and credibility, and, combined with your personal experience, is the most effective information you can provide.

Remember, the **Legislative Process is set up to answer 3 questions:**

- 1) Is the bill a good idea? (Answered in Policy Committees)
- 2) Is the bill a good use for Tax dollars? (Answered in Appropriations/Ways & Means Committees)
- 3) Can the bill win support of 51% of voters? (Answered on House & Senate Floors)

While paid from public funds, you cannot lobby, but, you can help provide information to determine the answers to all three. It's part of the job.

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

To make a difference in the legislative process, you must develop a relationship with your legislators and their staffs. Keep in mind that you can work effectively with someone, regardless of the personal opinions either of you may hold. Although you are unlikely to agree on every issue, you can still build a positive relationship in the long run.

Personal Visit: Call the office, introduce yourself, tell the legislator or the legislative assistant what you would like to discuss, and make an appointment for a visit. Use the [Member Rosters](#) to find the phone numbers. If you plan a visit, be prepared for your discussion. Know what you want to say, be factual, and make your comments as brief and specific as you can. If you do not know something, be willing to admit it and offer to follow up with more information later, which is also an avenue for further discussion.

GET TO KNOW LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Legislators rely heavily on professional staff for information gathering and analysis. You can play an equally supportive role by making sure staff is aware of the perspective your personal knowledge and experience can provide. Legislative staff works on a wide range of issues. They always appreciate new sources of clear and accurate information, and they can provide you with the most current information they have.

NETWORK WITH OTHER CITIZENS

Much of the information you need to be effective in the legislative process can be obtained from other concerned and active citizens. Most interest areas are represented by informal citizen groups, if not formal membership organizations. Find out whether there are groups that share your concerns and establish a network. A group of concerned citizens can be much more effective working together, rather than as separate individuals trying to accomplish the same goal.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE “OFF SEASON”

Use opportunities in the interim year in the biennial legislative budget cycle to build relationships with legislators and their staff, and get them in the field, and meet in a coffee shop.

Ideas for outreach in the interim:

- Tour of recently completed projects.
- Tour of emerging issues in salmon recovery.
- Attend our local salmon recovery conference.
- Any other relevant opportunity.

AFTER YOUR MEETINGS: CONTINUE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Local and regional partners should seize the opportunity to strongly advocate to the legislature for enthusiastic and energetic leadership from the state in salmon recovery. Below are some ideas to continue to build relationships after your meetings:

- **Attend a Town Hall Meeting.** Most legislators conduct periodic town hall meetings at various locations in their district. This is a good opportunity to meet your legislator and to express your views and concerns in an informal setting.
- **Write a letter.** Express your views and request the member's attention through the mail. Make your letters brief, to the point, clear, and formal. Include your mailing address and phone number so the legislator knows where to respond. Use the [Member Rosters](#) to find the mailing addresses.
- **Send an e-mail message.** Like letters, e-mails should be brief, to the point, clear, and formal. Include your name and mailing address, as well as your e-mail address, and let the legislator know how you'd prefer to be contacted. Use the [Member E-mail Address](#) list to find the e-mail addresses for legislators.

- **Call the toll-free Legislative Hotline.** You can call the toll-free Hotline at **1.800.562.6000** to leave a message on any issue.
- **Testify before a committee.** Make your views and positions known by testifying before a committee that is having public hearings on an issue or bill.

APPENDIX A: Washington Salmon Coalition Messaging

WASHINGTON SALMON COALITION MESSAGING

TARGETED FEDERAL PRIORITIES

PACIFIC COASTAL SALMON RECOVERY FUND

The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) was established by Congress in 2000 to reverse the declines of Pacific salmon and steelhead and support salmon recovery efforts in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, and Alaska. This program is essential to preventing the extinction of the 28 listed salmon and steelhead species on the West Coast and is the primary source of funds for habitat project implementation in Washington. Funding for each of the eligible states is distributed through a competitive grant process administered by NOAA Fisheries.

SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

- A \$65 million Federal appropriation for PCSRF provides status quo funding for salmon recovery throughout the recovery area. An appropriation less than \$65 million will reduce the amount available for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant round and lead entity capacity funding.

TARGETED STATE PRIORITIES

LEAD ENTITY FUNCTIONALITY

There are 25 lead entities in Washington State, which guide the implementation of regional salmon recovery plans and are integral to empowering local communities' participation in salmon recovery. Lead entities are responsible for recruiting, reviewing, and prioritizing habitat protection and restoration projects funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and ensure that projects have local support, are scientifically-sound, and are fiscally responsible.

Established by law (RCW 77.85), lead entities consist of:

- A lead entity coordinator (staff person)
- A committee of local, technical experts (technical committee)
- A committee of local citizens representing a variety of interests (citizen committee)
- A lead entity grant administrator (the fiscal agent)

All state agencies were asked to submit budget options that reduce general fund expenses by 15% for the 2015 – 2017 biennium. This reduction to RCO's budget would lower lead entity funding by \$149,287.

SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

- A 15% reduction to RCO's general fund allocation will reduce capacity funds provided to lead entities. Maintaining lead entities' current levels of service requires maintaining the level of operating funding appropriated for the 2013 – 2015 biennium (\$907,000).

STATE MATCHING FUNDS FOR PCSRF

A significant portion of the funding necessary for salmon recovery in Washington is derived from the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF), which requires matching funds of at least 33 percent from the state. State bond funds appropriated for the SRFB grant program are used for this match and, on occasion, a portion of the bonds appropriated for the PSAR and FFFPP programs.

SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

- On a biennial basis, \$40 million in general obligation bonds in the state capital budget for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant program provides the necessary PCSRF match to allow for continued protection and restoration of critical salmon habitat. Matching funds less than this amount threaten the availability of federal funds for the SRFB grant round.

STATE FUNDING FOR THE LEAD ENTITY PROGRAM

From 2000 – 2006, the state and federal government (through PCSRF) equally shared the cost of the lead entity program. Beginning in 2007, Washington reduced support for the lead entity program from the state’s general fund by \$711,771 (nearly 50%). This reduction has been maintained since that time. In response, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board continues to shift a portion of federal PCSRF funds away from projects to make up for the loss in capacity funding and to support the legislatively-established framework for salmon recovery coordination in Washington. Doing so puts Washington at a competitive disadvantage relative to other states competing for PCSRF funds.

SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

- The addition of \$770,000 in state general funds to RCO’s budget will rebalance the state/federal funding share for lead entities, resulting in a \$1.67 million state match to the federal share. Restoring state funding for the lead entity program will enhance the state’s competitiveness for federal PCSRF funds and will provide the capacity to bolster efforts within communities to develop priority projects and advance and report on implementation.

MISCELLANEOUS PRIORITIES, AKA THINGS THAT WOULD BE AWESOME

Aside from the targeted priorities listed above, several objectives are important and relevant to the work of WSC and individual lead entities but are not directly tied to current legislative requests. These include:

- Additional capital funding to support high priority, implementation-ready habitat projects.
- Exploring the creation of new funding authorities to provide sustained resources for large, complex projects involving a phased approach to planning, design, implementation, and maintenance.
- Funding for monitoring and evaluating our actions, which cannot be funded with existing resources but is necessary to understand whether recovery actions are effective.

APPENDIX B: Grab and Go, Legislative Outreach Information Card

GRAB & GO: LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH INFORMATION CARD

PREPARATION:

1. **BE PREPARED:** Print this page to help you plan. Be well prepared for your discussions.
2. **RESEARCH:** Check your local representative's website to see what is important to them.
3. Know what **LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT** you reside in and familiarize yourself with any current legislation.

MEETING:

1. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF** (and Citizen members or others if they are present). Give a brief introduction to describe a Lead Entity, your purpose, and the watershed you represent. Focus on the objectives of salmon recovery; explain the goals of the program and how your organization helps to reach those goals.
2. Provide **THANKS** for the work they have already done.
3. Focus on **CURRENT LEGISLATION** and reserve any non-legislation related meetings, tours, etc. for the interim.
4. **MAKE IT LOCAL:** provide local project data, impact, need, etc.
5. **QUESTIONS:** Ask them how you can help *them*. (see "WSC Messaging" below for suggestions). Make sure to ask if they have any questions, answer the best you can – if you don't have a good answer, just say that you will follow up with them (and do).
6. **AVOID JARGON:** use language they know.
7. **DON'T DEBATE** or argue with your legislator when you disagree. Simply thank the member for the time spent with you and express a desire for further discussion.
8. **YOU ARE A RESOURCE:** Make sure that you let the Legislator know the purpose of your meeting is to make contact for future communication and that you are a resource available for them or their staff – this is the key take-home message you hope to leave.
9. **HANDOUT MATERIALS:** Provide briefing materials as a part of your discussion or as a leave behind.
 - Provide the Legislator with the **WSC Restoration Works Document** (Appendix B) and hit on a few of the key points of your choosing – this information has resonated with Legislators on both sides of the aisle because it highlights the locally based Washington Way approach to salmon habitat recovery that we Lead Entities hang our hat on.
 - Provide the Legislator with your **two-pager from the Lead Entity Directory** – you can choose to highlight whatever you want on these pages, the interest groups your LE includes, or your contact information for future use.
 - Provide the Legislator with your **local information handout** (if you've created one). This can be any additional information you'd like to highlight.
 - Make sure you leave the Legislator with your **business card or contact information**.
10. **FOLLOW-UP:** Make letters and e-mail formal, specific, and concise. Keep your follow up information simple and targeted towards the specific information they have requested – do not overwhelm them. Make sure you understand exactly what additional info is asked for, and provide it promptly along with your thanks for their time.