

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Salmon, steelhead, and bull trout populations within the Columbia River Basin have suffered declines due to a variety of causes. Government agencies, tribal governments, environmental organizations, fishing interests, local entities, and the public at large agree that halting the decline and, if possible, reversing it is important to the social, cultural, economic, and environmental well-being of the region. Recovery plans are a vital part of the effort to combat the decline of salmon; the goal of the plans is to produce a guide for the long-term implementation of actions designed to restore populations as closely as practicable to a healthy state.

1.1 PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

Salmon and other salmonids are an important part of the life and economy of the Pacific Northwest. Since the 19th century, salmon populations have declined within the Columbia River Basin. Over-harvesting, as well as loss of habitat due to agricultural activities, logging, urbanization, and construction of dams, have reduced populations of salmonids to extremely low levels in some parts of Washington, resulting in some populations being listed as threatened or endangered under the federal and state endangered species acts. It became obvious that something must be done if these populations were to be saved from extinction.

Recovery planning for salmon is defined by the Salmon Recovery Act of 1998 (RCW 77.85) as “a state plan developed in response to a proposed or actual listing under the federal endangered species act that addresses limiting factors including, but not limited to harvest, hatchery, hydropower, habitat, and other factors of decline.” In addition to aiding in the recovery of salmon populations within the state, Washington’s goal in embarking upon the recovery planning effort was to retain responsibility for managing the state’s resources rather than relying on the federal government to do so. The recovery planning process is designed to provide an opportunity to incorporate best available scientific information with local enhancement efforts. The objective in adopting this approach is a plan, capable of being implemented, that can be used to remove currently listed species from the threatened or endangered species designation and maintain healthy, viable, sustainable, and harvestable populations of those species.

In 1999, the document “Extinction is Not an Option—a Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon” was released by the Washington Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office. This document provides overall guidance for addressing the myriad aspects of salmonid recovery including agriculture, forestry, land use, water quality and quantity, fish passage, harvest, artificial production (hatcheries), and hydroelectric dams. It “stresses the importance of a strong scientific foundation, a collaborative and open process, and a long-term adaptive management strategy based on a comprehensive monitoring of salmon recovery and watershed health.”

To guide regional groups entering into salmonid recovery planning, “An Outline for Salmon Recovery Plans” was developed by the State of Washington, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NWPPCC), and other local and regional organizations. This document is based on the earlier strategy document and presents more details on what should be included in a recovery plan. It was endorsed by the Governor’s Office of the State of Washington and approved by NMFS in December 2003.

The outline establishes the approach to salmon recovery planning and identifies the important components of a plan. Specifically, the plan must include:

- Scientific assessments of the status of species and their habitats.
- Factors for decline, threats to viability, and/or factors limiting recovery of the species, and factors supporting current populations.
- Measurable goals that describe recovery for the listed species against which the success of actions will be measured.
- Actions and commitments for habitat, harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower necessary to reduce or eliminate the limiting factors and recover fish populations.
- Implementation components such as time lines, funding, identification of responsible parties and authorities, research needs, monitoring plans, and methods of evaluating actions and adapting the plan.

NMFS has the ultimate responsibility to decide if actions implemented by the salmon recovery regions have successfully restored salmonid populations to the point where they can be de-listed. In order to guide salmon recovery programs, NMFS established Technical Review Teams (TRT) for the Pacific Northwest and northern California. The Snake River Salmon Recovery Region falls into NMFS' Interior Columbia region. The TRTs are to act as advisors for groups entering into salmon recovery planning. In addition, they are tasked with:

- Identification of population/ESU delisting criteria.
- Characterization of habitat and fish productivity relationships.
- Identification of factors for decline and limiting factors.
- Identification of early factors for recovery.
- Identification of research, monitoring, and evaluation needs.

The findings arrived at by the Interior Columbia TRT (ICTRT) will inform the regional recovery plans. Organizations involved in the ICTRT include the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), NMFS, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Columbia Inter-tribal Fish Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), University of Montana, and the University of Washington.

USFWS has a separate process for guiding recovery programs for bull trout. For bull trout, the USFWS has the ultimate responsibility to determine when this species has been successfully restored to the point where bull trout can be delisted.

1.2 LEAD ENTITY AND PARTICIPANTS

1.2.1 Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

To aid in salmon recovery planning, the state was divided into regions: Snake River, Northeast Washington, Upper Columbia Basin, Middle Columbia Basin, Lower Columbia River, Puget Sound, and the Washington Coast (Figure 1-1). The planning effort in each region is funded by Washington's Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) established by the Salmon Recovery Act. Lead Entities were organized as precursors to regional recovery organizations and were locally based committees reliant upon citizen volunteers to provide a framework for restoration of salmon habitat.

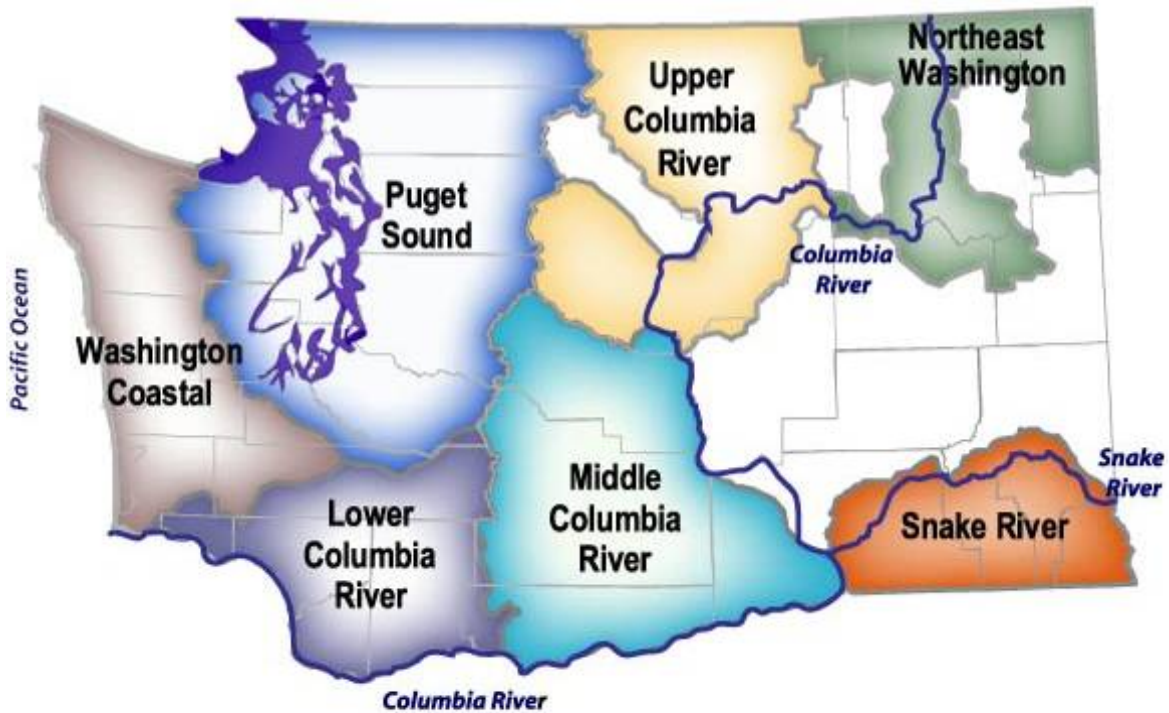


Figure 1-1 State of Washington Salmon Recovery Regions

For the Snake River region, the Lead Entity is the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (SRSRB). The SRSRB comprises government and tribal representatives, landowners, and private citizens. Table 1-1 shows the list of voting SRSRB members.

Table 1-1 Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

Constituency	Affiliation
Landowner	Garfield County
Landowner	Columbia County
Irrigation District	Walla Walla County
Citizen	Garfield County
Landowner	Asotin County
Citizen	Asotin County
Tribal Representative	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Commissioner	Columbia County
Commissioner	Garfield County
County Representative	Walla Walla County
Commissioner	Asotin County
Citizen	Columbia County
Citizen	Walla Walla County
Citizen	Whitman County
Commissioner	Whitman County

The SRSRB was formed in 2002 after invitations were submitted to more than 150 individuals, organizations, tribes, and government bodies. The invitation was followed by presentations by the state Recovery Planning project manager to better acquaint potential members with the responsibilities and goals of salmon recovery planning.

The Snake River Salmon Recovery Board defined its mission as protection and restoration of salmon habitat, consistent with the recovery plan, for current and future generations. The following recovery priorities were established by the SRSRB.

- Habitat Protection: protect existing high-quality salmonid habitat
 - Recognize and support cooperative, voluntary habitat protection activities and projects
 - Protect key habitat via public education, outreach, and voluntary activities
 - Protect key habitat via market-oriented conservation easements, banking, and/or lease
 - Protect key habitat via purchase by government entities or non-profit land trusts
- Habitat Restoration: restore degraded salmon habitat
 - Continue promoting cooperative, voluntary landowner involvement in habitat restoration activities
 - Restore important habitat consistent with, but not limited to, recommendations in the SRSRB's Recovery Strategy, Washington Conservation Commission Limiting Factors Analysis, Guidance on Watershed Assessment for Salmon, and Subbasin Summaries
 - Restore important habitat via public education and involvement activities
 - Encourage restoration of important habitat via cost-share funded restoration project
- Public Support/Involvement: Facilitate widespread support for salmonid habitat protection and restoration activities among taxpayers, landowners, civic groups, and businesses
 - Create general public awareness that public funds are being spent effectively and strategically
 - Create interest in public and private habitat protection and restoration assistance from owners of important habitat
 - Create interest among civic groups and businesses to be involved with protection and restoration efforts

In addition, all SRSRB actions “occur with an emphasis on (1) being proactive rather than reactive, (2) providing strategic leadership, (3) looking to the future rather than the past, (4) encouraging diversity in viewpoints, and (5) making collective rather than individual decisions” (Parametrix 2003).

The priorities will guide the development of the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan. The plan will become the implementing mechanism for salmon, steelhead, and bull trout recovery efforts in the region following its submittal and funding by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

1.2.2 Committees and Subcommittees

The SRSRB operates through several committees including the Budget Committee and the Lead Entity Project Review and Ranking Committee. In addition, the SRSRB has appointed a Regional Technical Team (RTT) to review and provide input to the recovery effort from the technical and scientific standpoints. Figure 1-2 shows the relationship of the SRSRB and various committees. The Executive Committee is responsible for developing broad policy recommendations, guidance, and budgets. These recommendations are referred to the full SRSRB for consideration.

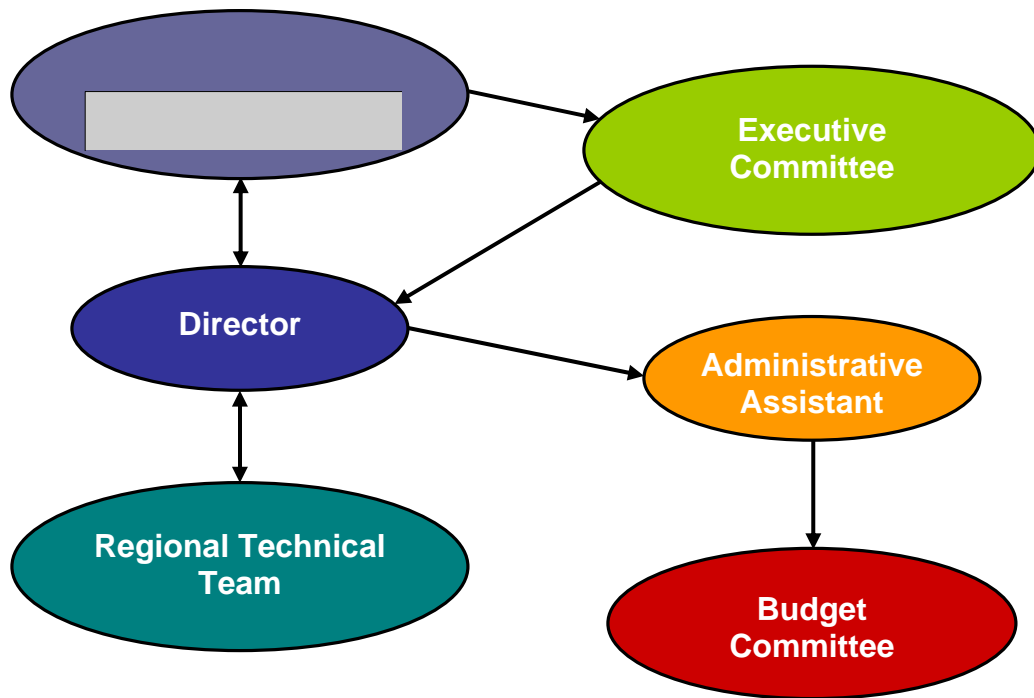


Figure 1-2 Organizational Chart for the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board and Committees

The Lead Entity Project Review and Ranking Committee is responsible for developing a ranked habitat project list for the SRSRB to use in requesting funding from the state-level Salmon Recovery Funding Board. This committee has citizen members and members from the Technical Advisory Committee. The committee’s organizational members are Washington State Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service (Pomeroy Ranger District), Washington Department of Ecology, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nez Perce Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

All administrative grants are reviewed by the Budget Committee. This committee also makes recommendations to the full SRSRB on the needs of the region in terms of capacity, organization, and administration. It is responsible for reviewing project contracts, reporting on expenses and contract status, and other fiscal tasks.

1.2.3 Regional Technical Team

The SRSRB has appointed a Regional Technical Team (RTT) to review and provide input to the recovery effort from the technical and scientific standpoints. The RTT has reviewed information leading to creation of the plan including the methods and strategies that lead to formulation of salmonid restoration actions. The RTT worked with the SRSRB to ensure that policies and the recovery plan’s implementation strategies were based on best available science. Furthermore, it is intended that the RTT will be involved in implementation of the plan as well as monitoring and evaluation. Membership in the RTT consisted of the following organizations: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), GSRO, WDFW, Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and USFWS.

1.3 APPROACH AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING PROCESSES

1.3.1 Coordination and Approach

Salmon recovery planning is part of a larger array of planning taking place within the region. Recovery planning must be cognizant of other plans which have been, or are being, formulated and must seek consistency with those plans to the extent possible. The Snake River Salmon Recovery Board considers that the recovery plan is based primarily on the subbasin plans developed by local entities in partial response to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. Other plans which may affect or be affected by the recovery plan include Habitat Conservation Plans and other documents developed under the ESA, State of Washington habitat preservation programs, conservation reserve enhancement programs, watershed plans, and harvest management plans. Some of these plans are discussed further in Section 6.6. In addition, master plans and comprehensive plans developed by communities, as well as land and water use plans for communities and counties may affect the recovery plan by defining what can and cannot be done to lands and water within certain geographic areas.

Where possible, the recovery plan will coordinate with the goals of other applicable plans. The plan has sought to actively integrate the various planning projects to achieve consistency, to the extent possible, among the plans and to make use of data and information from the other plans. Many of the plans have similar broad goals and objectives, facilitating coordination and communication across planning efforts.

The Snake River Salmon Recovery Board recognizes the importance of a coordinated approach to salmon recovery within its region. To that end, the SRSRB is actively developing an "interlocal" agreement between itself and the affected counties and other interested parties. The purpose of the agreement is to achieve salmon, steelhead, and bull trout recovery, to the extent possible, through habitat restoration and protection. The SRSRB recognizes that it has no authority or jurisdiction over the land or water within the counties and cannot preempt any jurisdiction or treaty rights, but it intends to work with the counties, the tribes, the State of Washington, NMFS, and the USFWS to achieve the recovery goals. The SRSRB will strive to ensure that the recovery plan is consistent with local watershed plans, the subbasin plans, and the Environmental Protection Agency's Total Maximum Daily Load criteria.

According to the agreement, the SRSRB's approach to salmon, steelhead, and bull trout recovery is through habitat restoration and protection. It considers that hydropower operations, hatchery management, and harvest issues are being addressed in other forums and are outside the scope of regional recovery planning. The SRSRB intends to prioritize streams within its region and assess the reasons for salmonid decline within the prioritized streams on a stream-by-stream basis. Projects and programs designed to aid in salmonid recovery will be prioritized on the basis of a project's "likely value in ...recovery" of the key species and its "ability to protect, restore, or enhance treaty reserved resources of the affected Indian tribes and to benefit the citizens of Washington." Economic impact will be considered in designing the prioritization criteria, but "jurisdictional boundaries and factors related to jurisdictional population" will not be considered.

1.4 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public involvement program for the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan was aimed at involving the public in planning for recovery of endangered and threatened salmon within the lower Snake River watershed. A number of methods were used throughout the planning period to inform the public about the planning process in general, plan elements specifically, and to obtain input into the planning elements. These methods included establishment of a website, advertisements, press releases, public displays, SRSRB meetings, public workshops, and a speakers' bureau.

The public involvement program, which was conducted in three phases, resulted in hundreds of agency and public comments. The purpose of Phase 1 was to inform the public about the planning process and to receive public input on the first two plan elements: existing conditions and salmonid assessment (chapters 1.0 and 2.0). This phase took place between May 2004 and September 2004. Phase 2 began in October 2004 and extended through June 2005. Its purpose was to report to the public on the planning process and to receive public comment on the Draft Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan and Draft Public Summary. Phase three or the "transition phase" occurred between July 2005 and October 2005. During the transition period, additional agency and public comment was procured on the June 2005 version of the plan. The October 2005 version of the plan received additional agency and public comments and the updated version, this document, was completed in December 2006.

The website, www.snakeriverboard.org, includes information about the planning process and schedule and outlines ways in which the public can be involved in the process. It also provides specific information about the planning elements and related planning processes. SRSRB meeting times and locations, SRSRB meeting minutes, drafts of plan elements, and planning updates were posted on the site. During the planning period, the website received an average of 5,000 hits per month.

Paid advertisements ran in several area newspapers at various times throughout the planning process: *Walla Walla Union Bulletin*, *Waitsburg Times*, *Dayton Chronicle*, *The East Washingtonian*, *Lewiston Tribune*, *Whitman County Gazette*, *The Daily Bulletin*, and the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*. The advertisements gave an overview of the planning process and informed the public that portions of the plan were available for review. Press releases aimed at advertising the public workshops were also sent to the newspapers, 19 radio stations, and four television stations in the area.

In August and September 2004, public displays were set up at the Columbia and Walla Walla county fairs. The displays provided recovery planning information and information about public workshops related to early stages of the planning process. In addition, brochures about recovery planning were made available to those who passed by the display booths.

SRSRB meetings are held in Dayton, Washington, and are open to the public. The meetings are advertised on the website and approved minutes are posted to the website.

In Phase 1, four public workshops were held in September 2004 in Clarkston, Pomeroy, Walla Walla, and Dayton, Washington. All the workshops were held in the evening with a staffed open house followed by a short Power Point presentation and comment period. These workshops were held to provide general information on the plan and the planning process and to provide the public with an opportunity to ask questions and provide input. Workshops were held in April 2005 in Clarkston, Walla Walla, and Dayton during Phase 2. Specific information was provided about each chapter of the draft plan and the public was given an opportunity to comment.

In addition to the workshops, a regional salmon summit was held in March 2005 in Dayton. The purpose of the summit was to update regional stakeholders on the salmon recovery planning process, generate discussion on the draft recovery plan, and provide other entities involved in salmon recovery activities within the region the opportunity to share the results of their efforts.

A "speakers' bureau" was offered by the SRSRB staff. The staff contacted groups within the planning region which were considered to have a particular interest in the salmon recovery plan. Several of these requested presentations by the SRSRB staff during the early portions of the planning process.