

Guiding principles for ecosystem management in Puget Sound

Input from the topic forums and action area meetings in 2008 led to the development of the following principles for ecosystem management. The principles, refined by the Leadership Council, Science Panel, and Ecosystem Coordination Board, were used to develop the strategic priorities and actions.

- a. Address threats and choose opportunities with the highest potential magnitude of impact.
- b. Address threats with the highest level of urgency. (How imminent is the threat; will it result in an irreversible loss; how resilient are the resources that are affected?)
- c. Use strategies that have a reasonable certainty of effectiveness and reflect a balanced precautionary and adaptive approach.
 - Actions should have a realistic expectation that they will be effective in addressing the identified threat.
 - Actions and decisions about the use of resources should err on the side of caution to avoid irreversible ecological consequences.
 - Actions should be designed so they can be measured, monitored, and adapted.
- d. Use scientific input – about the importance, urgency, and reversibility of threats; opportunities for management impact; effectiveness of actions; and monitoring and adaptation – in designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies.
- e. Use strategies that are cost effective in making efficient use of funding, personnel, and resources with realistic expectations of achieving results.
- f. Address the processes that form and sustain ecosystems and increase ecosystem resiliency rather than focus narrowly on fixing individual sites. Consider the Salish Sea ecosystem perspective.
- g. Attempt to address threats at their origin instead of reacting after the damage has been done. Anticipate and prevent problems before they occur, and plan for extreme events. (With more people coming to the region and a changing climate, a proactive strategy is increasingly important.)
- h. Consider the linkages and interactions among strategies.
 - Address multiple threats and their interactions with strategies that work together. We cannot afford to look at problems or develop solutions in isolation.
 - Watch out for unintended consequences. Evaluate strategies so actions to address one problem do not cause harm to other ecosystem processes, functions, and structure, as well as social and economic considerations.
 - Integrate salmon recovery actions with ecosystem management actions.
- i. Account for the variations in ecosystem conditions and processes in different geographic areas of Puget Sound. Some parts of Puget Sound are fairly intact while others are severely degraded, and rebuilding strategies need flexibility to encompass regional differences. Ensure that no region or economic sector bears the entire brunt of the responsibility for implementing solutions.