



Contact: Jim Kramer, Shared Strategy  
206-447-8635  
Brian Gorman, NOAA Fisheries Service  
206-526-6613

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## **Federal Fisheries Agency Approves Plan to Restore Puget Sound Chinook** *Salmon-Recovery Plan Is Nation's Biggest*

The federal agency charged with protecting Northwest salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act today approved a far-reaching plan to recover threatened Chinook in Puget Sound. The salmon-recovery plan, a requirement of the ESA, is the largest and most comprehensive ever approved by the federal government, according to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.

Today's formal approval marking adoption of the plan by NOAA's Fisheries Service is the culmination of more than five years' effort by local communities across the 14 river basins that drain into Puget Sound. The plan is aimed at restoring salmon to waters from the crests of the Cascade and Olympic mountains to Puget Sound.

Puget Sound Chinook, along with Hood Canal summer chum and Lake Ozette sockeye, were listed as threatened under the ESA 1999. The listing of Puget Sound Chinook was the first of its kind in a heavily urbanized area.

Federal approval sets the region's course for bringing salmon back to healthy numbers and provides a cornerstone for Puget Sound recovery efforts. In addition to lasting measurable results for salmon, the plan's actions are also expected to provide important ecological benefits to the overall health of Puget Sound.

"This is a plan built on local salmon-recovery efforts and remarkable cooperation among state, tribal and local governments and others," said Bob Lohn, head of the NOAA Fisheries Service Northwest regional office. "You can't get a better foundation for recovery than that."

The recovery plan is notable in that it was developed through the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound, a collaborative conservation effort that includes state, tribal and local governments, industry, conservation groups and others.

Recovery plans for threatened or endangered species are typically written by federal officials. Lohn said the NOAA Fisheries philosophy for salmon recovery plans throughout the region is that a cooperative approach that builds on local salmon recovery efforts will be more effective.

Locally generated recovery plans for other listed salmon populations in the Northwest are expected this year and next.

“Recovery of salmon depends on a healthy and sustainable Puget Sound basin. We can’t save one without the other,” said King County Executive Ron Sims, an early advocate for the plan. “We all have important contributions to make and this grass-roots plan gets us going in the right direction. Now we need to make good on our commitments.”

Federal approval arrives just as Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire has announced a major initiative to protect and restore Puget Sound by 2020. She is proposing a \$200-million investment to clean up Puget Sound, with more than \$50 million dedicated to salmon-habitat-restoration projects.

To ensure that these and other potential funds produce the best results for salmon recovery, local watershed leaders across the region have identified key projects in the recovery plan to be completed in the first three years of the 10-year plan.

“Solid, locally developed salmon recovery plans, unique to each watershed, are essential for guiding the funding of critically needed habitat restoration projects,” said Jeff Koenings, director of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. “Scarce dollars need to be spent very wisely to keep the public's confidence and trust in what we do.”

### **One Region, One Plan**

The plan integrates management of the three H’s – habitat, harvest and hatcheries – that are considered the keys to salmon recovery. Management of each H must complement the others to enable salmon recovery. The plan also:

- Addresses the needs of people and fish together;
- Provides a tailored approach to recovery, based on local characteristics and conditions; and
- Considers the entire Puget Sound ecosystem, as well as the environmental and biological processes that create healthy places for salmon. This will benefit a wide range of other species such as threatened Hood Canal summer chum, bull trout and wildlife in general.

The plan covers the whole Puget Sound basin, from the Canadian border south to Olympia, Hood Canal and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Restoring threatened Puget Sound Chinook runs is the main focus of the plan.

“This is a comprehensive plan that offers real hope for salmon recovery,” said Billy Frank Jr., chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. “Developing the plan has helped to build strong bridges between all of us who care about the salmon. I am confident that by working together we will restore Puget Sound Chinook.”

The plan and other documents are posted on the Web at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/>.