

PART II – REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

The Review Panel prepared Part II of this report. Attachment 2 contains short biographies of Review Panel members.

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Review Panel evaluations and comments differ depending on whether project lists were based on recovery plans or lead entity strategies in areas not covered by recovery plans (See Table 2). As in 2006, the panel only evaluated strategy quality and fit of the lists to strategies for the six lead entities where no recovery plans have been developed (Klickitat, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Quinault, Pend Oreille, and Water Resource Inventory Area 20 - North Coast). For the entire state, the panel evaluated projects to ensure that they were technically sound, and continued to serve in a process review and oversight role in areas that are participating in recovery plan implementation (most of the state).

Table 2: Review Panel Evaluations by Lead Entity and Region

Salmon Recovery Region	Strategy Review (No Recovery Plan)	Process Review Only (Lead Entity Participating in Recovery Plan)
Coast	Grays Harbor Pacific Quinault WRIA 20 (North Coast)	
Upper Columbia		Chelan Foster Creek Okanogan/Colville Tribe
Hood Canal		Hood Canal NOBLE
Puget Sound		Hood Canal Island King 8 King 9 Kitsap Mason Nisqually NOBLE Pierce San Juan Skagit Snohomish Stillaguamish Thurston WRIA 1-Nooksack
Northeast	Pend Oreille	
Middle Columbia	Klickitat	Yakima
Lower Columbia		Lower Columbia
Snake		Snake

Regardless of the basis for project lists, the panel reviewed all projects to ascertain projects of concern. The SRFB questions and criteria used by the panel to evaluate projects, project lists, strategies, and regional processes are in Manual 18. The information for all of the panel's project evaluations and other comments in this report included:

- Early project site visits and consultations.
- Observations from attendance at local technical and citizens committee project evaluation and ranking processes used by the lead entities and regional organizations.
- Information submitted with applications by lead entities and regional organizations.
- Discussions with lead entities, project sponsors, and regional organizations during meetings from November 5-9.

REVIEWS OF REGIONAL PROCESSES

PUGET SOUND, HOOD CANAL, LOWER COLUMBIA, MID-COLUMBIA/YAKIMA, UPPER COLUMBIA, AND SNAKE

Where regional salmon recovery plans exist, the SRFB has shifted the emphasis of the Review Panel during the past two grant rounds from evaluating the fit of project lists to strategies to narrative observations about the project list development and ranking processes. The panel's comments were framed by a set of questions in SRFB Manual 18, Appendix D, and based on responses from lead entities and regional organizations contained in the Information Submission Questionnaire submitted with project lists and other information obtained throughout the process. Attachment 3 contains the panel's comments on the questions associated with the following topics, for each region:

- Internal funding allocations
- Local technical review processes
- Evaluation processes and project lists

Regions' Internal Funding Allocations

The purpose of this topic was to discern how funding was allocated across watersheds within regions. As was the case last year, the approaches varied. For example, Puget Sound applied an a priori allocation to lead entities in the region. Other regional organizations (e.g., in Hood Canal, Lower Columbia, Snake) did not use an a priori approach to allocate funds across watersheds or to individual lead entities. Regardless, criteria used to make allocations or to identify project priorities were technically-based, using principles associated with salmon and/or overall ecosystem benefit. Allocation among lead entities in the coastal region was based on funding levels from previous grant rounds. In any case, where allocation percentages were used, they often were

intended to be transitional, leading toward development and use of prioritization or sequencing approaches in future rounds.

Local Technical Review Processes

Considerable information was provided to the panel by the regional organizations and lead entities about their technical review steps and technical committees' membership (although areas of expertise were often not identified). All regional organizations relied on some form of local technical team, most of which were operating at the regional scale. Notable exceptions occurred in Puget Sound and the Mid-Columbia regions. In Puget Sound, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Technical Recovery Team performed a spring review of watershed/lead entities' three-year work program updates (narrative and potential project list), for consistency with the regional plan and watershed/lead entity recovery plan chapters. Later in the summer, the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team performed a simple "consistency check" of proposed project lists for consistency with the three-year work programs and recovery plan components. The Puget Sound Technical Review Team did not examine projects for consistency region-wide nor review the detailed technical merits of individual projects. In contrast, in addition to the watershed-level reviews for consistency performed by the Puget Sound Technical Review Team for Chinook and summer chum, the Hood Canal Coordinating Council solicited from NOAA's Puget Sound Domain Team a region-wide (Hood Canal) review and ranking of projects to address the fit of all projects in the region. In the mid-Columbia region, the two project lists (Yakima and Klickitat) were reviewed only at their respective scales.

The panel visited a large number of project sites and, in some cases, attended pre-application technical meetings where project lists were discussed at the regional scale. Compared to last year, an increased number of regional organizations invited the panel to attend their citizens' committee meetings to observe the interactions between technical and non-technical aspects, and final approval of project lists for submission to the SRFB.

Evaluation Processes and Project Lists

This topic pertains to the Panel's understanding of evaluation and list development mechanisms for each regional organization, and how those organizations ensured consistency of project lists with regional recovery plans and local priorities. With some exceptions, the information provided by regions was clear and thorough in outlining their organizations' evaluation and ranking criteria, prioritization, and scoring schemes. However, in a few cases the extent to which multiple project lists within a region addressed the highest priorities in recovery plans was not fully clear (e.g., Puget Sound; Hood Canal summer chum, which involves two project lists).

Most regional organizations have made progress in their ongoing work to develop multi-year habitat implementation plans or work schedules. If well aligned with the highest priorities in regional recovery plans, and if they are focused and specific, those implementation plans promise to offer longer-term frameworks that could be substantial improvements over the past incremental approaches to identification and recruitment of highest priority projects.

The panel received information from regional organizations not just about the technical evaluation process itself, but also about the interactions between the technical and non-technical processes and how they were brought to bear on project list development and approval. The type and extent of such information received by the panel varied, and more transparency on interactions between technical and non-technical elements in leading to final lead entity and regional lists would be helpful.

Summary

The panel found that, although improvements would be desirable in some regions (e.g., cross-watershed technical review of fit-to-plan for Puget Sound, Hood Canal summer chum, and mid-Columbia regions), the varied technical review mechanisms applied by local and regional organizations were generally transparent, credible, and effective. Information the panel received on review processes and results, in some cases was fairly general, and improved transparency would be helpful. However, the panel had at least the requisite minimum of information in all cases and found the regional evaluation processes to be reasonable.

STRATEGIES AND FIT OF LISTS TO STRATEGIES

KLICKITAT, GRAYS HARBOR, PACIFIC, QUINULT, PEND OREILLE, AND WATER RESOURCE INVENTORY AREA (WRIA) 20 (NORTH COAST)

How Strategy Quality and Fit of Lists to Strategies Were Evaluated

For lead entities whose project lists were not based on recovery plans, the Review Panel used an approach identical to that used in the previous two grant rounds to evaluate strategy quality and fit of lists to strategies. Strategy quality was addressed for the following six categories:

- Species
- Watershed and marine ecological processes
- Habitat features
- Actions and geographic areas
- Community issues
- Certainty

In addition, the panel's evaluation of how well project lists reflected priorities in lead entity strategies addressed two categories:

- Habitat restoration and protection actions and geographic areas
- Fit of project ranking on lists

For each category, the Review Panel provided a rating of excellent, good, fair, or poor, and the rationale for the rating as well as a brief narrative supporting the rating (Attachment 4).

To determine the rating, the panel applied the definitions of "excellent" from SRFB Manual 18, Appendix D, associated with the eight rating categories. Given the upper bound set by the definitions of excellent, any lower ratings (good, fair, and poor) were determined by judging how well the projects addressed the questions the panel considered in each category as posed in SRFB Manual 18.

Strategy Quality Results

The six lead entities not involved in recovery planning received ratings for strategy quality (Table 3). In general, the strategies of these lead entities had been at best only slightly modified from the 2006 grant round. Thus with a few exceptions, the strategy quality ratings essentially were identical to what they were in the last round.

As noted in Review Panel comments on the 2006 round, ratings for Watershed and Marine Ecological Processes and Certainty continue to be among the lowest of all categories rated (e.g., no "Excellent" ratings were received for these two categories). Understanding, identifying, and prioritizing the underlying (causal) watershed or marine ecological processes (e.g., delivery and routing of wood, sediment, water, heat, nutrients) with specificity remains challenging. The certainty rating was affected by the type and extent of technical information (e.g., data, modeling) available for use in strategies, as well as the extent to which available information was actually applied in the strategy. Availability of data and analytical tools are limited for some lead entities. None of the lead entities received excellent ratings for these two strategy quality categories.

The SRFB criteria for the Community Issues category are complex, emphasizing not just having community support for projects but also the need for strategies to include a focused, strategic approach to identifying and obtaining support where it is needed to address the highest priority actions and areas. This complexity made it challenging for strategies to achieve excellent ratings. Most strategies reflect a rather general approach, emphasizing considerable but broad outreach efforts and processes intended to build general support within lead entity areas. Fewer strategies took the more difficult additional step of identifying specific issues and areas presenting substantial obstacles that inhibit progress on biological priorities, and then articulating a focused and prioritized strategy to address those obstacles.

Fit of List to Strategy Results

Ratings for fit of lists to strategies also were provided for the six lead entities not involved in recovery planning (Table 3). Ratings for these categories were mixed, indicating that projects were not always well matched to the highest priorities outlined in their strategies.

Table 3: Review Panel Rating Summary Chart

Lead Entity	Strategy Quality					Fit to Strategy	
	Species	Process	Priority and Focus	Actions/Areas	Community	Actions/Areas	Rank order
Klickitat	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good
Grays Harbor	Good	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Good
WRIA 20	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Excellent	NA
Pacific	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Good
Quinalt	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good
Pend Oreille	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

EVALUATION OF PROJECTS – ALL REGIONS AND AREAS

For the 2006 grant round, the SRFB continued the target pre-allocation funding approach and regional-based review methods for most areas of the state. In addition, it continued with its policy to conduct project-specific review of all projects to identify projects of concern (POCs) that failed to meet the SRFB's low benefit and low certainty criteria. This portion of the panel's report presents the project of concern review process and determinations.

Compared to past rounds, the 2007 project review process involved more effort up front to provide early feedback to project sponsors, lead entities, and regional organizations. Starting in spring 2007, and well before the September 17, 2007 application deadline, the panel visited many sites and participated in field and office reviews of potential projects around the state. To provide early feedback to project sponsors, this year the Review Panel met in mid-July to discuss all projects that had been visited. In addition, the panel and representatives from regional technical review groups operating around the state participated in an informational meeting.

After these pre-application project review steps, a total of 219 projects were submitted to SRFB by the application deadline of September 17. To stress to lead entities and sponsors the need for more or complete information, this year a new category was used throughout the process – "Need More Information (NMI)". Although providing additional information could lead to a project of concern determination, in most cases it simply reflected an information need that could be readily met.

In October, the panel evaluated all projects to determine if any had low benefit to salmon, low certainty of being successful, or were not cost-effective. Any projects not meeting these SRFB criteria were identified as Preliminary Projects of Concern (PPOC). The panel did not otherwise rate, score, or rank projects. Panel determinations were provided to lead entities and regional organizations.

In response to this information, project sponsors modified many projects and provided updated information to the panel for further consideration and discussion at a series of meetings with lead entities and regional organizations from November 5-9.

New Criteria for Assessment Projects

The SRFB applied new criteria for assessment projects in 2007. The new criteria stipulated that results of proposed assessments must **directly and clearly** lead to:

- A feasibility study or a minimum of a 30 percent design of future restoration projects. (See Manual 18b for the definition of a 30 percent design.)
- OR**
- Filling a data gap that is identified as a high priority in a regional salmon recovery plan or lead entity strategy. All of the following also must apply:
 - ▷ The data gap clearly limits subsequent project identification or development.
 - ▷ The regional organization and/or lead entity and project applicant can

demonstrate how it fits in the larger context, such as its fit with a regional recovery-related science research agenda or recovery work plan, and how it will address the identified high-priority data void.

- ▷ The results must be designed to clearly determine criteria and options for subsequent projects and show the schedule for implementing those projects.
- ▷ The region and project sponsor can demonstrate why SRFB funds are necessary, rather than other sources of funding.

Supplemental Project Reviews

Similar to 2006, fish passage (19 projects) and marine nearshore (61 projects) projects received separate technical reviews to supplement the panel's evaluations.

Fish Passage Reviews

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Habitat Program Technical Application Division reviewed all the fish passage projects.

For screening, passage, and passage design projects, the Department of Fish and Wildlife team concentrated on two areas for each project – engineering and biological review. The engineering review included the preliminary engineering data along with any conceptual designs. The biological review consisted of verifying the priority index number, if calculated, or calculating a surrogate priority index number whenever stream channel data were provided.

Review of screening projects focused on verifying the Screening Priority Index (SPI) number, or calculating that number whenever data was provided. Flow rates through the pump or diversion, species present, stock mobility, stock status, and project cost were considered while calculating Screening Priority Index numbers.

Marine Nearshore Reviews

To bolster panel evaluations of marine nearshore and estuary projects, the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project and Implementation Team provided the panel with supplemental reviews of projects. Two nearshore guidance documents identified in SRFB Manual 18 were used to evaluate these types of projects (*Guidance for Evaluating SRFB Nearshore Assessments* and *Guidance for Protection and Restoration of the Nearshore Ecosystems of the Puget Sound*).

PROJECTS OF CONCERN

After the application deadline, 219 projects were deemed eligible for full review by the panel. Of those, the panel determined that 18 projects were "draft" projects of concern (DPOC) in this report (See Table 4). Attachment 5 contains SRFB evaluation criteria for projects, Attachment 6 contains the evaluation forms for each project of concern. The draft report contained project evaluation forms for projects that the panel felt were not projects of concern but which needed to meet conditions for approval.

Table 4: Number of Projects and Projects of Concern

PPOC = Potential project of concern; DPOC = Draft project of concern; POC = Final project of concern

Lead Entity	# Of Eligible Projects (Sep. 17)	PPOCs (Oct. 26)	DPOCs (Nov. 16)	POCs (Nov. 30)
Grays Harbor	6	1	0	0
Hood CCC	24	7	1	0
Island	8	2	1	1
King 8	4	0	0	0
King 9	5	1	0	0
Kitsap (West sound)	11	1	1	0
Klickitat	3	2	1	1
LCFRB	16	1	1	0
Mason	7	1	0	0
Nisqually	2	0	0	0
NOPE	10	2	1	0
Okanogan/Colville, Chelan & Foster	10	2	0	0
Pacific	3	1	0	0
Pend Oreille	4	1	0	0
Pierce	7	2	0	0
Quinalt	3	0	0	0
San Juan	12	4	3	0
Skagit	15	3	2	1
Snake	15	1	4	1
Snohomish	14	1	2	0
Stillaguamish	12	2	0	0
Thurston	5	0	0	0
WRIA 1	12	1	1	0
WRIA 20 (North Coast)	1	1	0	0
Yakima	10	3	0	0
TOTAL	219	40	18	4

Lead entities and regional organizations met with the panel from November 5-9 to discuss additional information and clarify issues. These presentations focused on the processes used within regions to prepare one list of projects, or as in the case of Puget Sound, Middle Columbia, and the Coast, multiple prioritized projects lists from lead entities in the region.

Additionally, the presentations focused on projects where the lead entity or applicant provided new information to address "Need More Information" designations. Revised project of concern determinations were shared with lead entities, regional organizations, and project applicants.

A draft of this report was distributed November 16 to regional organizations, lead entities, and project applicants. A total of 23 comments were received by November 27, 12 of which pertained to draft projects of concern. Also, three projects of concern were withdrawn from funding consideration, bringing the total number of projects of concern to 15. The Review Panel met by conference call on November 29 to consider comments received on the draft report and reduced the final number of projects of concern from 15 to 4. Comments were received from four regional organizations on text overviews of regional processes, and one lead entity commented on its strategy ratings and

narratives. This final report was distributed on December 3 for public comment before the SRFB meeting on December 13. Any materials submitted after November 29 were not able to be addressed in this report.

Summary of Project Issues

Nearshore Fish Assessments

The panel reviewed eight nearshore fish assessment proposals from six lead entities around Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca (Table 5). The Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team review of lead entity project lists found that all of the proposed nearshore fish assessments were consistent with the 3-year implementation plans of the local watersheds. Those reviews however, did not identify whether projects were the highest overall priorities in the salmon recovery plan or component watershed plans. Because use of nearshore areas by fish has been identified as a data gap in all or nearly all watershed chapters of the Hood Canal summer chum and Puget Sound Chinook salmon recovery plans, it can be expected that nearshore fish assessments will continue to be proposed for funding in future SRFB grant cycles.

Table 5: Summary of Nearshore Fish Assessment Proposals and Funding Requests

Lead Entity	Project Name, Number, and Rank	Review Panel Status	Technical concerns in Nearshore Review?	SRFB Request	PSAR Request	Project Total
Hood Canal	Nearshore Juvenile Salmon Assessment 07-1907N (below allocation line)	Condition	Yes	\$103,464		\$121,764
Kitsap	Tacoma Narrows Acoustic Tracking 07-1886N (1 of 8)	Condition Not rated (monitoring)	No		\$29,500	\$36,000
Kitsap	Westsound Nearshore Fish Use Assessment 07-1898N (2 of 8)	Condition	Not evaluated		\$101,315	\$121,315
Mason	WRIA 14 Beach Seining 07-1844N (4 of 6)	Condition	Not evaluated		\$46,032	\$98,296
San Juan	Assessment of Juvenile Salmon in WRIA 2 07-1863N (1 of 10)	Condition	Yes		\$655,825	\$771,706
San Juan	Juvenile Salmon Prey Source Monitoring 07-1770N (2 of 10)	Condition	No		\$71,960	\$87,870
Island	Origin of Juvenile Chinook in WRIA 6 07-1589N (4 of 5)	Condition	Yes		\$222,470	\$261,884
Thurston	WRIA 13 Beach Seine Assessment 07-1821N (4 of 5)	Condition	Not evaluated		\$46,032	\$98,296
TOTAL				\$103,464	\$1,173,134	\$1,597,131

The SRFB Review Panel and nearshore proposal reviewers mentioned above found proposed assessment design and data collection methods could lead to information that might meet their stated local objectives, but not necessarily be amenable to being rolled-up to address pertinent data gaps at larger scales (e.g., multi-WRIA). Significant inefficiencies and lost data opportunities can exist when data gaps are addressed in such a varied collection of assessments. Design, methodology (e.g., gear type, gear size, sampling frequency), data parameters collected, species of interest, tag types, and/or study duration were not necessarily complementary where appropriate. Equally variable were the conceptual underpinnings of need/use of data, anticipated analyses, interpretive “power” of collected data, and application of data to inform salmon recovery efforts; this includes meeting SRFB benefit/certainty criteria #16 pertaining to whether the assessment is “directly relevant to project development or sequencing,” and will “clearly lead to beneficial projects.”

Summary

In summary, three key issues tend to be associated with nearshore fish assessment proposals that the panel has reviewed over the years, and 2007 is no exception:

1. Fragmentation – assessments that address only a small fraction of an area, assessment gap, or need
2. Regional coordination and standardization – lack of region-wide consistency, standardization, coordination, and oversight to ensure sufficient consistency between sampling efforts to allow for analysis at levels beyond the individual assessment level and to ensure the quality of the data
3. Relationships to on-the-ground habitat projects – difficulties in meeting SRFB evaluation criteria that call for assessment projects to lead to restoration or protection projects.

In the absence of better context providing comprehensive design and complementary standard sampling protocols, as well as the relationship of such assessments to on-the-ground projects, the Review Panel found it difficult to conclude that the entire suite of nearshore fish distribution assessment proposals met or exceeded all of the SRFB’s low benefit and low certainty criteria.

A way to address concerns 1 and 2 would be to identify a new or existing panel of salmon scientists and task them with developing a region-wide integrated assessment design and standard sampling protocols for nearshore fish distribution assessments. Such work also could support the needed development of a comprehensive monitoring strategy and prioritized action plan for nearshore fish distribution and other information. The panel could review and evaluate individual nearshore fish distribution assessments proposed for SRFB and PSAR funding.

As a result of early interactions between the Review Panel and lead entities proposing the above nearshore assessment projects, at the November Review Panel meeting, the

affected lead entities acknowledged the panel's concerns. The panel's recap of the response recommended by the lead entities and region is:

1. Individual projects should be evaluated on their own merits and whether they address local recovery plan needs.
2. Consistency should be applied where it make sense. A workshop might be convened in the next few weeks for the involved project sponsors to discuss consistency issues. This will attempt to identify where the projects can implement consistencies that do not increase significantly the scope and budget of individual projects. If any significantly increased scope or budgets result, further discussion would be triggered to resolve outstanding issues.
3. The region (Puget Sound) will agree to address the issue of consistency in broader terms in a more comprehensive manner during the next few months.

The panel did not find the above group of projects were projects of concern but applied the same condition to the group of projects. The condition is to seek follow-through on the recommended collaborative work to address issues of consistency involving affected project sponsors, lead entities, regional staff, SRFB staff, and appropriate scientists.

Finally, the SRFB Review Panel continues to wrestle with the extent to which individual projects accommodate concern #3 – relationships of nearshore assessments specifically to the development and implementation of habitat restoration or protection projects. There are many ways to argue in favor of how assessments, studies, or research lead at some point to on-the-ground projects. For example, it can be argued that even basic scientific research that informs the underlying science of fish biology and habitat restoration relates eventually to development of projects. However, the panel has interpreted SRFB policy and new assessment criteria to mean that they would increasingly like assessments, studies, or research projects that it funds to lead directly to on-the-ground project development.

There is no question that many nearshore fish-related data gaps exist. However, the panel feels that it should be possible for prospective proposals to be demonstrably part of a larger and more standardized assessment context that supports projects addressing the most important factors, locations, and sequences for recovery of salmon.

Invasive Species

Similar to past rounds, the panel reviewed several proposals this year whose purpose (whole or in part) is to address invasive non-native species (e.g., knotweed in riparian areas, brook trout competitors in bull trout areas). These kinds of projects typically involve some form of treatment to reduce the incidence of the invading species. In some cases, the priority basis for such projects in lead entity strategies and recovery plans is

vague, and if implemented, maintenance of the treated area along with restoration and protection is unclear or not included.

Similar to the above discussion associated with the strategic context and integration among nearshore assessment projects, the panel wrestled with the fact that there generally is no comprehensive statewide context or strategy to effectively address the invasive species condition to be addressed. Focused strategies to address invasive strategies also may be limited within recovery plans.

To date the panel has applied existing SRFB benefit and certainty criteria to the extent possible, stressing that linkages between the proposed project and specific benefits to salmon must be documented, and stressing the need for long-term maintenance and riparian restoration efforts within the treated areas.

Before funding this category of projects in the future, the panel recommends that the SRFB seek additional clarification and coordination (e.g., advice from the Invasive Species Council on overall strategy, assessments, treatment approaches) to assist project sponsors in developing projects, and further guidance for panel evaluation criteria.

Applying SRFB Criteria to PSAR Projects

All projects were reviewed using the SRFB's benefit and certainty criteria. The panel found that in nearly all cases the criteria were workable. There are two situations however, where the criteria did not work well, and in those cases the panel made no project of concern-related determination. This is not meant to imply that the projects should be viewed as draft projects of concern.

One such project was the Tacoma Narrows acoustic tracking project and the other was the south fork Stillaguamish Chinook supplementation project. The acoustic tracking project is included in the above discussion of nearshore assessments, and was primarily viewed by the panel as a monitoring project. The hatchery-related Chinook supplementation project did not fit the SRFB criteria; however, another hatchery-related project (Issaquah Creek Hatchery Intake Dam Removal) is more of a traditional engineering project and the panel was able to apply the SRFB criteria.