



A Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development

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A Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this document is to help lead entities, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and the Board's Review Panel move toward a greater level of understanding regarding the purpose, content, and use of lead entity strategies. The document is intended primarily to be a guide for lead entities that are not participating in region-wide salmon recovery planning for the Endangered Species Act or are targeting non-listed species in addition to listed ones. For listed species, the SRFB strongly recommends that the lead entities use the regional recovery plans, whether in draft or final form, whenever possible as their strategy for habitat restoration and protection. However, these lead entities may wish to draw on this document for guidance on how to include community values in their project prioritization process.

OVERVIEW

The SRFB recognizes that some lead entities have had more years of experience in salmon habitat recovery efforts and community engagement than others, and some lead entities have been involved in the development of regional salmon recovery plans while others have not. In addition, every lead entity has different levels of information about its watershed(s), varying degrees of technical and staff support, different financial resources, and different degrees of complexity resulting from the size of the lead entity area, number of endangered species, and the number of involved tribes, local governments, and other agencies and organizations.

The Review Panel and SRFB will take into consideration these differences when reviewing lead entity strategies and lists of proposed projects. However, lead entity strategies should always be based on the best available scientific information and understanding of local community values. Strategies should establish priorities for actions in the watershed(s) and provide a project evaluation and ranking process based on these priorities.

Lead entities should not submit projects that cannot be supported by their strategy. If a strategy is still in the early phases of development and is non-specific in terms of priority actions and areas in the watershed, proposed projects should be ones that are clearly beneficial to salmon and would clearly be priority projects in a more focused strategy (i.e., the proverbial "low hanging fruit"). If the strategy is more developed or focused in one area of the watershed or for one class of restoration or protection action, then proposed projects should be emphasized in these areas or actions.

What is a Strategy?

A lead entity strategy is a habitat protection and restoration action plan for the watershed(s) within the lead entity area. It provides a stepwise approach to how, where, and when to take action to restore and protect habitat and the watershed processes that are necessary to support salmon. It takes into consideration current knowledge and understanding of biological, physical, chemical, and ecological factors as well as community social, economic and cultural values and goals. The strategy provides guidance for specific actions over time and space in pursuit of established goals and desired outcomes. The strategy may be a single, stand-alone document, section(s) in a regional recovery plan, or a bundle of documents that, together, represent the lead entity strategy.

Required Strategy Summary

Lead entity strategies may be structured in many different ways based upon local needs and interests. However, it is helpful for the SRFB, Review Panel and others to have information on strategies in a concise, clear and consistent manner. Therefore the SRFB will require that lead entities submit a summary of the major strategy elements along with grant application materials. Lead entities do not need to restructure their strategies to provide this information.

A GUIDE TO LEAD ENTITY STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

This Guide is intended to provide lead entities with direction for developing, refining and using their strategies. It answers some basic questions about the purpose of strategies, reasons to improve them, their relation to regional recovery plans, and how they will evolve as regional recovery plans are completed and begin to be implemented. The Guide also offers an outline of one approach to strategy development that lead entities may choose to follow.

Primary Purposes for Lead Entity Strategies

- Guides project selection and ranking for SRFB funding.
- May guide project selection for funding other than SRFB (e.g. NFWF).
- Could be a guide for spending mitigation funds resulting from environmental permitting.
- Documents the scientific and community priorities for restoration and protection of salmon habitat.
- Contributes to the habitat restoration and protection (non-regulatory) component of a regional salmon recovery plan.
- Contributes to the salmon habitat component of a sub-basin plan.
- Contributes to the non-regulatory component of the habitat element of watershed plans under RCW 90.82 ("2514").

- Communicates to non-technical people, as well as potential project sponsors and community stakeholders the lead entity plan for salmon habitat protection and restoration.
- Provides information for the Habitat Work Schedule, which is required by RCW 77.85.060.

Elements of a Strategic Approach for Lead Entity Strategies

- Answers the question: With time constraints, resource constraints and financial constraints, what would you do first? What would you do next?¹
- Includes a rationale for priorities.
- Integrates the most important science-based actions benefiting salmon stocks (i.e., scientific priorities) with community priorities in a collaborative process.
 - Prioritizing is a social endeavor, while science provides the information to help stakeholders decide on priorities.
- When possible, identifies specific portions of the watershed (including river mainstems, estuaries, and the marine nearshore) for focused efforts.
- To the extent feasible, identifies the personnel, monetary resources, and community support² necessary to implement actions identified in the strategy.
- Includes a strategy for garnering the community support necessary to implement high priority actions identified in the strategy.
- Includes a time frame for implementation that is consistent with available resources.

DEVELOPING FOCUSED LEAD ENTITY STRATEGIES

The Benefits of Focused Strategies

- Provides a consistent, defensible approach for addressing the needs of multiple forums (e.g. regional salmon recovery planning, permit mitigation, GMA, etc.).
- Focuses actions to maximize the use of limited personnel (such as project sponsors and technical advisors) and financial resources.
- Provides a clear message to the community and potential project sponsors what habitat restoration and protection actions the lead entity will be seeking.

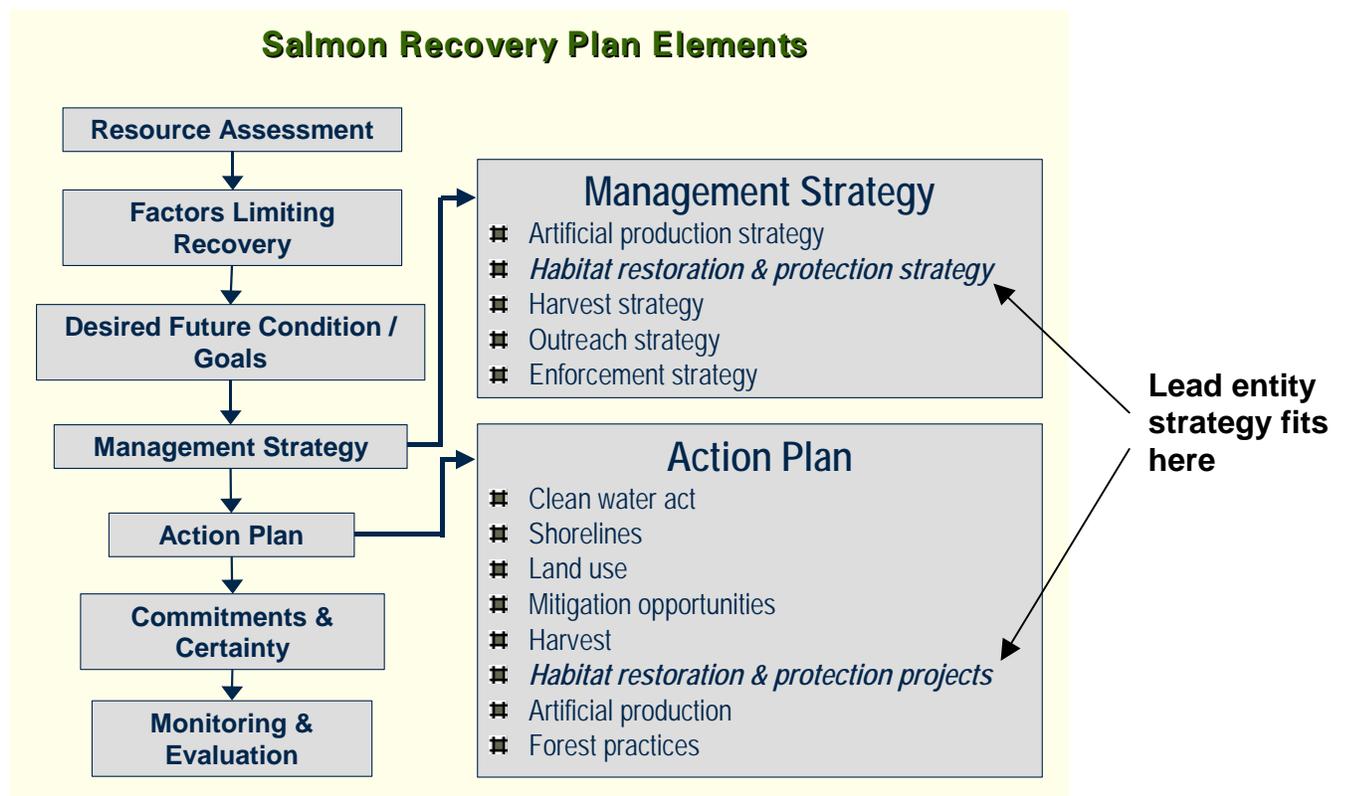
¹ RCW 77.85.060 requires that “critical pathways methodology” be used in developing a list of priority actions and the sequence that those actions will be carried out. Based on limiting factors analysis, an understanding of what projects would be supported by the community, and other assets and constraints, critical pathways methodology produces a schedule of logically sequenced projects.

² “Community support” could mean willing landowner(s), support by elected officials, a supportive economic sector (e.g. agriculture, forestry, tourism), or support from other people or entities affected by proposed actions.

- Provides a higher likelihood that projects will be funded by the SRFB.
- Could provide the necessary assurances for SRFB targeted funding allocations.
- Provides objectives³ against which to monitor progress.

How the Lead Entity Strategy Fits with a Regional Recovery Plan

Lead entity strategies can form the basis of the habitat restoration and non-regulatory protection sections of a “4-H” recovery plan (see diagram below). Representing all of the habitat restoration and protection project priorities throughout a watershed, the lead entity strategy brings to the salmon recovery planning table the starting place for an integrated discussion of recovery actions in that watershed. It is possible that, through the recovery planning discussion, opportunities may surface that cause strategies to be updated.



The lead entity strategy provides the habitat restoration and nonregulatory habitat protection component of a regional salmon recovery plan. The strategy is guided by resource assessments and limiting factors analysis at the watershed level, and desired future conditions (recovery goals) and watershed priorities established (with the participation of the lead entity) at the regional level.

³ Objectives are *measurable, temporal, and spatial* in reference.

Evolution of Lead Entity Strategies

Strategies and their implementation will evolve as regional recovery plans are developed and implemented.

- Lead entities use fish goals to develop watershed habitat goals, and in turn update restoration and protection priorities for the watershed. The lead entity's fish goals (and resulting habitat goals) may be general and tentative until goals have been established at the regional level or by the co-managers at the watershed level.
- Regional recovery plans establish fish goals and priorities across watersheds.
- The lead entity strategy(ies) becomes the nonregulatory habitat protection and restoration portion of the regional recovery plan. The lead entity list(s) become part of the regional recovery action plan.
- Regional boards develop region-wide monitoring strategies coordinated with the state's Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy and with the participation of lead entities and other watershed groups.
- Lead entities become more engaged in developing watershed-level monitoring strategies and may participate in monitoring and evaluation efforts at the watershed and project level.

A STRATEGY OUTLINE

This outline is summarized in Attachment I.

Technical Foundation

Lead entity strategies should be based on a sound technical foundation. The greater the understanding of habitat conditions and habitat forming processes, the higher the certainty that habitat restoration and protection projects offering the greatest benefits to salmon will be selected. This technical foundation will be based on limiting factors analysis and other assessments, inventories and studies; the use of models and decision support systems such as EDT; and knowledge and best professional judgment of the lead entity's technical advisors.

1. **Identify stocks and determine their status.** Identify all stocks in your watershed and for listed or depressed stocks, determine which population viability characteristics (PVCs = abundance, productivity, diversity, and spatial distribution) are preventing/slowing the recovery of the stock(s). This should include stocks spawning in your watershed and may also include stocks passing through the area, for example in the marine nearshore or Snake or Columbia River mainstem. This is a scientific endeavor. Scientific information will dictate which PVCs need

improvement in order to achieve the recovery of your priority stock(s). [Example: *The abundance of Summer Chum is low in our watershed, and the productivity of Chinook is very poor in our watershed.*]

2. **Prioritize stocks and establish goals.** Prioritize all of the salmonid stocks in your watershed and identify recovery goals. This is an endeavor based on policy, guided by both stakeholder input and scientific information. These decisions may be fairly general until the goals component of regional salmon recovery plans is available. In addition to listed stocks, you may also choose to prioritize one or more unlisted stocks. If there are no listed stocks in the watershed and the watershed is not a part of a region developing a salmon recovery plan, you should still prioritize one or more stocks for targeting restoration and protection activities. Where multispecies priorities are identified, the rationale linking policy with the scientific basis will need to be clearly articulated. [Example: *We will pursue the recovery of Summer Chum and Chinook in our watershed.*]
3. **Determine limiting habitat features and watershed processes.** Determine which habitat feature(s) and watershed and marine ecological processes are responsible for the poor PVCs you identified in step 2 above. This is a scientific endeavor. [Example: *The abundance of Summer Chum is low in our watershed because of high temperatures. The productivity of Chinook is very poor in our watershed because of high rates of sedimentation.*]
4. **Determine measures to improve targeted stocks.** Armed with knowledge about the habitat feature(s) and watershed and marine ecological processes that you identified in step 3 above, attempt to identify the primary underlying causes. (Some tools, such as EDT, include the “identification of causes” in the scientific model.) Identify all possible actions to remedy the causes you identified.
5. **Prioritize actions and areas.** Evaluate those possible actions and explain how you decided upon the most appropriate action(s) to pursue. In addition to the factors addressed above, consider:
 - a. Current and potential abundance, productivity, population diversity, and population distribution,
 - b. The potential to successfully eliminate the difference between current and potential PVCs, and
 - c. The protection offered (or not offered) by current and anticipated land use regulations and practices.

In most cases, priority actions will lead to specific areas in your watershed in which to work. Areas may include freshwater, estuarine, and marine nearshore portions of the watershed. Assemble these most appropriate actions (and associated areas) into an initial “TOP TIER⁴” of priority actions and areas using the information generated in steps 1-5. This will provide the greatest impact towards achieving

⁴ Strive for a TOP TIER that contains actions and areas that cover a small percentage of the area in your watershed. The idea is for your TOP TIER to reflect those actions and areas that are *realistic* to address over the short term (1-5 years).

recovery of the prioritized salmon stock(s). [Example: *The high temperatures that are limiting Summer Chum abundance in our watershed are due to the virtual elimination of riparian vegetation through the urbanized parts of X and Y subbasins. The high rates of sedimentation that are reducing the productivity of Chinook in our watershed are due to the extensive system of unpaved roads in Z subbasin.*]

Consideration of Community Values

“Community values,” as used in this Guide, are the values⁵ of people living in the area represented by the lead entity relating to conservation in general and salmon specifically. These values include social, cultural, and economic values, and are often expressed in terms of what a person prizes in his or her culture, community, society, and environment. Examples include attitudes and beliefs regarding the role of government, private property rights, land use planning and regulation, economic use of land, and the value of endangered species.

For the purpose of strategy development and project selection, community values are best addressed in terms of people’s attitudes and opinions regarding the problems affecting salmon and the restoration and protection actions necessary for recovery. These attitudes and opinions, in turn, can be expressed as the level of community support for proposed actions necessary to protect and improve salmon stocks. *Community support* could mean willing landowner(s), support by elected officials, a supportive economic sector (e.g. agriculture, forestry, and tourism), or support from other people or entities affected by proposed actions.

1. **Assess community values, issues and concerns.** Try to achieve an understanding of how the community, segments of the community, or people in different areas of the watershed(s) feel about different types of habitat protection and restoration actions such as land acquisition or dike breaching. This can be achieved through development of a diverse citizens committee, circulating drafts of your strategy for public comment, town meetings, and personal interaction with interest groups and affected industry sectors such as farming and forestry.
2. **Identify areas, actions, project types, and projects that have community support.** Using your understanding of community values, issues and concerns, identify actions and areas that are likely to have community support and can be useful in building community support for habitat restoration and protection.
3. **Identify areas and actions where it will be necessary to build community support before taking action.** Using your understanding of community interests, issues and concerns, identify the high biological priority actions and areas where it might be beneficial to delay work until community support can be developed.

⁵ There are numerous published definitions of “values.” The simplest and most appropriate for this Guide is “Beliefs of a person or social group in which they have an emotional investment.”

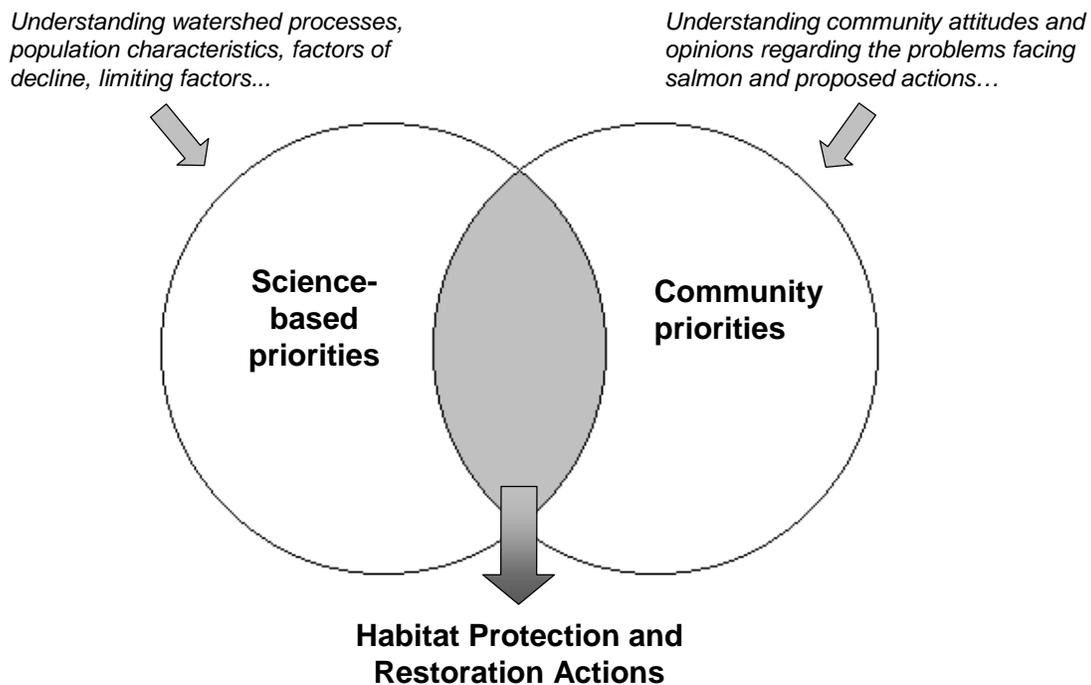
4. **Develop a strategy for building community support for high biologically based priority actions and areas.** Are there high priority actions or areas based on biological importance that do not have community support? If so, what types of actions are necessary to build that support? How will they be carried out?

Develop Priorities for Action

1. **Determine priority actions and associated areas based on both technical and community values.** It may be beneficial to modify priorities initially based on biological importance. The strategy document should include a rationale for both excluding and including actions and areas in the final TOP TIER.
Develop a summary table of TOP TIER actions and areas (See Attachment II)
 - a. Identify high priority stream reaches, shoreline segments/drift cells, estuaries (on the order of a few miles) wherein you will pursue the priority actions such as preservation, restoration, or strategy development or implementation (e.g., community outreach, reach-scale assessments, feasibility studies).
 - b. Provide brief justification for each action and area in your table based on biological and community considerations.
 - c. The Table of TOP TIER Actions should include priority actions over the short-term (1-5).
2. **Develop Project Ranking Criteria.** Create project evaluation and ranking criteria that will integrate the science and community goals and objectives delineated in your strategy and link them to your final, prioritized project list. Note that, although community support for a specific project may be important to the project's success, it is more important to show how community support for the project will help build support for other high priority actions and areas identified in the strategy.

Figure 1 illustrates the concept of bridging the scientifically identified biological and ecological needs of salmon with community values. Actions in the area where the two circles overlap (shaded) are likely to be the best steps to take now while building support for salmon recovery in the community for the future. The SRFB wants to be assured that proposed projects are high priorities based on science and have the necessary support from interests of the community critical for implementation. SRFB encourages project lists that at least maintain the current support for salmon recovery at the local level and to the extent possible expand necessary community support to increase the overlap between community values and the highest priority actions necessary for salmon.

Figure 1
Including Community Values in Strategy Development



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING LEAD ENTITY STRATEGIES

1. How should strategies address ESA-listed species? Non-listed species?

Washington statutes state that the SRFB shall “give preference to projects that... will benefit listed species and other fish species.” SRFB policy currently states that the board will “give the greatest preference to lead entity strategies and project lists that benefit salmonid populations that are listed under the Endangered Species Act.” Lead entities may also target unlisted species when ranking projects but should document the reasons for doing so and recognize that this may result in receiving less SRFB funding.

2. Should the strategy address “opportunistic” projects? Is it possible that an unanticipated project may emerge that has acceptable biological benefits and exceptional community value but is not in a priority area of the watershed? Should the strategy provide guidance on how to rank such a project high on the lead entity project list?

Yes. Although each such project tends to be a special case, the strategy should provide guidance for what types of projects could be considered and how. If such a project is submitted to the SRFB for funding, the justification should be well documented.

3. Should the lead entity strategy and the project evaluation criteria take into consideration existing land use regulations and practices? For example, an area of the watershed that has been prioritized for protection may already be subject to land use regulations that are believed to be adequate to protect the resources identified in the strategy. A second example is a barrier removal project that will open up several miles of habitat, but the newly accessible habitat is believed to have insufficient land use regulations to protect it from being degraded in future years.

Each lead entity will have to decide how to address the relationship between existing and potential land use regulations and practices to its strategy and proposed projects. In project evaluation, the lead entity may choose to consider the adequacy of regulatory protection in its evaluation of the anticipated benefits of a project and the likelihood that it will be successful.

4. What criteria would the lead entity use to identify and prioritize data gaps in its strategy?

Filling data gaps should be a high priority only if the data are necessary for the next phase of strategy development or are necessary for identifying and ranking projects.

5. How do I assess community values?

There are a variety of ways to do this. You do not have to conduct an expensive survey or hire a team of sociologists. The goal is to achieve an understanding of how various members of the community feel about different types of habitat protection and restoration actions in different parts of the watershed. This can be achieved through some or all of the following: development of a diverse citizens committee, circulating drafts of your strategy for public comment, town meetings, and personal interaction with interest groups and representatives of affected industry sectors such as farming and forestry.

6. Should lead entity strategies be useful for more than SRFB project prioritization?

Yes. The strategy documents the local scientific and community priorities for restoration and protection of salmon habitat in the watershed. The strategy should be useful for identifying projects for SRFB and other funding sources and for spending mitigation funds. It also should contribute to the salmon habitat component of subbasin and watershed plans and regional recovery plans. The strategy is also a communication tool, documenting the scientific and community stakeholder priorities for salmon habitat in the watershed and informing the community about proposed actions to protect and restore that habitat. The strategy also should inform the Habitat Work Schedule, required by RCW 77.85.060.

Attachment I

Lead Entity Strategy Development

Technical Foundation

1. Identify stocks, determine their status
2. Prioritize stocks and establish goals
3. Determine limiting factors, watershed processes
4. Determine measures to improve stocks
5. Prioritize actions, and when appropriate, geographic areas



Community Values

1. Assess community attitudes and opinions
2. Identify areas, actions, projects types, projects that have community support
3. Identify where it will be necessary to build community support before taking action
4. Develop a strategy for building community support for high priority actions and areas



Develop Priorities For Action

1. Establish the overlap of science-based priorities and community priorities
2. Determine priority actions and associated areas
3. Develop a strategy for building community support where needed
4. Develop project ranking criteria

Attachment II: Example of Top Tier of Actions and Areas

Reach	Species	Habitat Type	Recommended Action	Actions/Needs	Rationale	Comments
Salmon River (RM 1.7-3.5)	Threatened chinook, coho, and steelhead	Spawning and rearing	Acquisition and restoration	Purchase floodplain area and restore connectivity to river	50% of spawning occurs in this highly productive reach.	EDT indicates that restoration could result in a 70% increase in production
Canyon Creek subbasin	Threatened chinook, steelhead	Spawning and rearing	Restoration	Reduce sedimentation from road-related erosion on county, private, and USFS roads.	Formerly most productive watershed for threatened chinook, but sediment from landslides and road erosion have reduced spawning by 60% over past 10 years	Professional judgment of local biologists is that sediment inputs have cemented and buried redds and filled holding pools and is limiting factor for recovery of stock.
Bear River Estuary	Threatened chinook, coho, chum, pink, and steelhead	Rearing	Acquisition and restoration	Purchase land at head of estuary, remove levees, and conduct restoration	The Bear River estuary supports multiple stocks of salmon, has high production potential, and is critical rearing area for threatened chinook.	Acquisition and restoration will require significant work with landowners and may take decades, but potential productivity makes this a critical area for salmon recovery
Cub Creek	Threatened chinook, coho	Rearing	Restoration	Address fish passage problems, reconnect and restore off-channel habitat, and provide example of partnership with agricultural community.	Chinook rearing is limited in this small watershed, but potential to engage important segment of community in a lower profile setting.	Opportunity to conduct pilot project with local farmers that could be used as a template for use in areas more important to salmon recovery
Bear River A (RM 4.0-7.5)	Threatened chinook, chum, coho, steelhead	Spawning and rearing	Assessment	Feasibility studies and community outreach are needed to determine opportunities and costs for potential restoration	Potential for great increases in productivity for threatened chinook and other salmon, but development of options require more site-specific information	If feasibility study indicates good potential for success, acquisition and restoration of this reach should be considered a high priority
Bear River B (RM 12.1-13.8)	Threatened chinook, coho, steelhead	Spawning and rearing	Protection	Protect floodplain and riparian corridor	Significant amount of off-channel rearing habitat in this high production stream with mature forest floodplain at risk of future development.	Fee simple acquisition is the preferred option, but conservation easements may also provide similar protection at lower cost.

Example Map of Priority Actions and Areas

