

**Puget Sound
Partnership
Performance
Audit
Report 11-10**

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STATE OF WASHINGTON
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AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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REPORT SUMMARY

Puget Sound Partnership Has Not Demonstrated How its 2008 Action Agenda Would Lead to a Restored Sound by 2020

In 2007, the Legislature created the Puget Sound Partnership to coordinate and lead the effort to restore the Puget Sound by 2020. The Legislature also provided specific directives on how to develop an Action Agenda for restoring the Sound.

The Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to conduct two performance audits of the Partnership, the first in 2011 and the second in 2016. This first audit focuses on the accountability directives of the Legislature, as well as other key statutory requirements.

The Partnership's initial 2008 Action Agenda did not meet the following key accountability directives:

- The Action Agenda did not include the required benchmarks describing a restored Sound in 2020. Benchmarks allow policymakers and the public to determine if progress is being made and allow for an analysis of the resources and actions needed to accomplish goals;
- The Action Agenda did not clearly link actions to the goals and objectives in statute;
- Actions were not sufficiently detailed or prioritized in a manner to guide funding decisions; and
- The Partnership did not set up a transparent system for monitoring and reporting progress in restoring the Sound.

What the Partnership Should Provide in the 2012 Action Agenda Update

The Partnership plans to release an update of the Action Agenda by February 2012. Early indications are that development of the Action Agenda update is more in line with statutory guidance. For example, the Partnership has approved 20 environmental indicators and has adopted benchmarks for 16 of those indicators.

In addition to these benchmarks, the 2012 Action Agenda update should also include:

- 1) Benchmarks for near-term actions to be completed within the biennium;
- 2) Clear linkages between actions, measureable outcomes, benchmarks, and statutory goals;
- 3) Prioritized actions with sufficient cost estimate detail to inform budget decisions at the state and local level; and
- 4) A monitoring program and transparent process for reporting implementation progress.

After the Action Agenda Update Is Adopted, Additional Work Remains

After the revised Action Agenda is completed, the Partnership has other responsibilities assigned in statute. These include:

- Assessing progress in restoring Puget Sound;
- Making recommendations for reallocations in Puget Sound funding; and
- Using fiscal incentives and disincentives as accountability mechanisms to assure consistency with the Action Agenda.

Recommendations

The Legislature needs assurance that the Puget Sound Partnership has addressed the shortcomings from the initial Action Agenda in its 2012 Action Agenda update. The Partnership also needs to report to the Legislature how it intends to implement other key provisions of statute once the 2012 Action Agenda has been adopted. The first two recommendations address these issues.

Recommendation 1

The Puget Sound Partnership should submit a report to the Legislature accompanying the 2012 Action Agenda describing how the Partnership (A) is addressing required Action Agenda elements, and (B) plans to address additional statutory requirements.

Recommendation 2

To improve accountability and transparency, the Partnership should include the following information in future biennial State of the Sound reports:

- **The entity(ies) responsible for each near-term action;**
- **The funding provided to each entity, and expected outcome or result of that funding;**
- **The degree to which the results of completed actions met benchmarks;**
- **How each near-term action has contributed to Puget Sound recovery;**
- **How actions were modified as a result of adaptive management.**

In addition, statute allows the Leadership Council to make recommendations to the Governor and to the Legislature to address barriers it has identified to successfully implementing the Action Agenda. Consistent with the requirement to adaptively manage the Action Agenda, the Leadership Council should also make recommendations to the Legislature about what is and is not working as the agency implements the tasks required in statute.

Recommendation 3

The Partnership should submit a biennial report to the Legislature summarizing any barriers as the agency implements the tasks required in statute.

The State of the Sound report may be the appropriate vehicle for that biennial reporting.

Pages 15-16 of the report contain the full body of each recommendation.