

PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP

PROPOSED SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES



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STATE OF WASHINGTON
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND
REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Why a JLARC Study of the Puget Sound Partnership?

In 2007, the Legislature created the Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) and charged it with coordinating and leading the effort to restore and protect Puget Sound by 2020. The enabling legislation, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5372, directed JLARC to conduct two performance audits of the Partnership, the first in 2011 and the second in 2016. JLARC staff completed the 2011 performance audit, as well as a follow-up report as directed in the 2012 supplemental budget. This Scope and Objectives document relates to the upcoming 2016 audit.

Legislature set Specific Goals and Objectives for the Partnership

In creating the Partnership the Legislature established six goals and eight objectives for the restoration of Puget Sound.

The goals are:

- 1) A healthy human population supported by a healthy Puget Sound that is not threatened by changes in the ecosystem;
- 2) A quality of human life that is sustained by a functioning Puget Sound ecosystem;
- 3) Healthy and sustaining populations of native species in Puget Sound, including a robust food web;
- 4) A healthy Puget Sound where freshwater, estuary, nearshore, marine, and upland habitats are protected, restored, and sustained;
- 5) An ecosystem that is supported by groundwater levels as well as river and stream flow levels sufficient to sustain people, fish, and wildlife, and the natural functions of the environment; and
- 6) Fresh and marine waters and sediments of a sufficient quality so that the waters in the region are safe for drinking, swimming, shellfish harvest and consumption, and other human uses and enjoyment, and are not harmful to the native marine mammals, fish, birds, and shellfish of the region.

The objectives are:

- 1) Protect existing habitat and prevent further losses;
- 2) Restore habitat functions and values;
- 3) Significantly reduce toxics entering Puget Sound fresh and marine waters;
- 4) Significantly reduce nutrients and pathogens entering Puget Sound fresh and marine waters;
- 5) Improve water quality and habitat by managing storm water runoff;
- 6) Provide water for people, fish and wildlife, and the environment;
- 7) Protect ecosystem biodiversity and recover imperiled species; and
- 8) Build and sustain the capacity for action.

To meet these goals and objectives the Partnership has been given three key responsibilities: to develop and prioritize recovery solutions through a science-based Action Agenda; to oversee implementation of recovery actions; and to

track and monitor results, incorporating those findings into ongoing work. The Partnership is not responsible for implementing the Action Agenda: state agencies and local entities work as implementers to conduct on-the-ground work throughout Puget Sound.

JLARC's First Audits Focused on Accountability Processes

Recognizing the first JLARC reviews were likely too early to measure progress in meeting the Legislature's goals and objectives, the 2011 audit and 2013 follow-up report focused on key accountability directives assigned to the Partnership: would the Partnership be able to determine which restoration efforts were getting results?

The Partnership agreed with the audit's conclusion that much work was still needed to create and implement measures to understand what was and was not working in efforts to meet statutory goals and objectives.

2016 Audit Scope

This study will evaluate the Partnership's performance in their key responsibilities and follow-up on previous audit findings.

Audit Objectives

The audit will answer the following questions:

- 1) What progress has been made in restoring Puget Sound by 2020?
- 2) Are restoration efforts and expenditures across the Puget Sound tracking with the priorities and strategic initiatives set by the Partnership to meet legislative goals?
- 3) How is the Partnership meeting key oversight and accountability requirements directed by statute? Specifically, how has it improved linking actions to progress on restoration goals, prioritizing actions, and monitoring effectiveness?
- 4) Has the Partnership identified any barriers to implementing the Action Agenda? If there are barriers, have solutions been identified and communicated to the Governor and/or Legislature?
- 5) How is the Partnership utilizing monitoring and adaptive management in updating the Action Agenda?

This study will include a review of other national ecosystem restoration efforts to inform these questions.

Timeframe for the Study

Staff will present its preliminary report at the JLARC meeting in January 2017.

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