

Oct 26 Answers to SRFB Panel Questions:

1. What are the Strawberry Point site selection criteria?

Sites for protection actions, like fee simple or acquisition efforts, will be based on the following process:

a. Use of guidance from the approved WRIA 6 Salmon Recovery Plan which prioritizes actions based on protection objectives. This problem is particularly acute when seen in context of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan. It states, "The Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team (PSTRT) identified protection of existing and functioning habitat as most important in their technical guidance to watersheds (PSTRT, 2002)." Further, as the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan (2005) states, "Protection is a more certain strategy than restoration because we know that untrammelled habitats are more likely to support species."

b. Parcel analysis of the identified Strawberry Point nearshore area based on knowledge of habitat characteristics of

- Shoreform segments and drift cell interrelationships
- Forage fish spawning habitat
- Eelgrass and other nearshore conditions
- Watershed basin boundaries
- Geomorphic changes
- Riparian conditions
- Other unique characteristics, based on existing scientific data

c. Comparison of results of steps above with ownership interest will yield a prioritized inventory of private parcels for partners to work from. WSU Shore stewards, the Conservation District and Whidbey-Camano Land Trust will collaborate and use the results of this assessment to create action plans for their own missions. Shore Stewards' aim will be sign up and engaging the maximum number of landowners based on the site selection process along the 5 miles nearshore area. Similarly, the Conservation District will do the same based on the priority of involving the optimum number of private landowners in the Backyard Conservation program. Finally, the Land Trust will take the preliminary site inventory and involve the private landowners, in a coordinated fashion with the first two organizations and move landowners from having a high site selection assessment score to being willing participants in an acquisition action, such as a conservation easement.

In every case, with EVERY partner, the project WILL NOT be creating new processes. These productive and valuable organizations will be using existing practices and protocols to complete their missions. Just as TODAY the Land Trust engages and seeks out key private parcels for acquisition actions, under this effort these professionals will use the same processes, based on what the technical data says are the most important parcels to guide the site selection process.

2. What is Island County's role?

The objective of this project is to protect nearshore processes and habitats through protection actions like increased voluntary stewardship, acquisition and other non-regulatory efforts. Only through a coordinated partnership with local agencies achieved by centralized program management can a scientifically based assessment of nearshore habitats and related protection be carried out. As project lead, Island County's overarching responsibility is to ensure consistency of scientifically based methodologies and priorities, followed by strong, partner-wide coordination and reporting of results.

Further, Island County's four main responsibilities are to coordinate the following: assemble existing data, fill needed data gaps and evaluate relevant data; create recommended implementation action plans; implement and evaluate partner action plans; and provide a conservation easement assessment for optimum, follow-on acquisition project(s).

Additionally, as project lead, Island County, will produce status reporting on partner results through normal SRFB reporting channels. Further this task will include twice yearly assembly of full partner panels with other local and SRFB identified members to review and record protection planning and implementation progress. At the conclusion of the project plan implementation evaluations will take place to determine how many outcomes were accomplished and what contributions those outcomes made to achieving protection objectives.

As has been shown through the Island County Salmon Technical Advisory Committee's Protection Group – the Land Trust, Conservation District, Island County government, WSU Extension Office and other local and state agencies (like PSAT and others) can work together for common, identified and measurable goals. WRIA 6 has a history of these partners working together for the good of salmon recovery—this partnership-based project is a natural solution to our area's biggest need—protection.

3. How will developed and undeveloped parcels be treated during this project?

This protection project is the first of its kind for this part of the Puget Sound. The goal is to achieve measurable, real protection results. It is clear based on lessons learned within the region that the first part of a multi-phased program is focus on privately held, highly valued salmon use areas with minimal or no development. This does not mean that developed parcels will be ignored. They will be included in the same assessment as all other parcels along the Strawberry Point nearshore. However, during the first step of protection activities, it is believed that the most good, done in the shortest time is based on focus on stewardship and acquisition actions on undeveloped parcels. In later phases, based on technical merit, other parcels will be addressed. Additionally, if a highly valued, developed parcel comes to the attention of the project as a possible acquisition actions—it will not be ignored. Further, if the SRFB has experience contrary to this project's approach, please provide an alternative path for dealing with developed v. undeveloped parcels and the project can be modified to meet those criteria.

As the review panel said it “strongly encourages that protection opportunities in developed or armored areas be included as there may be significant habitat features remaining on the property. For example, the bluff portion of a land parcel that is developed at the top of a bluff would still merit protection and such opportunities should be explored. Similarly, armored areas may continue to provide features worthy of protection depending on the armor location in the intertidal zone and the riparian vegetation conditions. Voluntary restoration opportunities may exist in these areas as well.

Agreed! Developed or armored areas will not be ignored in the parcel assessment or site prioritization process. Based on local experience it is known that the largest benefit for the resources invested based on local ownership values focuses the project on undeveloped sites to the degree it makes sense based on the local WRIA 6 Salmon Recovery Plan.

4. Is \$200,000 for these 2 years of work too much? Was this same project done elsewhere for \$50,000?

The answer to both questions is no.

In protection activities a funder gets what they pay for. If a project is budgeted at \$50,000 for two years of work, then the outcomes will be sized to meet those funds. In the case of protection Strawberry Point for salmon recovery \$200,000 is an accurate, experienced based estimate of the resources required to create lasting and sustainable results. Conducting an exhausting technical and parcel assessment of the entire stretch takes time and money. Engaging a community and partners to create acquisition links, involving landowners in stewardship and conservation actions, writing new, best practice conservation plans for public lands and the overall coordination of the technical and administrative functions cost money over twenty-four months and the cost estimate is reasonable.

5. Are Island County Parks and Washington State Parks—Deception Pass State Park (for the Dugulla Unit) not on board? Will they write new letters of support this week reinforcing what they have already signed?

The answers to both questions is no.

Both the local state and county parks are seriously on board and are big supporters of protecting this critical stretch of salmon habitat. Further, they partnered in the conception and writing of the details of the project proposal. Finally, they signed the required partnership forms.