

October 18, 2018

To: Alliance for Healthy South Sound Executive Committee

From: South Sound Technical Team

Subject: Recommendation on Allocation of \$100,000 in “Local” National Estuary Program Funding

Decision needed: Selection of a project for the \$100,000 in “local” funding under the EPA National Estuary Program. Recommendation is due on November 6.

Recommendation: The South Sound Technical Team recommends the **South Sound Shore Friendly Programs project**, administered by the Mason Conservation District. If awarded, funding will be divided between the Thurston, Pierce, and Mason Conservation Districts to support continuation of the ongoing Mason County model program and initiation of programs in Thurston and Pierce Counties. Shore Friendly programs link shoreline homeowners to science-based, non-regulatory, professional technical assistance and provide site-specific guidance to help land owners reduce shoreline armor and develop restoration projects to benefit salmon recovery.

This is partial project funding. The original funding request asked for over \$900,000. With the partial funding, each conservation district will provide as much landowner assistance as possible with available funds and will identify potential armor removal projects for future development. Each CD will also refine strategies for future program development in anticipation of future funding. At this level of funding it is unlikely that project design or landowner incentives could be funded. Additional funding will be sought to provide those services and further expand the programs.

Five technical team members participated in the process to develop the recommendation, including participants from organizations in Mason, Thurston, and Pierce counties and the Squaxin Island Tribe. The recommendation was informed by previous technical team evaluation of project proposals, which included participation by seven technical team members.

Rationale: The South Sound Shore Friendly Program scored highly in both rounds of Technical Team scoring. Initial scoring was not designed to differentiate between projects in the highest scoring category. Subsequent scoring was designed to differentiate in this way, however fewer technical team members participated in the second scoring round.

The Shore Friendly program was high scoring but not the highest scoring habitat project in the second round. In addition to scores, the Technical Team also considered and prioritized: projects that would reach throughout the South Sound geography, projects that would deliver on-the-ground services/results, and projects which might be less competitive in traditional habitat funding grant programs. The South Sound Shore Friendly Program rose to the top based both on its high scores and those other factors.

Alternatives considered: All NTA project sponsors were given the opportunity to apply for the \$100,000 in funding. About half chose to make application. The Technical Team considered all projects that applied.

Other high-scoring **habitat projects** include:

- Lower Ohop Creek and Floodplain Protection and Restoration, where \$100,000 would be used as match for Salmon Recovery Funding Board funding.
- Restoring Naturally Functioning Riparian Buffers in South Sound, where \$100,000 would be used for new planting, invasive species control, and maintenance of existing plantings for priority streams in the Kennedy/Goldsborough system.
- McNeil Island Estuary Restoration where \$100,000 could be used to remove a concrete groin extending onto the beach and remove shoreline debris.

The highest scoring **stormwater project** was the Shelton Green Stormwater Infrastructure Program Development (Phase 1), which would have supported development of a sub-basin stormwater analysis to help identify the best locations, extent, and type of green stormwater infrastructure practices to protect water quality. The highest-scoring **shellfish project** was Thurston County Pollution Prevention, Identification, and Correction which would have focused on stream segmentation sampling of McLane Creek and tributaries (ambient monitoring shows elevated fecal coliform in these areas) and follow up site visits, along with work with the Thurston Conservation District to hold outreach events and technical assistance site visits. Implementation of water quality best management practices would be carried out if funding is available however likely additional funding would be needed to complete this work.

Additional Background and Previous Decisions: The \$100,000 in “local” EPA National Estuary Program funding is administered in the same way as all Puget Sound NEP funding – through state agency Strategic Initiative Leads. The AHSS project recommendation will go to the relevant state agency lead and, provided the project conforms with Federal NEP funding guidelines, we expect that the state agency leads will accept local recommendations. (This is how it has worked in the past.) All our projects comply with NEP funding guidelines. The lead state agency will negotiate directly with the project sponsor to create a project contract. Grant funds will be available after January 2019; however, we do not know how soon in the year they will become available. Funding contracts can extend for one or two years.

The Executive Committee has made “local” funding recommendations two other times. Both times it recommended funding for the South Sound Shellfish Recovery project, which distributes funding to shellfish protection districts throughout the South Sound and is administered by Pierce County. The South Sound Shellfish Recover project was considered again this year but not recommended for funding. It has leveraged the previous AHSS funding to secure approximately \$1 million in additional NEP funding from the Shellfish Strategic Initiative.

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