

Kitsap Peninsula Business Journal



The Voice Of Kitsap Business

Environmental

12-9-2004

Salmon and Watershed Recovery: How to become part of the solution

By Joy Paulus

At a recent biodiversity meeting held in Olympia, people from all sectors of government, private industry, environmental advocacy organizations, private citizens, and tribal representatives met to talk about the complex environmental issues facing Washington State. In this meeting, these various groups spoke about global warming, the environmental decline of the Puget Sound and Hood Canal, the need for improved environmental education in our primary schools and the challenge of balancing business and the environment. But, what resonated with everyone was the need for better citizen awareness of what's happening around us and how we fit into the picture.

Much of my work over the years has involved information management and the linking of people with information. As the states Salmon and Watershed Information Coordinator, I help people discover information that helps them answer natural resource questions so they can make better environmental decisions.

Although, the unfortunate reality is that we are inundated with information. All you need to do is search the Internet and you'll find a wealth of information showing immense range and detail. But, is this the right information? Typically you have to dig deeper before you know. You have to take the time to go to the sites and view the files before you know if it's the "right" information and this is time consuming.

The Salmon and Watershed Information Management (SWIM) team has developed a tool to help interested parties in effectively searching for information using the Natural Resources Information Portal. This service is very similar to what you would find in one of today's search engines, only with significantly more advanced search parameters. Furthermore, this information portal can help you quickly and easily understand what the

specified information contains and whether it meets your needs.

The Natural Resources Information Portal (www.swim.wa.gov) was created so that people would have the capability to readily find, access, share, and disseminate critical information that's needed for salmon recovery and watershed management. The SWIM Technical Advisory Committee provides guidance and assistance on the creation and implementation of effective information solutions that help get us there. This guarantees that citizens and salmon recovery partners have timely access to information, that state agencies work collaboratively together, and that cost effective salmon recovery and watershed information management solutions are available.

Typically some of the data published at this site has never been exposed on the web before - things like bibliographies, watershed reports, environmental databases, mapping tools and more. On the main page, users have access to basic guidance on how to use the site and what recent data sets were posted. You can even sign up on the Portal ListServe to get notices about new data additions or to post questions to others about your data needs.

The Portal allows you to search for information in one of two ways - geographically and with advanced keyword searches.

After doing a search, you can scroll through the search results list to see what interests you.... You can even review a full summary report to make sure it's what you need before going to the place where the information is actually stored. You can yet print a report of the search summary or the detailed report.

As with any tool, it's only as good as the people who use and contribute to it. That's why we're looking for cities, counties, non-profits and private companies to contribute and make use of the Portal.

So take a few minutes to let people know what you've been doing to help the environment and what you have to share. It's open to all so become part of the solution!

With dwindling state resources, it was considered prudent to partner across agencies to acquire alternate funding sources for critical information management and integration projects that directly support the strategic goals and objectives of SWIMTAC. This is a multi-agency effort while integrating individual agencies specific roles, such as the WDFW's SSHIAP and DOE's Environmental Information Management System.

This year the state Office of Interagency Committee (IAC/SRFB) contracted with local grant-writer and environmental advocate Kathleen

Byrne-Barrantes (Grant-Solutions) to assist in proposal development and understanding of grant processes for the SWIMTAC. This involved review and assessment of grant opportunities, letters of intention and support, documenting state governmental organizations participation in grants, and coordination with local and tribal organizations to seek partnerships on SWIMTAC proposals.

Initial work included 8 state agencies and the Washington State Geographic Information Council (see wagic.wa.gov) for a USGS grant led by the state Department of Information Services (DIS) for the US Dept. of Interior National Map Program. Prospective grants will be through various federal agencies led by the most appropriate state agency (DIS, IAC, DNR, WDFW, DOE, DOH, WSDOT, & WAGIC).

Future projects may involve more entities through the Oregon/Washington Hydro Steering Committee, currently comprised of 12 agencies including some federal.

Open access to the full range of data by all stakeholders will lead to improved limiting factor analysis and diagnosis of ecosystem recovery needs, and thus to an agreed list of priorities for future action. This will ultimately result in faster decision support at all levels of government, whatever the particular funding source.

I am enthusiastic that these shared strategies and cooperative efforts will leverage funding mechanisms and greatly improve resource sharing in these times of limited local, state, and federal budgets.

To participate in or to learn more about the Natural Resources Information Portal (www.swim.wa.gov) contact Joy at (360) 902-2954.

(Editor's Note: Joy Paulus is the Salmon & Watershed Information Management Coordinator and serves as the chair of the SWIM Technical Advisory Committee on matters related to salmon and watershed information management. The position is housed at the Office of the Interagency Committee in Olympia.)