TESTIMONY OF

RON KREIZENBECK
SENIOR ADVISOR
PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP/
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, I am Ron Kreizenbeck, Senior Advisor to the Puget Sound Partnership, on loan from the Environmental Protection Agency through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA). Today I hope to provide perspective based on my thirty years of senior management service with the EPA and from my current leadership role with the Puget Sound Partnership.

I wear two hats. Technically, I am an EPA employee but through an intergovernmental agreement I also now directly support the Puget Sound

Partnership. This dual role has heightened communication between the Partnership and EPA, and illustrates how absolutely critical it is to have effective communication and tight collaboration among the multiple levels of government involved in Puget Sound basin work.

I am encouraged today by Congressman Dicks's recent introduction of the Puget Sound Recovery Act of 2008. It would establish an EPA Puget Sound Program Office, whose director would coordinate the major functions of the federal government to implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda being developed by the Puget Sound Partnership. The Office would also coordinate efforts with other federal agencies with jurisdiction in the Puget Sound watershed. I hope every effort is made to move this important legislation forward.

In that spirit, I'd like to give you a sense of the work already being done by EPA in collaboration with the Partnership, Tribes, other federal agencies and with our Canadian colleagues.

EPA is helping to achieve important environmental outcomes to protect this ecosystem. EPA Region 10 has dedicated millions of dollars to Puget Sound recovery and we take our role in this effort very seriously. We will continue to carefully plan how each dollar is spent, ensuring that spending plans are tied to true environmental outcomes for the Puget Sound. EPA has

established productive and cooperative interagency agreements with state agencies, tribal governments and other federal agencies. Between 2000 and 2007 these cooperative efforts in Puget Sound have:

- Protected or restored almost 26,000 acres of wetlands, riparian and nearshore habitat;
- Cleaned up more than 200 acres of highly contaminated sediments from local bays;
- Initiated a dozen major watershed protection grants to local and tribal governments and NGO's to implement local plans that protect and restore water quality, shellfish beds and salmon runs.
- Developed effective strategies to reduce both toxic and nutrient pollution from entering Puget Sound in the first place.

EPA is leading the effort to coordinate Federal agencies and programs within Puget Sound. Federal agencies manage over 40% of the land in the Puget Sound basin. The U.S. Forest Service, the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers share responsibility for this large Federal land base. Tribal reservation lands also assume a portion of the land base, where Federal agencies play a permitting, assistance and regulatory function.

EPA identified early on that it could play a vital role in coordinating the Federal

Agencies, and spearheaded the creation of the Puget Sound Federal Caucus. There are 12 Federal Agencies in the Caucus, and while the responsibilities and jurisdictions of these agencies differ, each agency manages lands or implements programs that have a direct relationship to the health of Puget Sound

The primary role of the Federal Caucus is to assist the Puget Sound Partnership in developing and implementing the Action Agenda. We try to align Federal planning with the work of the Partnership and are taking a leadership role in science, data and information management. We coordinate our input to the Action Agenda through the Caucus and share information on agency priorities and budgets so we can better understand what the Federal government can do and where some gaps may exist. The cross cut budget outlined in the draft legislation would take this concept and strengthen it considerably.

Specifically, the Caucus strives for an integrated, strengthened Federal response on water quality protection, salmon recovery needs, and local ecosystem protection by aligning both regulatory and non-regulatory programs to meet the objectives of the Action Agenda.

EPA is also working collaboratively and successfully with our Canadian colleagues on protecting the ecosystem. Residents of the Puget Sound/ Georgia Basin region share a common airshed, common watersheds, a common flyway for migratory birds and habitat for anadromous fish and marine mammals

and common concerns over urban growth pressures. The U.S. and Canadian governments have a unique responsibility to address the transboundary environmental challenges confronting the future of this common ecosystem.

Regionally, Environment Canada and the U.S. EPA - Region 10 have a long standing and successful relationship that was formalized in 2000 with the Joint Statement of Cooperation on the Georgia Basin and Puget Sound Ecosystem, signed by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Minister of Environment Canada. Work under this agreement includes collaborations with Washington State agencies, BC Ministries and Tribal Nations on both sides of the border.

I have two excellent examples of the international and federal/state collaboration that has emerged through our work with Environment Canada. One is the shared hosting of the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin Ecosystem Research Conference that we have convened every other year since 1998.
The other example is the collaborative development and publishing of ecosystem indicators that are understandable and accessible by the public for the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin (http://epa.gov/region10/psgb/indicators/).

While these and other efforts by EPA in Puget Sound have certainly helped, as Bill Ruckelshaus said earlier, we have come to realize that our current efforts are not sufficient. A federal office of Puget Sound would allow these

current collaborations and commitments to flourish and strengthen. An interagency office would enhance communication, streamline expenditures, and ensure coordination and alignment of federal, state and Tribal actions and programs.

Last year the Federal Caucus sent an interagency team to visit some of the other ecosystem restoration programs. We also interviewed federal agencies, Tribes, state agencies and non-profits working in Puget Sound and reviewed recent studies and reports on ecosystem restoration. All this to answer a simple question – How can the Federal government improve on what we are currently doing? Our answers support the concepts included in the draft bill, more specifically:

- The need for intense collaboration and commitment among the federal agencies to achieving specific environmental outcomes.
- The primary mission and purpose of the Office should be to assist the Puget Sound Partnership to refine and implement the Action Agenda.
- The federal agencies should take a leadership role to build a strong science foundation and integrate ecosystem data and information.
- The office should focus on coordinating those federal programs where centralized coordination will provide demonstrable benefits. Some examples for Puget Sound are grant funding, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and large scale estuary restoration.

- Work with Tribal governments to assure the Action Agenda reflects our Treaty Trust obligations
- Continue to work with Canada on transboundary issues
- Link the work in Puget Sound to work around the country on other Great Waterbodies.

In addition, a Federal Office could strategically plan, award, coordinate, track and map federal grants and contract funding to Puget Sound recovery and protection. The various federal agencies provide significant amounts of financial assistance all over Puget Sound through grants and contract funds. Currently, these grants and contracts are awarded on a project-by-project basis with little coordination or agreement on the best strategic use of these funds, or leveraging of each others efforts. Further, there is no way to track and map the location and purpose of these federal funds. For example, EPA, NOAA and USFWS have each provided significant grant funds for work within the Skagit watershed without being able to know whether our efforts are conflicting, complementary or redundant. In concert with the Partnership, an interagency federal office could strategically plan and target funding to support and implement the Action Agenda by collaborating on developing Request for Proposals for grant funds and on the review and ranking of proposals. A federal interagency office could also develop a database and GIS layers for tracking, monitoring and reporting on location, implementation and effectiveness of federal grants and contract funding throughout Puget Sound.

Finally, the Federal Office could assist with building local capacity to Action Areas. The Puget Sound Partnership will not meet its goal of recovery of Puget Sound by 2020 without strong and capable actions by local and Tribal governments. Their capacity to bring tools and information to bear on land use planning and decisions are critical for success in the face of rapid growth and development around Puget Sound. In a recent assessment by EPA on how it and other federal agencies can assist local and tribal governments deal with the environmental impacts of growth, we learned that EPA could provide needed assistance by creating some type of "Smart Growth" center or network for Puget Sound that would provide a forum for Puget Sound local and Tribal land use planners and decision makers to share tools, information, data and solutions. An interagency federal office could spearhead or seed such a forum by providing financial and technical assistance.

In summary, I believe a Federal Office could take what we have started with the Federal Caucus, improve it and establish a long term federal commitment to work with the state on this critical undertaking. Thank for your time today and for your continued support. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.