



NORTHWEST STRAITS  
marine conservation initiative

## **2008 Five-Year Strategic Plan**

**July 24, 2008**

## Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Initiative Mission and Benchmarks .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Operations: Making our Contribution, Measuring our Impact .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Organization: Developing the Commission.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>18</b>

## **I. Introduction**

This strategic plan was created to guide the work of the Northwest Straits Initiative and shape internal development over the next five years. It was developed with information provided by the seven Marine Resources Committees (MRCs) through their representatives to the Northwest Straits Commission.

This plan is designed to complement strategic planning work conducted by the MRCs. The strategic goals and objectives laid out here build on our existing framework for grassroots success, support the work of MRCs, and position the Initiative to maximize our contribution to regional efforts to protect and restore Puget Sound.

### **Five-Year Vision of the Northwest Straits Initiative:**

The vision of the Initiative is to be an increasingly effective citizen-based organization working in partnership with many organizations to protect and restore the waters and resources of the Northwest Straits region. The Commission and MRCs will accomplish meaningful education, restoration, and conservation projects and will achieve measurable results that protect and restore the marine environment.

## **II. Initiative Mission and Benchmarks**

The Northwest Straits region includes the marine waters, nearshore areas, and shorelines of the San Juan Islands, the U.S. side of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and northern Puget Sound reaching from the southern border of Snohomish County to the Canadian border. The Northwest Straits lie within Washington state's Puget Sound. Puget Sound is defined by the Washington Legislature as: "all salt waters of the state of Washington inside the international boundary line between Washington and British Columbia, and lying east of the junction of the Pacific Ocean and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the rivers and streams draining to Puget Sound as mapped by water resource inventory areas 1 through 19" (RCW 90.71.010).

The Northwest Straits region is nationally recognized as an area of tremendous ecological importance. Over the last several decades a variety of human activities have caused damage to shoreline habitat, disturbed ecological processes and impaired water quality. And we are experiencing alarming declines in highly valued marine species. The Northwest Straits Initiative (Initiative) was congressionally authorized in 1998 to provide the structure and support for organized citizen involvement in the protection and restoration of northern Puget Sound.

Since that time, Marine Resources Committees (MRCs) have been created in each of the seven Northwest Straits counties: Clallam, Island, Jefferson, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom. Each year, MRCs work within their respective communities to carry out successful marine conservation projects informed by science and local priorities. The Initiative has also carried out successful science and restoration projects on a regional scale, engaging multiple public and private partners. Projects are funded by a yearly federal appropriation and also through grants and donations secured by the Northwest Straits Foundation. In addition to on-the-ground projects, the Initiative serves a vital role as a conduit for information between citizens, local governments, tribes, state and federal agencies, the state legislature, and the United States Congress.

Under the leadership of Governor Gregoire, Washington State has made protection and restoration of Puget Sound a priority. In 2007, the state formed a new agency called the Puget Sound Partnership, to coordinate Puget Sound protection and restoration work and hold agencies and groups accountable for measurable results. Increased state and federal attention to Puget Sound issues is an opportunity for the Northwest Straits Initiative.

Understanding how best to use our assets to maximize our contribution to protecting and restoring the Northwest Straits is a central question of this strategic plan. Bringing people to the table to solve marine environmental problems has always been central to the purpose of MRCs and is a source of the Initiative's strength. Through its grassroots, bottom-up structure, the Initiative holds significant influence. MRCs are directly involved in conservation, education, and restoration at the local level. As the Puget Sound Partnership looks to build local engagement for the 2020 Action Agenda, the Initiative through the MRCs is in a position to help.

### **Northwest Straits Initiative Mission**

The Northwest Straits Initiative is a regional organization operating within a broad context of Puget Sound restoration and protection efforts. We work side by side with many partners and our unique contribution is derived from our grassroots, bottom-up structure.

**The Initiative's mission is to protect and restore the marine waters, habitats and species of the Northwest Straits region to achieve ecosystem health and sustainable resource use.**

This mission is achieved by:

- Empowering local citizens through Marine Resource Committees and the Commission structure to identify and resolve marine environmental concerns.
- Designing and initiating projects that are driven by science, local priorities, community-based decisions and the ability to measure results.
- Building awareness and stewardship and making recommendations to improve the health of the Northwest Straits marine resources.
- Maintaining and expanding diverse membership and partner organizations.
- Expanding partnerships with tribal governments and continuing to foster respect for tribal cultures and treaties.
- Recognizing the importance of economic and social benefits that are dependent on marine environments and sustainable marine resources.

The Initiative has defined five benchmarks that guide organizational efforts towards achieving this mission. While short and mid term goals and objectives change from year to year, the Initiative's benchmarks remain a long-term planning framework. Ultimately, many factors outside of the Initiative's control will influence whether or not benchmarks are achieved. Benchmarks serve as a stepping off point for more specific objectives described later in this document.

The Initiative's five benchmarks are:

- **Marine Habitats:** Protect and restore marine, coastal and nearshore habitats, prevent loss and achieve a net gain of healthy habitat areas.
- **Marine Life:** Protect and restore marine populations to healthy, sustainable levels.
- **Marine Water Quality:** Protect marine water quality of the Northwest Straits region, and restore the health of marine waters.
- **Science:** Collect high quality data and promote its use and dissemination.
- **Education and Outreach:** Promote stewardship and understanding of Northwest Straits' marine resources through education and outreach.

### **III. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

In order to establish meaningful goals for the coming years, the Commission conducted an in-depth analysis of the Initiative's strengths and weaknesses, and considered the variety of opportunities and threats that could affect the success of our work.

#### **Initiative Strengths:**

1. Our bottom-up structure and consensus based-decision making model is valued by members. Our membership gives us diverse perspectives, political strength, and resiliency as an organization.
2. Projects are generated and acted on locally. Members have a can-do attitude and a strong sense of local ownership. As a result, we have a track record of successful projects, an excellent reputation in the communities where we work and a strong network of partners.
3. We have a clear identity, geographically explicit focus, and independence, which give us common goals and flexibility to pursue opportunities. The Commission structure connects our Initiative to tribal governments, universities, agencies, scientists, industry and the environmental community. Local priorities guide our work but we also engage in a Sound-wide dialog.
4. With a current budget of \$1.6 million, capable staff, ever-growing Foundation and an increasing public focus on cleaning up Puget Sound, we are positioned for long-term success.
5. Each year, our projects are demonstrating benefits and change for the better.

#### **Initiative Weaknesses**

1. We need a better system to collect and coordinate data to develop adequate baselines and measure the effectiveness of our projects.
2. The scope of our Initiative is small compared to our mission. Capacity, funding, time, and organizational infrastructure do not always exist to scale up projects to a regional level, which would multiply our impact.
3. MRCs and the Commission struggle with turnover. New members have long learning curves and it can be a year before they are fully able to take a leadership role.
4. The Initiative's annual funding cycle is uncertain, making it is difficult to plan further ahead than the current work plan.

5. MRC's do not always have sufficient staff resources at a local level to coordinate what is essentially an all-volunteer effort. Coupled with a tendency to spread resources across many small projects, this can make MRC administration difficult.
6. The Initiative struggles with vertical and horizontal integration, which limits our regional effectiveness and ability to connect with upland interests. MRCs don't have systems to communicate and integrate with one another and other similar groups, like WRIAs (horizontal integration), and communication and integration of federal and state interests through the Commission to the MRCs and the public could be improved (vertical integration).

### **Initiative Opportunities**

1. The Puget Sound Partnership has focused federal and state support for Puget Sound initiatives. There has never been a more politically advantageous time for Puget Sound clean-up and the Initiative is poised to play a major role in organizing community participation and support for action. MRCs are taking the lead on science-based locally-driven marine conservation within their counties.
2. There is increased national attention to the problems posed by derelict fishing gear. This combined with the previous success of our derelict gear program creates an excellent opportunity for program growth.
3. There is increased support for regional ocean governance programs that fill the gaps between federal, state, and local efforts. The Initiative has a record of success as a regional program and can serve as a leader in this emerging policy field.
4. As the public becomes more and more aware of marine environmental problems there will be increasing opportunities to tap into support from the private sector. Increased public awareness will also lead to new opportunities for the Initiative to take a leadership role in defining problems and developing solutions.
5. There are opportunities to expand our partnerships to bring new capacity and ideas to the Initiative. Potential partners include:
  - Scuba divers to enhance our ability to monitor and restore the marine subtidal environment.
  - Students to carry out research projects and provide support as interns.
  - The Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership and other groups engaged in restoration to help us add to our portfolio of strategic, large-scale restoration projects.
6. There is awareness of issues just over the horizon—such as climate change and continued population growth—that will profoundly affect the Northwest Straits in the

future. There is an opportunity to plan now to incorporate these concerns into our project design. We will need to carry out restoration and protection activities with an eye towards adaptation to these long term threats.

### **Initiative Threats**

1. As with all publicly funded organizations, we function at the mercy of politics that are outside of our control. The US economy is in a downturn and federal funding will be increasingly difficult to come by, especially in the current anti-earmark political climate. We will need to continue to work to be accountable to our funders and show measurable results.
2. With increasing accountability demands and competition for funds, there is a risk that the Initiative could be marginalized. It will be important to work with the state and federal agencies and demonstrate the important role we play in the Sound as a grass roots, community-driven effort.
3. With climate change and the rapid development of new industries and technologies it is difficult to anticipate all of the environmental threats we will face in the future. And those problems which we clearly see are only likely to get worse before they get better.
4. We need to walk a fine line between being opportunistic and taking a strategic science-based approach. At the same time, we need to be aware of the politics of science and be willing to act in the face of some level of uncertainty.
5. In general, lack of public knowledge and political polarization threaten our ability to work cooperatively at a grass-roots level to solve marine problems. As a non-regulatory organization, we need cooperation in order to succeed.
6. All the attention being paid to Puget Sound environmental issues could lead to general public burnout and disinterest in our work. There is a risk with saturating the public with bad environmental news.



## **IV. Operations: Making our Contribution, Measuring our Impact**

Using the Initiative's existing benchmarks, this section develops targeted outcomes, goals, and objectives for the next five-year period. The work is accomplished by the effort of MRCs and the Commission, in coordination with many partners.

The Initiative has a track record of innovative, science-based projects that address issues important to communities around the Northwest Straits region. With the current atmosphere of increased accountability, we must continue to show the measurable positive impacts of our projects. The Initiative has always utilized a set of benchmarks to measure progress towards its mission. Benchmarks represent broad long-term goals that will require many years and many partners to achieve. The Commission articulated the intended outcomes related to each benchmark, and prioritized goals and objectives that we have the capacity to tackle in the next five years. Since this plan is a living document, it is understood that objectives will be modified at least annually to incorporate the learning from our successes and failures, and take advantage of new opportunities and correct course if the need should arise.

### **Marine Habitat**

#### ***Outcomes:***

1. The Initiative provides data products and a forum to support policies that protect marine shoreline habitat. All Northwest Straits counties have enacted and are enforcing Critical Areas Ordinances and Shoreline Master Plans.
2. We are restoring degraded marine and shoreline habitat in all seven Northwest Straits counties.
3. Over 3,000 acres of marine habitat are restored.
4. We are working with federal, state, and local governments, industry and the tribes to prevent oil spills, small and large.

#### ***Goals and Objectives:***

**Goal 1:** Characterize, inventory, and assess the condition of marine and shoreline habitat throughout the Northwest Straits region.

#### **Objectives:**

**1.1** Carry out mapping and inventory projects in all seven Northwest Straits Counties.

**1.2** Coordinate collection of data to maintain consistency.

**1.3** Share data between MRCs, with county governments, and state agencies

1.4 Use inventory data and information products to prioritize sites for shoreline protection and restoration.

**Goal 2:** Protect marine and shoreline habitat by informing shoreline management policies.

**Objectives:**

2.1 Provide data and information products on the status of marine and shoreline habitat to county and state governments.

2.2 Support MRCs ability to serve as a political forum for discussion of contentious shoreline planning issues.

**Goal 3:** Expand the derelict gear program and restore marine habitats by removing derelict nets and pots sound wide. (This objective cross-references with our marine life benchmark.)

**Objectives:**

3.1 Remove derelict fishing nets and pots and restore that habitat for use by marine life.

3.2 Document and monitor recovery of marine habitat at selected sites following gear removal operations.

3.3 Work with organized volunteer science divers to collect monitoring data.

**Goal 4:** Prioritize, select, and restore shoreline sites in Northwest Straits counties.

**Objectives:**

4.1 MRCs work with the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program, Lead Entities, the NGO community, and other partners to develop feasibility studies, engineering plans, and on the ground project work on high priority restoration projects.

**Goal 5:** Carry out survey and mapping activities to assess the extent of eelgrass beds and initiate eelgrass protection and restoration activities.

**Objectives:**

5.1 Revisit and update past eelgrass surveys.

5.2 Coordinate collection of data to maintain consistency and centrally locate spatial data for visual display on the Northwest Straits Commission and MRC websites. Share data between MRCs, with county governments, and state agencies.

**5.3** Facilitate the use of eelgrass data by county and state government to inform shoreline planning and management decisions.

**5.4** Encourage MRCs and other groups to use eelgrass data to prioritize sites for shoreline protection and restoration.

## **Marine Life**

### ***Outcomes:***

1. MRCs have selected key valued species for protection and recovery (such as Olympia oysters, Dungeness crab, and rockfish) and populations of these species are increasing where protection and restoration programs are in place. Species recovery work is documented.
2. MRCs have selected key invasive species for control and eradication, and populations of these species are declining where control and eradication programs are in place.
3. MRCs and the Commission are providing information to federal, state, and local agencies and authorities to support management policies that protect marine life.
4. By removing 90% of the derelict nets in Puget Sound and derelict crab pots from high priority areas, we eliminate the impact of derelict gear and document species recovery.

### ***Goals and Objectives:***

**Goal 1:** Restore priority native shellfish (including Olympia oysters, Dungeness crab, butter clams, and pinto abalone) in selected areas throughout the Northwest Straits region.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1.1** Monitor and document natural reproduction of outplanted Olympia oyster restoration sites. Work with partners to restore Olympia oysters where appropriate, in conjunction with State Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- 1.2** Establish recovery sites throughout priority shellfish species' natural range.
- 1.3** Provide maps of native shellfish populations to appropriate agencies to assist with protection measures.
- 1.4** Work with partners to restore pinto abalone populations within their natural range in Northern Puget Sound.
- 1.5** Provide recommendations for species recovery and prevention of over harvest of valuable species such as urchins, geoducks and Dungeness crab.

**Goal 2:** Protect priority marine birds in selected areas throughout the Northwest Straits region.

**Objectives:**

**2.1** Participating MRCs develop volunteer-based marine bird surveys following WDFW protocols. Provide this information to the appropriate agencies to inform protection and restoration strategies.

**2.2** Update and include marine bird information in Beach Watcher and Shore Stewards trainings.

**Goal 3:** Protect priority rockfish species and populations.

**Objectives:**

**3.1** Complete rockfish surveys in counties that wish to encourage creation of rockfish heritage or nursery sites.

**3.2** Use this data to prioritize sites for protection.

**3.3** Encourage better understanding of the status of rockfish.

**Goal 4:** Protect forage fish and forage fish spawning sites throughout the Northwest Straits region.

**Objectives:**

**4.1** Revisit and updated past forage fish surveys on a regional scale.

**4.2** Coordinate collection of data to maintain consistency and centrally locate spatial data for visual display on the Northwest Straits Commission and MRC websites. Share data between MRCs, with county governments, and state agencies.

**4.3** Provide forage fish data for use by county and state governments to inform shoreline planning and management decisions.

**Marine Water Quality**

**Outcomes:**

1. There is a demonstrated and measurable improvement in marine water quality at high priority sites in the Northwest Straits, as verified by testing.

2. Selected beaches, which are now closed to shellfish harvest due to poor water quality, are reopened.
3. Local governments are employing LID practices and supporting LID policies.
4. Sites where water quality is deteriorating are monitored and monitoring information is conveyed to appropriate government agencies.

**Goals and Objectives:**

**Goal 1:** Support active monitoring programs focusing on identifying areas of reduced marine water quality and addressing source controls through non-regulatory means.

**Objectives:**

**1.1** Identify areas of reduced water quality in each of the seven Northwest Straits counties.

**1.2** Develop non-regulatory source control measures to meet the needs of each of the seven Northwest Straits counties.

**1.3** Monitor and track water quality changes and share that information with local and state agencies and the department of health.

**Goal 2:** Support pollution prevention programs aimed at private property owners and non-point source inputs.

**Objectives:**

**2.1** Develop programs within Shore Stewards, Beach Watchers, and other organizations to target reductions of pollutants from private property owners.

**Goal 3:** Support LID best design practices on new public construction projects

**Objectives:**

**4.1** Provide information to local governments in the Northwest Straits region about LID demonstration projects and encourage their use.

**4.2** Support workshops and trainings to promote LID as a viable and cost effective alternative to non-LID construction.

**Goal 4:** Encourage and recognize small spill prevention, response, and containment practices at marinas, ports, and urban waterfronts.

**Objectives:**

**5.1** Develop partnerships between MRCs, marinas, and other organizations to educate boaters and marina operators on practices to minimize small spills.

**5.2** Develop monitoring and data gathering partnerships with marina managers, state agencies and others.

**Goal 5:** Reduce the introduction of pharmaceutical products to Puget Sound.

**Objectives:**

**6.1** Support legislation to implement a sound-wide pharmaceutical take back program.

**6.2** MRCs take a leading role in educating the public about the need to return unwanted medications to designated take-back locations.

**Science**

We use the term 'science' to include peer-reviewed publications, pre-publication and unpublished data that have been appropriately vetted. Science also includes traditional ecological knowledge.

***Outcomes:***

1. Our data are used to inform local and state shoreline planning permits.
2. Our data are used to prioritize marine and shoreline restoration and protection activities.
3. Our science is referenced and used to inform the Puget Sound Partnership's 2020 action agenda.
4. Our projects are presented at professional scientific and marine management conferences.
5. Traditional knowledge is included in our scientific investigations.

***Goals and Objectives:***

**Goal 1:** Create a Northwest Straits Initiative Science Team on par with the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team, the Puget Sound Partnership Science Panel and the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project Science Team. This science team will guide our work, review proposals and give input on use of the Commission's ecosystem fund. The science team will work to assure compatibility between other similar teams.

**Objectives:**

**1.1** The Technical Committee will draft guidelines for the formation of the Science Team and the team will be in place by the end of 2008.

**1.2** The Science Team provides input to Commissioners on issues pertaining to science that is relevant to and consistent with the goals and objectives of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative.

**1.3** The Science Team guides deliberations of the existing Science and Technical Committee.

**1.4** The Science Team interacts with similar science-advisory bodies in other regional initiatives and programs on issues of mutual interest.

**Goal 2:** Collect data and traditional knowledge to support best science. Make this data available to all users.

**Objectives:**

**2.1** Prioritize data collection; avoid measuring for the sake of measuring.

**2.2** Link data collection to human health.

**2.3** Address issues of scale.

**2.4** Reduce incompatibilities in data collection.

**2.5** Translate and disseminate scientific information and traditional knowledge to agencies, decision makers and the public.

**Goal 3:** Support effective and efficient science that informs restoration and adaptation.

**Objectives:**

**3.1** Incorporate sea level rise data into restoration feasibility assessments and designs.

**3.2** Coordinate with the Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership on scientific investigations of nearshore restoration projects.

**Goal 4:** Conduct research needed to understand the impact that derelict fishing gear has on marine life and marine habitats in Puget Sound.

**Objectives:**

**4.1** Document the environmental harm to marine life caused by derelict gear in Puget Sound and species recovery following derelict gear removal.

**4.2** Document the impact that derelict fishing gear has on submerged marine habitat in Puget Sound.

**4.3** Monitor recovery of habitat and species following removal of derelict gear.

## **Education and Outreach**

### ***Outcomes:***

1. Increased understanding and appreciation of local marine resources.
2. Increased involvement and cooperation in protecting and restoring marine habitat, expressed by:
  - Voluntary action to protect the Northwest Straits' marine environment;
  - Increased enrollment in local marine stewardship and outreach programs such as Shore Stewards and WSU Beach Watchers;
  - Increased funding for the Initiative; and
  - Federal, state and local legislation and policy that protects and restores the marine environment

### ***Goals and Objectives***

**Goal 1:** MRC and NWS Commission projects engage residents and managers in protecting local marine resources.

#### **Objectives:**

**1.1** Design and use Marine Stewardship Areas to promote public understanding of local marine resources.

**1.2** Promote the connection between Stewardship Areas and Shore Stewards, Beach watchers and other opportunities for direct citizen participation.

**1.3** Engage agency managers in Marine Stewardship Area planning processes.

**1.4** Sponsor volunteer marine clean-up and restoration efforts and other events that encourage direct citizen interaction with and access to marine areas.



**Goal 2:** MRCs and the Commission pursue partnerships with organizations with like goals and priorities to broaden the impact of our education messages.

**Objectives:**

**2.1** Network with groups within and beyond our MRC jurisdictions, such as the Puget Sound ECO Network, to share successful education programs and create a cooperative environment.

**2.3** Plan and carry out educational workshops for MRCs and the public in partnership with regional groups like the Puget Sound Partnership, People For Puget Sound, Sea Grant, COMPASS, and the Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership.

**Goal 3:** Continue to promote broad public understanding of marine stewardship by using local and regional media to reinforce key messages, such as:

**Objectives:**

**3.1** Healthy marine habitat and species foster the lifestyle that attracted us all to live here, and that we want to pass on to the next generation.

**3.2** It makes economic sense to protect and restore Puget Sound.

**3.3** Green jobs represent a tremendous economic opportunity in the Puget Sound region.

**3.4** Climate change is accelerating and we need to protect and restore Puget Sound so that the ecosystem is resilient and we are able to adapt to the coming changes.

**3.5** Restoring Puget Sound tomorrow is more expensive than protection today.

**3.6** Sustainability should be the guiding principle as our region grows.

**Goal 4:** All projects that address marine life, marine habitat, and marine water quality benchmarks incorporate an education and outreach component.

## **V. Organization: Developing the Commission**

The development goals of the Commission are focused on supporting the MRCs and increasing our capacity to make a meaningful contribution within the larger dialog of sound-wide restoration and protection. The Commission already has a strong track record of organizing Marine Resource Committees in the Puget Sound region that bring diverse interests to the table and mobilize citizen-based stewardship. In the next three to five years, the NWSI anticipates that the network of MRCs will be leveraged towards increased coordination and “ramping up to scale” of critical restoration efforts.

### ***Outcomes:***

1. MRCs successfully articulate and carry out their work plans.
2. Agencies, tribes, elected officials and relevant organizations in Puget Sound find the NWSI and MRCs to be a valuable resource.
3. The NWSI continues to be a funded, vital organization.

### ***Goals and Objectives:***

**Goal 1 – MRC Support:** Provide financial, technical and administrative support to the MRCs to ensure that they have the information, funding and ability to succeed.

#### **Objectives**

- 1.1 Organize annual training conference and occasional workshops for MRC members and staff.
- 1.2 Provide scientific review of project proposals and technical support to MRCs.
- 1.3 Manage MRC contracts and ensure that all reporting is timely and accurate.
- 1.4 Collect and manage MRC data.

**Goal 2 – Regional Marine Program:** Identify and manage projects of regional importance.

#### **Objectives:**

- 2.1. Manage the derelict fishing gear program.
- 2.2 Manage projects funded through the ecosystem budget, tribal budget and education budget.
- 2.3 Coordinate with other groups doing restoration work (e.g. Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership).
- 2.4 Communicate the regional needs of the NWS area to other decision makers.

**Goal 3 – Administrative:** Strengthen community partnerships and implement plans successfully.

**Objectives**

**3.1** Increase communication and participation of elected officials, tribal officials and agency directors.

**3.2** Coordinate work with Puget Sound Partnership.

**3.3** Provide opportunities for interns to gain experience and educational benefit.

**3.4** Ensure that NWSC staffing is available to support the continuity of successful MRCs.

**3.5** Increase communications between MRCs.

**Goal 4 – Financial:** Strengthen the sustainability of the Initiative by diversifying our funding and ensuring that all project funds are managed appropriately.

**Objectives**

**4.1** Create a NWS Foundation growth and development committee to attract increased and diversified financial resources.

**4.2** Ensure that all projects funded by the NWSI demonstrate sound financial management and accountability.

**4.3** Find a safe funding path for federal appropriations and strengthen our position through reauthorization.

## **VI. Conclusion**

In the face of rapidly declining ecological function, it is more critical than ever that the NWSI coordinate action and engage citizen involvement in protecting and restoring the Puget Sound. This plan serves as a living document, to be used by the Commission and MRCs to help focus organizational effort over the coming years. Each year, the plan is reviewed and updated by the individual MRCs and the Commission as a whole. The administration of the NWSI uses the plan to guide their work, and reports monthly to the Commission on progress made at various levels of the organization. As community needs and resources continue to shift, the plan also shifts - as one of the strengths of the Initiative is its ability to be flexible and responsive. Nonetheless, this plan serves as a tool to communicate across the region our intended results,

and a strategic approach for achieving those results based on years of research and experience of living and working in the Northwest Straits region.