

STATE OF WASHINGTON

INDEPENDENT SCIENCE PANEL

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June 30, 2003

The Honorable Gary Locke
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Honorable Jim West
Majority Leader of the Senate
PO Box 40482
Olympia, WA 98504-0482

The Honorable Frank Chopp
Speaker of the House
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear Governor Locke, Senator West and Representative Chopp:

The Independent Science Panel (ISP) was created by the Legislature in 1998 to provide scientific review and oversight, and help ensure that sound science is used in Washington's salmon, steelhead, and trout recovery efforts. The ISP's findings are to be provided to the Governor and the Legislature.

In a memo dated September 18, 2002 the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office asked us to review the Department of Ecology's 2001 "*Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington*" (Manual). Stormwater and its management are key components of the 1999 "*Statewide Strategy to Recovery Salmon: Extinction is Not an Option*" (Strategy). Our review responded to the following three key assigned questions:

1. To what extent was the applicable scientific literature used in the development of the manual, with special attention to the development of the flow control standard, and the treatment standard? If you think other information is appropriate to use or has emerged since completion of the manual, please identify it and clarify why you think it should be included.

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2. Are the practices outlined in the manual reasonable and consistent with the scientific information used to develop the manual? If not, what changes would you recommend and why?
3. What scientific studies would you recommend to address the most important gaps in knowledge associated with the issues?

Because of the state's interest in potential stormwater runoff effects on salmon as expressed in the Strategy, the ISP also reviewed the Manual and its assumptions and limitations for consistency with scientific knowledge in dealing with salmonid survival, productivity, and recovery in urban and urbanizing watersheds.

As part of our review process, and to bolster our technical capacity on the subject matter, we enlisted advisory assistance from several recognized experts on stormwater management from around the country. We convened a technical workshop in western Washington with local experts and those affected by the Manual. Finally, we consulted with local university scientists who are actively contributing important research in this field.

The results of our review are contained in a report entitled "*Review of Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington (August 2001)*" (ISP Report 2003-1) (enclosed). Copies of our report have been provided to the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office and the Department of Ecology.

We conclude that the Department of Ecology has done a credible job in developing the guidelines and standards presented in the Manual using the information available. Although our report raises a number of technical considerations and issues concerning specific standards or requirements, and points to some gaps in the level of scientific understanding, we do not believe these are individually or collectively sufficient to preclude use of the Manual. We feel most of the issues we identified could be resolved by refining existing standards, planning processes, and development of a monitoring – adaptive management process.

The relationship of the Manual to salmon recovery efforts is less clear to us. In that context, we cannot overstate the importance of the need to link the implementation of the measures in the Manual to watershed-specific assessments and recovery actions and to identify through recovery planning where stormwater management will be expected to make the greatest contribution toward salmon recovery goals and objectives. Finally, we strongly urge that adaptively managed studies be undertaken to help establish how management of stormwater relates to restoration and protection efforts for salmon recovery.

As always, we hope our analysis will be of value to your continuing efforts to contend with salmon recovery and related issues like stormwater management – now and in the future.

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Please contact us if you have questions about any aspect of these comments.

Sincerely,



Kenneth P. Currens, Chair
Independent Science Panel

Enclosure

cc: Senator Dan Swecker, Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee
Senator Bob Oke, Chair, Senate Parks, Fish and Wildlife Committee
Senator Bob Morton, Chair, Senate Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee
Representative Kelli Linville, Chair, House Agriculture Committee
Representative Mike Cooper, Chair, House Fish, Ecology and Parks Committee