

The Estuary Partnership held its fourth Science to Policy Summit on Friday June 4, 2010. Nearly 100 community leaders, practitioners and scientists came together to focus on how the Estuary Partnership can continue to support regional efforts and remain accountable for the investments being made in the lower Columbia River and estuary. Oregon State Senator Jackie Dingfelder and Washington State Representatives Jim Jacks and Deb Wallace served as co-hosts kicking off the event.

WHY WE CAME TOGETHER

Working with members of Congress on the Columbia River Restoration Act of 2010, one question repeatedly came up: 'Can we ensure the funds invested today will give the results needed to protect public health and restore the health of the ecosystem? The Federal government invests in restoring many of the nation's water bodies and the problems are not always resolved; so how will this investment be different?'

In the comprehensive report on the estuary released on June 4, 2010, the Estuary Partnership outlined progress made since 2005 and the challenges that lie ahead. See sidebar.

Twenty years from now the partners of the Estuary Partnership want to be in front of Congress thanking the members for their investment and giving them tangible improvements to habitat and contaminant reduction.



FRAMING THE DISCUSSION: A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Recognize that the Columbia River and estuary is a dynamic system.
- Value the expertise and experience of all.

ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP RELEASES

2010 REPORT ON THE ESTUARY

At the summit, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, Washington State Representative Deb Wallace and EPA Region 10 Director of Oregon Operations, Anthony Barber released the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership's *2010 Report on the Estuary*.

The report assesses progress in five key areas towards a healthy ecosystem in the lower Columbia and estuary: water quality, land use, habitat, stewardship and endangered species. Additionally, it lays out challenges for the next five years.

Highlights of progress:

- The Estuary Partnership and over one hundred partners have restored 16,235 acres of habitat since 1999.
- Local communities are using innovative stormwater management techniques to improve water quality.
- The bald eagle is no longer listed as endangered and the Columbian White-tailed deer populations are showing improvements.
- The Estuary Partnership has reached 84,500 youth and adults since 2005 to provide science learning experiences about the lower Columbia River.

Despite this progress, the river is in trouble: toxic contaminants, both old and new are in water, sediment and fish. The current monitoring and work to reduce contaminants are not adequate. Pollutants flowing from roadways and rooftops continue to compromise water quality. Pharmaceuticals degrade water quality and cause severe challenges to wildlife. The progress toward restoring habitat for fish and wildlife replaces less than half of the habitat lost since settlement. The number of plants, fish, and wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered has grown in the lower river since 2004. We are not tracking habitat loss and land use changes. The Columbia is a shared water body and significant to the nation, it requires a broad restructured investment.

Read the full report at [www.lcrep.org /2010 Report on the Estuary](http://www.lcrep.org/2010%20Report%20on%20the%20Estuary).

- Accept that decisions made today may be better than the decisions made five years ago but may not as good as the ones made in the future.
- Know that results don't come in human time- political election cycles, budget cycles - they come in geologic time.
- Accept that there is no fast way to recover fish or remove toxics.
- Acknowledge it takes courage and foresight to invest in work that may not show immediate results but will improve the River for future generations.
- Recognize that despite the name changes to project management approaches, *it is time to act*, rather than continue talking and planning. MBO, TQM and AM all use available data; take action; assess and evaluate; add new information; refine action; assess and evaluate; add new information, refine, take action... Each approach emphasizes action, productivity, efficiency and refinement.
- Embrace the challenge that the Columbia River is in our care.

WHAT ARE THE PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO REACHING GOALS?

Participants offered a few ideas:

- Efforts on the River are not always focused on the environmental goal, although that's the intention;
- Measures are not in sync with the environmental goals;
- Efforts of partners working on the River are not always coordinated; it's not always clear what it would look like;
- Failure is often punished, rather than accepting risk and learning from the challenges;
- A prescriptive path to goals doesn't allow adaptation or innovation;
- Always planning;
- Too much paperwork and cumbersome processes get in the way of results.

THE SUMMIT DISCUSSION

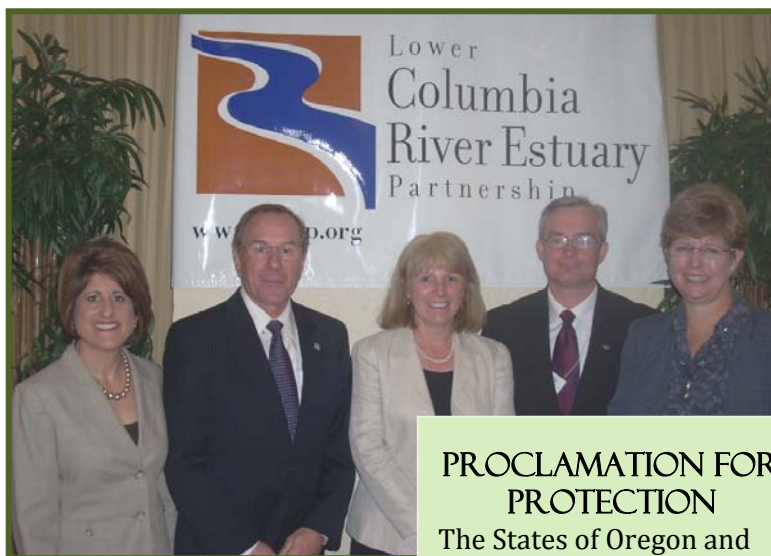
In small groups participants discussed:

1. How can we ensure results?

- Ultimately, what are you accountable for and to whom? (What are the statutes or missions that guide the work you do?)
- What are the drivers that determine your daily decisions?
- Are those daily drivers helping you be accountable?

2. Do your daily drivers support responsive and responsible adaptation in the lower Columbia and estuary?

- Of those drivers that aren't helping you be accountable, which are focused on the lower Columbia and estuary?
- How can the Estuary Partnership help align?



PROCLAMATION FOR PROTECTION

The States of Oregon and Washington and the US EPA, reaffirmed their commitment to the lower Columbia River by issuing a *Proclamation for Protection* signed by Oregon Governor, Ted Kulongoski, Washington Governor, Christine Gregoire, and US EPA Regional Administrator, Dennis McLerran.

PARTNER'S FEEDBACK TO THE ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

Continue to build on successful collaboration.

Participants suggested the Estuary Partnership work to expand connections among partners and with the community, continue work to secure funding for the region, continue to support partners and fill gaps to help facilitate getting projects planned, designed accurately and implemented on the ground.

A few specifics for the Estuary Partnership:

- Diversify the partnership outreach; bring new partners in that are not necessarily environmentally focused but who have a stake in a healthy river. Expand beyond the fish-centric partners. It was specifically suggested that we connect with the agricultural community and industry.
- Help connect the lower and upper river and bridge the rural and urban divide.
- Help develop a shared strategy for the lower river.
- Provide more forums for partners to share results of studies, research and ideas. The Science Work Group is successful and more groups like this would be helpful.
- Help connect people; person to person. Success happens when there's a connection between people.



Improve communication for the partners and the public.

Participants noted that the Estuary Partnership is uniquely situated, as a National Estuary Program, to connect and inspire people and tell the story of what is happening on and in the river.

A few specifics for the Estuary Partnership:

- Develop new strategies and methods to share information among partners and match the tool or method to the audience. Use social media outlets to reach younger citizens, for example, or web based resources like a discussion group to help broaden the connection of the Science Work Group.
- Create a clearinghouse for data and information sharing across agencies. Possibilities suggested include a database for getting permit data, shared access to digital copies of reports and shared habitat restoration data.
- People want to be a part of success; continue telling the success stories, share what is improving over the years, so people will have more faith in policies made down the line. Keep the messages and perspective fresh and in context.
- Remind the public and Congress why the Columbia River matters.
- Increase the opportunities for people to get on the river, maintain the focus on students and expand adult based education. Help people know what actions they can take and how their actions affect the water and habitat. Give them choices or better alternatives.
- Members of the Estuary Partnership Board of Directors can be stronger ambassadors to their communities, constituents and agencies.



Continue to work on regional metrics.

One of the overriding challenges will be to define metrics that track environmental change, not just processes. Environmental changes are slower to see; even with habitat restoration, where actions are concrete, it can take the ecosystem years to fully respond to and integrate the improvement.

A few specifics for the Estuary Partnership:

- Help establish regional goals for river health and recovery of species before we set out to achieve them. Keep the focus on the ecosystem and the regional context.
- Expand baseline/trend data to help guide our decisions.
- Metrics need to be kept broad enough to meet future needs for knowledge and be adaptive and show how the goals of a project translate into changes in the river.
- Focus is needed on toxics reduction and monitoring. This helps measure trends that will encourage success.

ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP NEXT STEPS

Debrah Marriott, Estuary Partnership Executive Director, gave a short summary of actions the Estuary Partnership can address, including a couple of recommendations that partners raised today. She announced that the Estuary Partnership has received funding from the US EPA to update its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan to include climate change adaptations.. The grant will allow the Estuary Partnership to review the Management Plan and develop adaptations and actions that address the impacts of climate change.

She noted that several staff people have been exploring better and more extensive use of social media.

One key activity of the Estuary Partnership will be to continue to work to secure Congressional action on the Columbia River Restoration Act of 2010.

The Estuary Partnership Board of Directors will review all the discussion notes and input at its September meeting. From there they will develop additional actions for the Estuary Partnership and continue moving forward with our partners on these ideas.

COLUMBIA RIVER RESTORATION ACT 2010
In February 2010 the Columbia River Restoration Act was introduced in Congress by Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley and Representative Earl Blumenauer. The bill would raise the stature of the river to that of the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes and give Congress the authority to appropriate funds annually to reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin.



Representative Deb Wallace is retiring from the Washington State Legislature. She has served the people of southwest Washington since 2003. Rep. Wallace made education and preparing our children for the global world of today a priority. In 2007, she reached out with Oregon Senator Dingfelder to institute a continuing cross river dialog, recognizing that 'a river runs through us'. Deb will continue her work as the Planning and Resource Manager with Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

We thank Deb for her leadership, her service and we wish her the very best.



We gratefully acknowledge the
East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District
for their contribution to this summit.