Department of Commerce
Innovation is in our nature.

Building Regional Alliances
Technical Assistance Opportunity for Puget Sound LIOs

Background: The Growth Management Services Unit of the Department of Commerce received federal funding [1] to provide technical assistance to Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs), or other regional entities, in support of the Puget Sound Partnership's *Action Agenda*.[2] Commerce staff will provide staff time and state agency expertise to develop strategies to address key land use issues that are barriers to implementing the *Action Agenda*.

Objectives:
- To develop and prioritize land use strategies that can be incorporated into upcoming Growth Management Act (GMA) updates and possibly tribal land use plans.
- To create a framework for ongoing regional work in Action Areas around the Sound.

Why participate: Commerce is aware that local government and tribes have limited staff capacity at this time. This is an opportunity to work on locally-identified priority issues by taking advantage of the technical assistance and resources that Commerce can provide. Commerce will do all of the work to organize, convene and facilitate meetings or workshops, identify needed resources, follow up on ideas and issues, and write drafts for commenting and final reports. Based on LIO-identified issues, Commerce will bring in other state agency resources to assist with strategy development.

Who should participate: Member counties, cities, and tribes of regional LIOs, and other stakeholders important to selected land use strategies. Participating LIOs or other regional entities must have a desire and the capacity to work on identified land use issues at an inter-jurisdictional level in June through December of 2013.

Timing: Commerce is funded to work with three to four LIOs on a regional alliance process in 2013. Commerce intends to convene the participants over this summer and the fall, with a report by December 2013 or January 2014. If an LIO is unable to participate this year, Commerce has requested funding to continue this work Soundwide, eventually working with every LIO.

Scope of project: This project can be as broad as an entire Action Area, a single watershed, or as narrow as a sub-basin of the watershed, or specific policy area. However, we encourage participants to choose a project that can be completed in the time available with tangible outcomes. *See attached Examples of Regional Alliance projects*. Process options include a short series of meetings or workshops (3-4), an all day workshop, or another process that meets the project objectives.

Outcomes:
- Prioritized barriers in plans, regulations and policies that are preventing achievement of protection and recovery targets in the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda.
- A list of countywide planning policies, comprehensive land use plan policies, regulations and other land use strategies, that could include tribal policies and strategies, to address protection and recovery targets.
- Regional strategies for incorporating agreed upon policies, regulations and best practices in GMA updates, regulations, and tribal land use plans; with recommendations for implementation of each strategy.

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[1] Commerce received a Watershed Protection and Restoration grant from the National Estuary Program. Funding is assured for 2013, and additional funding has been requested so that Commerce can work with all LIOs over three years.
[2] Commerce is responsible for implementing Near Team Action A4.1 on page 58 of the 2012/2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound. A4.1 NTA 1.

Examples of Regional Alliance Projects

Sub-basin Subarea Plan - _Land Use Issue:_ Puget Sound creek flows into Puget Sound Bay, with the largest oyster fishery in South Puget Sound. Most of the sub-basin is designated rural land with some agricultural operations. There is a small grocery store and gas station on the state highway. A landowner has proposed a comprehensive plan amendment to designate a large area around the store and gas station as a limited area of more intense rural development (LAMIRD) under the GMA. There are no current significant issues with water quality in Puget Sound Bay, but decreased water quality due to failing septic systems and stormwater runoff from development activities has been documented. The Tribe and other landowners are concerned that increased development could create significant water quality issues.
Process:
- Step 1: The County, Tribe, landowners, oyster company, and other stakeholders are convened by Commerce in a half-day workshop to identify and prioritize the land use issues raised by current zoning and the proposed LAMIRD.
- Step 2: Commerce convenes the stakeholders for a second half-day workshop to identify comprehensive plan policies and potential zoning changes to address identified priority issues.
- Step 3: Commerce staff write up the results of the two workshops for review by the stakeholders.
- Step 4: Commerce and the stakeholders present a final report on the results of the two workshops to the full LIO for consideration and adoption as a recommendation to the County.
Outcomes: The stakeholders have developed recommendations that can be incorporated in the comprehensive plan update, a working relationship, and a process to address ongoing issues in the sub-basin.

Countywide Planning Policies - _Land Use Issue:_ Glacier River runs along the border of two counties. Forest landowners in the upper river basin are interested in maintaining their land in forestry, but have issues with land use regulations that impact their ability to remain profitable. One issue for landowners with smaller land holdings is consistency of county critical area ordinances (CAOs) applicable to forest lands not governed by the Forest Practices Act. The Tribe is very interested in maintaining the land in forestry to reduce stormwater runoff and keep streams cool for salmon.
Process:
- Step 1: Commerce convenes a three-hour meeting of the forest landowners, Tribe, counties, a neighboring small town, and other stakeholders to identify and prioritize the land use issues raised by inconsistent CAOs.
- Step 2: Commerce convenes the stakeholders for a second three-hour meeting to discuss countywide planning policies that would provide guidance for developing more consistent CAOs as they apply to forest practices.
- Step 3: Commerce staff write up the results of the two meetings for review by the stakeholders.
- Step 4: Commerce/stakeholders present a final report to the LIO for adoption as a recommendation to the counties.
Outcomes: The stakeholders have developed recommendations for the counties' CAO updates, and a working relationship and a process to address ongoing issues in the watershed.

Floodplain Development
Land Use Issue: Part of the City of Rainville's downtown lies in the floodplain of the Rainier River. The City has just hired a new economic development director to spur economic activity in the City. She is anxious to look at new development potential in the city, including the downtown. The County is considering a rezone to decrease development in the floodplain outside of the City. The Tribe has invested in numerous restoration projects for salmon recovery, and is concerned about any new development or redevelopment in the floodplain.
- Step 1: Commerce convenes a three-hour meeting of the City, Tribe, County, the Economic Development Council, and other stakeholders to identify and prioritize the land use issues raised by floodplain development.
- Step 2: Commerce convenes the stakeholders for a second three-hour meeting to discuss countywide planning policies that would provide guidance for consistent zoning and floodplain regulations in the City and County.
- Step 3: Commerce staff write up the results of the two meetings for review by the stakeholders.
- Step 4: Commerce/stakeholders present final report to the LIO for recommendation to the County and City.
Outcomes: The stakeholders have developed recommendations for the County and City's zoning and floodplain regulation updates, and a working relationship and a process to address ongoing issues in the watershed.