Mitigation That Works

Forum Member Interviews as of December 18, 2007

Why Interviews?

- Begin to understand Forum participants' perspectives on:
  - What is working
  - What is not working
  - Specific suggestions for improvement
  - Defining successful mitigation
- Gather information to help plan and sequence issues for Forum deliberations

Interview Status

- To date 13 of 26 Forum members have been interviewed.
- Remaining interviews will be carried out ASAP
- Interview scheduling:
  - Kate Weinberger, (206) 447-1805

Perspectives on What is Working

- There have been a number of successful individual mitigation efforts.
- A number of mitigation tools show promise.
- There is good institutional expertise within permitting agencies.
- The “50%” failure rate may be exaggerated.

Perspectives on What Isn't Working - Overall

- Lack of trust between parties
- Too many varying expectations regarding mitigation; not all grounded in political, legal or technical realities
- Lack of will, capacity to implement more creative/newer approaches

Perspectives on What Isn't Working - Process

- System can be inefficient
- Lack of coordination among resource agencies and local jurisdictions
- Lack of capacity to make decisions quickly or keep up with applications throughout agencies, particularly at local government
- Lack of consistent, clear written policies to indicate preferred approaches
- Not enough incentives for creative solutions

Process
continued

- Not enough funding/resources for watershed evaluations / characterizations – not enough ecological information on which to base mitigation decisions
- Avoidance and minimization steps not documented properly, may be glossed over in some instances

Perspectives on What Isn’t Working - Technical

- General lack of technical success
- Permit conditions might not work even if implemented as written
- Lack of performance based evaluation
- Inadequate monitoring and enforcement
- Small, piecemeal mitigation projects don’t provide a lot of benefit; chronic resource problems remain unsolved

Suggestions for Improvement - Process

- Incorporate consistency into permitting
- Encourage coordinated planning among local jurisdictions
- Engage in internal agency assessments on mitigation issues/performance.
- Incorporate mitigation into land use and planning efforts
- Link to the Puget Sound strategy and to restoration efforts generally

Suggestions for Improvement - Technical

- Do not short-change avoidance and minimization
- Use natural processes when possible (i.e., less engineering)
- Consider a broader geographic range when identifying “local” mitigation sites
- Factor climate change into mitigation planning

Suggestions for Improvement

- Get agreement on what watershed-based mitigation is and then implement a watershed approach
- Provide adequate guidance on watershed-level mitigation
- Inform mitigation efforts with completed watershed plans and data

Defining “Successful Mitigation”

- A functionally equivalent, or more, site that meets performance standards and is self-sustaining
- Mitigaiton meets the needs/interests of the broader community and that benefits multiple public values
- The process is timely, consistent, understandable, predictable, affordable and includes accountability

Defining “Successful Mitigation”

- Establishes trust between and among permitters and permittees
- Allows for flexibility and creativity
- Integrated into other processes such as land use planning and restoration/recovery efforts
- Mitigation is watershed based

Defining “Successful Mitigation

- Mitigation is understandable to the public and incorporates an educational element
- Includes the appropriate balance of on and off-site mitigation
- Includes very clear/specific factors to measure success and should take into account ecological goals for specific sites