ATTACHMENT 6 -- EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR STRATEGY QUALITY AND FIT TO STRATEGY

The SRFB Review Panel evaluated how well each lead entity's list of projects addressed the priorities identified in the lead entity's strategy and/or recovery plan. To accomplish this, the Review Panel used a series of scored evaluation questions. Each of the 25 lists submitted by lead entities was evaluated.

For the 2005 grant round, the SRFB decided that the quality of lead entity strategies not covered by regional salmon recovery plans should be reviewed and evaluated by the Review Panel. In some cases, project lists would be based on both the lead entity strategy and a recovery plan. Strategy quality would be evaluated in those cases. Recovery plans would not be evaluated. Strategy quality also would be reviewed and evaluated for lead entities in recovery regions that chose not to use recovery plans as the basis for their project lists.

SRFB staff considered criteria used by three National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Technical Recovery Teams (TRTs) in reviewing watershed plans and regional plans, and consulted with affected lead entities to develop a basic approach and criteria for the evaluation of strategy quality. This approach is intended to be consistent with *"A Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development"* (June 2005 update).

Strategy Quality

The approach to reviewing and evaluating strategy quality here is to add a new component -- *the certainty of biologically effective lead entity strategies* -- to the specificity and focus components used in the 2004 grant round. Logically, a strategy that is more certain is likely to be more biologically effective. Below is an overview of specificity and focus criteria, followed by the criteria for certainty.

Specificity and Focus

The Review Panel's evaluation of the specificity and focus of a strategy was performed in five categories:

1. Species
2. Watershed and marine ecological processes
3. Habitat features
4. Actions and geographic areas
5. Community issues

These areas are based on the *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*. For each of the four categories the Review Panel rated the strategy *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, or *poor*.

1. Species and stocks[1]

The Review Panel considered:

- Does the strategy clearly identify all of the stocks in the WRIA(s) comprising the lead entity area?
- Is the status of each stock presented?
- Are one or more stocks prioritized for habitat restoration and/or protection actions?
- Is there a clear and supportable rationale for establishing these priorities?
- Do the project ranking criteria reflect the priorities?

In an *excellent* strategy: The strategy clearly identifies all salmonid species and stocks[2] in the lead entity area, and the status of each stock; one or more stocks are prioritized[3]; a clear and supportable rationale is presented to justify the priorities; and the project ranking criteria[4] reflect these priorities.

2. Watershed and marine ecological processes

The Review Panel considered:

- Does the strategy clearly identify the watershed and marine ecological processes (i.e., habitat forming processes) that are limiting factors for prioritized stocks?
- Does the strategy prioritize limiting watershed and marine ecological processes?
- Is there a clear and supportable rationale for these priorities?
- Do the project ranking criteria reflect the above priorities?

In an *excellent* strategy: The strategy clearly identifies limiting watershed processes and prioritizes these watershed processes for the benefit of priority species and stocks; there is a clear and supportable rationale for these priorities; and the lead entity's ranking criteria reflect these priorities.

3. Habitat features

The Review Panel considered:

- Does the strategy clearly identify habitat features (i.e., habitat conditions) that are limiting factors for prioritized stocks?

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[1] See *A Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*, June 2005 update, for details.

[2] "Stock" is a salmonid subpopulation as designated in the *Salmon and Steelhead Stock Inventory*. Alternatively, lead entities may choose the term "population" as used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-Fisheries.

[3] This means that the lead entity has identified one or several species or stocks as the highest priority for habitat protection and/or restoration actions. Lead entities are not expected to prioritize one listed species or stock over another, although they may want to prioritize one listed stock of the same species over another if NOAA-Fisheries or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recovery documents have identified high priority populations for their area. A lead entity also may choose to prioritize unlisted species and stocks. If a lead entity strategy adopts a multi-species approach, it is important that the species or stocks be identified along with the rationale for selecting them.

[4] The Review Panel will expect that the ranking criteria used by the lead entity will be part of the lead entity strategy or will be submitted with the strategy.

- Does the strategy prioritize limiting habitat features?
- Is there a clear and supportable rationale for establishing these priorities?
- Do the project ranking criteria reflect the above priorities?

In an *excellent* strategy: The strategy clearly identifies limiting habitat features and prioritizes these habitat features for the benefit of priority species and stocks; there is a clear and supportable rationale for these priorities; and the lead entity's ranking criteria reflect these priorities.

4. Actions and geographic areas

The Review Panel considered:

- Does the strategy clearly identify specific actions for restoration and/or protection of targeted habitat features and watershed processes?
- Does the strategy prioritize actions for restoration and/or protection of targeted habitat features and watershed processes?
- Does the strategy identify specific geographic areas associated with prioritized actions?
- Is there a clear and supportable rationale for establishing these priorities?
- Do the project ranking criteria reflect these priorities?

In an *excellent* strategy: The strategy clearly identifies and prioritizes specific actions and geographic areas for the benefit of priority species and stocks; there is a clear and supportable rationale for these priorities; and the project ranking criteria reflect these priorities[5].

5. Community issues

Lead entity citizens committees often consider non-technical issues when evaluating and prioritizing projects. Projects may be ranked higher by the committee because of strong community support or because the project may be useful in helping build future community support, or if there are benefits to the community in addition to those for salmon. How the consideration of community values[6] and community support[7] might be addressed in a lead entity strategy is discussed in detail in the *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development.*

If community issues are taken into consideration by a lead entity in evaluating and ranking projects, the issues being considered should be identified and justified in the lead entity strategy. If not, the strategy should at least provide for an effective process to evaluate and weigh community issues as they arise.

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[5] Not all priority actions need to translate into priority areas of the watershed but all priority areas should have priority actions. See the *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*.

[6] "Community values" include social, cultural, economic, and political values. Examples include values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the role of government, private property rights, land use planning and regulation, economic use of land, and the value of endangered species.

[7] "Community support" could mean willing landowner(s), support by elected officials, a supportive economic sector (e.g. agriculture, forestry, and tourism), or support from other people or entities affected by proposed actions.

If community issues were taken into consideration by a lead entity in evaluating and ranking projects, the Review Panel will evaluate the specificity and focus of the strategy in this area.

The Review Panel considered:

- Does the strategy clearly identify community issues and concerns regarding salmon habitat protection and restoration?
- Does the strategy propose specific actions for building or maintaining community support for salmon protection and restoration efforts? For the highest biological priority actions and areas?
- Does the strategy prioritize these actions?
- Does the strategy articulate what community values will be taken into consideration in evaluating and ranking projects?
- Is there a clear and supportable rationale for establishing these priorities?
- Do the project ranking criteria reflect the priorities?
- Does the strategy provide for an effective process for evaluating and weighing community values and taking these values into consideration when developing and prioritizing project lists?

In an *excellent* strategy: The strategy provides for an effective process for evaluating and weighing community values and taking these values into consideration when developing and prioritizing project lists; proposes specific actions for building or maintaining community support for highest biological priority actions and areas; lists community values that will be taken into consideration in project evaluation and ranking; and the project evaluation criteria reflect these priorities and values.

Certainty

This rating draws in part on the "certainty analysis" developed and applied by TRTs in Washington. The approach used here contains elements that are similar to those used by TRTs. However, the approaches are not identical because the scopes of recovery plans and lead entity strategies are different. For example, important differences include: (1) TRTs reviewed strategies for all Hs (Habitat, hydropower, harvest, hatcheries) whereas the SRFB effort is confined to the habitat chapters of recovery plans, (2) TRTs included questions relating to cross-H integration whereas the SRFB review is confined to the habitat strategy, (3) the TRT approach includes elements (e.g., whether plans used multiple independent models) that were deemed to be above and beyond what is reasonably available to lead entities not covered in recovery planning, and (4) some TRT questions (e.g., actions consistent with strategy) are already reasonably addressed by SRFB specificity and focus categories. Adding a certainty component to bolster reviews that enable evaluation of lead entity strategy quality is consistent with, but not as extensive as, the level of review and evaluation to which regional recovery plans undergo.

This addition bolsters evaluation of quality by aligning as consistently as possible with the evaluations used by TRTs operating in Washington. It retains the strong foundation provided by existing specificity and focus elements in the fifth and sixth rounds and is complementary to the five questions in the last round asking whether there *"…is a clear and supportable rationale for these priorities."*

The Review Panel considered:

- How well supported are hypotheses/assumptions for (1) attributes (e.g., abundance, productivity distribution, diversity), and (2) watershed processes and habitat conditions, that are most limiting fish response? What is the nature of the data to support these hypotheses? [Watershed Data Quality]
- How well have the habitat actions been shown to work? [Empirical Support]

In an *excellent* strategy: The strategy addresses with empirical data all key assumptions related to factors most limiting watershed processes and habitat conditions affecting fish response, and clearly demonstrates that actions identified in the strategy will achieve the stated goals and objectives for the prioritized species/stock(s).

For background, summaries of review questions used by two of the three TRTs working in Washington are found in at the end of this Attachment.

Fit of the Project List to the Strategy

The Review Panel's evaluation of the fit of the lead entity list of projects to the lead entity strategy and/or recovery as performed using two categories: Priority actions and areas, and project ranking. These areas are based on the *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*. For each of the evaluation categories, the Review Panel will rate the strategy *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, or *poor*.

1. Actions and geographic areas

The Review Panel considered:

- The extent the project list addresses the highest priority action and areas
- The extent that those actions and areas benefit the highest priority stocks, limiting watershed processes, and limiting habitat features.

In an *excellent* strategy: The entire project list addresses the highest priority actions and areas[8], benefiting the highest priority stocks and the highest priority habitat features and watershed processes.

2. Fit of project ranking

The Review Panel considered the extent the rank <u>order</u> of the project list addresses the highest priority:

- Stocks

[8] Not all priority actions need to translate into priority areas of the watershed but all priority areas should have priority actions. See the *Guide to Lead Entity Strategy Development*.

- Limiting watershed processes
- Limiting habitat features
- Actions
- Geographic areas
- Community interests

In an *excellent* strategy: The rank order of the entire list of projects fits the specific and focused priorities (stocks, watershed processes, habitat features, actions, geographic areas, community issues) presented in the strategy. That is, the highest ranked projects fit the highest specific and focused priorities identified in the strategy or plan and, if there are projects that address lower priorities in the strategy or plan, they are lower in the list.

Relationship Between Strategies, Recovery Plans, Project Lists

Although not rated, the Review Panel will provide a narrative describing the relationship between strategies, plans, and lists.

The Review Panel considered:

- Is the strategy included in a regional salmon recovery plan prepared by a regional organization?
- Does the project list reflect the local and regional priorities in the plan?
- Does the rank order of projects on the list consistently and clearly reflect the priorities in the recovery plan?

Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team – "Certainty Analysis" Questions

1. Did the analysis use one or multiple independent models to understand potential fish responses to habitat actions? What is the nature of the analytical support for the model linking salmon population status to changes in habitat-forming processes and instream habitat conditions? [Independent Models and Analytical Support]

2. How well supported are the hypotheses for (1) the Viable Salmonid Population (VSP) attributes *(i.e., abundance, productivity, distribution, diversity)* most limiting recovery and (2) the habitat-forming processes or conditions that are limiting population response? What is the nature of the watershed-specific data to support (either of) these hypotheses? [Watershed Empirical Data]

3. Is the recovery strategy consistent with the recovery hypotheses for population status and key habitat factors limiting recovery? [Consistent with Hypothesis]

4. Does the habitat recovery strategy preserve options for recovery of all four VSP parameters across all Hs? [Preserves Options]

5. Are the habitat recovery actions consistent with the recovery strategy? [Consistent with strategy]

6. How well have the habitat actions been shown to work? [Empirical support]

Interior Columbia Technical Recovery Team Review Questions

"…The following review questions are designed to provide a consistent framework for evaluating proposed recovery plans for Interior Columbia Basin Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs). The questions are designed to identify ways to increase the scientific rigor of proposed recovery plans – thereby increasing the certainty that recovery objectives will be achieved. The review is designed to apply a similar set of questions to each of the four major elements of recovery plans - considerations for habitat, hatchery, harvest, and hydropower.

Specific Review Questions

1. Does the plan explicitly aim to achieve population viability? Does the plan explicitly address Interior Columbia TRT Population and ESU/Major Populations Group (MPG) viability criteria?

2. Are the current status and trends of ESUs and populations characterized with respect to TRT viability criteria?

3. Does the plan explicitly integrate recovery strategies or actions across the four Hs?

4. Can the plan be readily aggregated to address recovery at the ESU level?

5. Framework questions - for application to each planning sector (H)
    a. Modeling Framework - one or more independent models to assess fish response?
    b. Analytical Support - Support for models/assessment conclusions – are the conclusions logical?
    c. Population Specific Data - use of empirical data from the target population. How is lack of specific data handled?
    d. Consistency - rationale linking action plan to population/ESU objectives and limiting factors.
    e. Empirical support – Is there empirical evidence that the proposed actions will have the desired effect relative to existing environmental conditions? Does the plan cite examples of responses to action consistent with plan expectations?
    f. Is the component/plan part of an integrated strategy at the population level, the MPG or ESU level?
    g. Is there an explicit adaptive management and m&e plan?

6. <u>Tributary Habitat Element</u>

   a. Did the analysis use one or multiple independent models to understand potential fish responses to habitat improvement strategies? What is the nature of the analytical support linking population status to changes in habitat forming processes and stream conditions?

   b. How well supported are hypotheses/assumptions for 1) VSP related factors most limiting recovery and 2) habitat forming processes or conditions that are limiting population response?

   c. Does the plan describe a tributary habitat recovery strategy? If so, is the recovery strategy consistent with recovery hypotheses linking population status and key limiting habitat factors?

   d. Are the proposed actions in the plan consistent with target changes in habitat conditions? Are there empirical examples demonstrating the proposed actions are effective?

   e. Does the tributary habitat recovery strategy preserve options for recovery across all Hs?”