

**ISLAND LIO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPROVAL**  
**Island LIO Executive Committee Meeting: April 24, 2019**

**Topic:** Strengthening the role of LIOs in Action Agenda implementation and in influencing Puget Sound recovery investments/actions.

**Background:** Prior to the implementation of the EPA National Estuary Program-Geographic Funds funding model, LIOs met with EPA to encourage a regional/local allocation similar to the State Salmon Recovery Funding Board model (70% Watershed/30% Regional Funding Split). In the 70/30 model, LIOs would have influence over the vast majority of NEP funding investments towards Puget Sound recovery (see attached letter from 2014). It should be noted that an allocation formula at that level is a model EPA has not implemented anywhere else in the United States. The decision not to implement a watershed-driven 70/30 local allocation stemmed from the absence of developed/adopted Ecosystem Recovery Plans that would prioritize NTA investments. The 2016 NEP funding model allowed for a direct allocation of \$100,000 per LIO or about 4% of total NEP Funding (96% Regional/4% LIO) with the remaining funds allocated by the Strategic Initiative Leads and their respective Advisory Teams.

The 2018-2022 Action Agenda is now complete and the first round of funding recommendations are being reviewed for 2018 EPA NEP funds. The level of influence provided by LIOs included accounting for 20% of the final tier for NTAs that went into the Action Agenda and a continuation of the direct \$100,000 allocation.

At a recent LIO Coordinator's meeting, we had a discussion around the current NEP funding model and the role of LIOs in implementation of that model. The current NEP funding model lacks meaningful and effective input from the LIOs and those elected officials, agencies, Tribes, and other key Puget Sound recovery participants. The conversation also broadened into the role of LIOs in Action Agenda implementation. The Coordinators noted that although there have been steps toward greater collaboration and communication with LIOs, LIOs are not treated as partners within the NEP Funding Model/regional SIAT processes. LIOs are looking for additional partnership opportunities within the NEP funding model and Action Agenda implementation processes more broadly.

Some examples of specific feedback from various LIO Coordinators is copied below:

- \$100,000 is insufficient incentive to maintain LIO participation.
- Local partners do not want to come forward to participate, because the lack of dedicated funding is so minimal/not commensurate with the time it takes to engage in the process. We are losing human infrastructure and participation in the process, because the funding is much too small to justify participation.
- LIOs are not being considered in SIAT prioritization process, are blind to the SIAT criteria, and unclear what criteria they use to make funding decisions. Need transparency around process to maintain/build trust with NTA owners and maintain engagement/buy-in in Action Agenda.
- EPA had previously noted that once LIO Ecosystem Recovery Plans were developed and in place that would trigger greater coordination with the LIOs. We are past that point, and results have not been seen there yet. Time to circle back to EPA and revisit the discussion.
- This is a bigger issue than the funding model. This is a Partnership issue as well because the Partnership created the LIOs. LIOs are under-funded, under-powered, and under-supported. The Partnership is missing an opportunity to take advantage of LIOs and the membership available. There is a hope that Puget Sound Partnership will be advocating for the LIOs now that the LIO Plans are done.
- All LIO Coordinators concurred that they will move this conversation to their ECB Representatives.

**LIO Coordinators next steps:** two months' timeframe (end of April) for LIO Coordinators to talk with LIO committee members and ECB representatives.

**Potential for New Opportunities:**

When the existing funding model was developed, LIOs did not have Ecosystem Recovery plans. Now that each LIO has developed (and are engaged in ongoing adaptive management efforts) Ecosystem Recovery Plans we wonder if there is a new opportunity for LIOs to have increased influence over NEP investments and allow a more meaningful contribution to Puget Sound recovery. Along with the Ecosystem Recovery Plans, LIOs provide continuity to Action Agenda implementation. Outside of the local LIO processes, LIO representatives are utilized as part of the regional process to review NTAs for inclusion into the Action Agenda as well as on the Strategic Initiative Advisory Teams. This local perspective has often been highlighted as invaluable to those discussions but is occurring outside the LIO process rather than within it.

LIO Coordinators have committed to bring this topic before their Committees in an effort to see if the Committees are supportive of engaging the LIO ECB representatives to work through ECB to develop additional opportunities for LIOs to influence Puget Sound recovery investments/actions. Discussion points with ECB include:

- Developing alternative pathways for LIOs to influence NEP funding recommendations. LIOs are interested in opportunities that provide continuity and protect/enhance existing investments. Options that have been discussed include:
  - I. Changing the LIO/SIL allocation where LIOs allocate more than \$100,000 per year.
  - II. Alter the make-up of the SIATs by reserving a seat for each LIO Coordinator (or designee) on each of the SIATs (analogous to the Salmon Recovery approach).
- Utilize LIOs to develop and implement the regional Mobilizing Funding Initiative (coordinate through ECB).
- Utilize LIOs to prioritize addressing gaps and barriers to Puget Sound recovery (coordinate through ECB).

**For Island LIO EC Approval:**

*Option 1:* Island LIO EC supportive of engaging Whidbey Basin Action Area ECB Representative, Ron Wesen, on issue with goal of finding additional utility for LIOs in the recovery framework.

*Option 2:* Not supportive of engaging Whidbey Basin Action Area ECB Representative, Ron Wesen, on this issue.