

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OVERVIEW

This draft Water Resource Inventory Area 1 (WRIA 1) Watershed Management Plan – Phase 1 (WRIA 1 WMP) was developed through the cooperative efforts of local stakeholders and governments under the framework provided by the Washington State Watershed Management Act (RCW 90.82). The WRIA 1 WMP provides a roadmap for addressing water quantity, water quality, instream flow, and fish habitat challenges faced by residents of WRIA 1 now and in the future, with an initial focus on 2005/2006 activities. It is to be viewed as a living document that will evolve and develop over time with continued refinement of the technical information necessary to respond to existing and new challenges.

The WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan – Phase I is comprised of five sections and a number of appendices. Information is presented in the following manner:

- Section 1 – This section provides a description of the WRIA 1 Project process and the approach for developing the WRIA 1 WMP;
- Section 2 – Included in Section 2 is an overview of the actions taken and proposed as part of the WRIA 1 Project to build upon and enhance local knowledge about water resource issues and concerns. This section also includes a description of the technical tools being developed to support local decision-making with regard to water resource management issues. Also included in Section 2 of the WRIA 1 WMP is a discussion of the interrelationship between the Watershed Planning Process and the resolution of Tribal/Federal reserved water rights and related Treaty-based claims;
- Section 3 – This section of the WMP focuses on the recommended approaches and options for addressing key issues and managing water resources in WRIA 1;
- Section 4 – This section provides information on the approach for implementing and updating the WMP including resource considerations; and
- Section 5 – Included in this section is a summary of the actions, schedule, and resources needed to implement the WMP.

- Appendices – The appendices include supplemental documents and documentation considered necessary to understand some of the content provided in the five sections of the WRIA 1 WMP.

The Planning Unit approved the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan - Phase 1 on March 23, 2005. Legislative acts of those local governments participating in the Planning Unit under which said local governments authorized approval of the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan - Phase 1 are compiled in Appendix G of the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan -Phase 1. Appendix G is hereby incorporated by reference into the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan - Phase 1. Appendix G also includes other actions of Planning Unit members authorizing approval of the Watershed Management Plan – Phase 1.

This Executive Summary is intended to provide an overview of the content for each section of the WRIA 1 WMP- Phase 1. For further detail or expansion of content covered in the Executive Summary, the reader should refer to the full version of the WRIA 1 WMP- Phase 1.

## **SECTION 1**

In 1998, the Washington State Watershed Management Act (Act) legislation was passed and codified as Chapter 90.82 RCW. The specific geographic area covered under the Act is referred to as a “Water Resource Inventory Area”.

The geographic area for which this watershed plan was developed is Water Resource Inventory Area 1 (WRIA 1). WRIA 1 encompasses a majority of Whatcom County with a portion extending into Skagit County. For purposes of the WRIA 1 project, the study area extended into British Columbia because a portion of the WRIA 1 watershed is located in Canada.

In general, the requirements for participation, technical issues, and plan development outlined in RCW 90.82 are divided into four phases: Phase I is an organization phase, Phase II is an assessment phase, Phase III is a plan development phase, and Phase IV is an implementation phase.

The local WRIA 1 Watershed Management Project started in October 1998 after a Memorandum of Agreement was signed by four of the five “Initiating Governments”. The WRIA 1 Initiating Governments are the City of Bellingham, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, the Public Utility District No. 1, and Whatcom County. During the organization phase, the Initiating Governments established the Planning Unit to ensure representation of a broad range of water resource interests. There are 16 caucuses representing government and non-governments water interests on the WRIA 1 Planning Unit. The WRIA 1 Planning Unit recommends approval of the WRIA 1 WMP to the Joint Board. The Joint Board was created by a 1999 Interlocal Agreement and is comprised of representatives of the City of Bellingham, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Public Utility District No. 1, and Whatcom County. Pursuant to the October 1998 Memorandum of Agreement, this Interlocal Agreement further formalized the government-to-government relationship essential to the tribes’ participation in the process.

In March 2000, a general scope of work for the WRIA 1 Project was developed by project participants and approved by the Planning Unit and Joint Board. The March 2000 Scope of Work identifies project goals, the technical elements to be addressed (water quantity, water quality, instream flow, and fish habitat), the approach for defining solutions, and elements to be considered for WMP implementation including governance structure, funding, long-term monitoring, and adaptive management.

## **SECTION 2**

Section 2 of the WRIA 1 WMP describes the actions taken and proposed to build upon and enhance local knowledge of water resource issues and concerns. It also describes the tools being developed to support decision-making to address the concerns and to meet the adopted WRIA 1 Project goals (March 2000 Scope of Work). Work was conducted in the following areas: Technical Assessments, Socioeconomic Conditions/Methodology, and Local Perspectives.

- Technical Assessment – Technical assessments were completed for water quality, water quantity, instream flows, and fish habitat. The work undertaken was based

on the goals and requirements identified in the March 2000 WRIA 1 Project Scope of Work. Local and outside expertise was hired to perform the assessments in coordination with WRIA 1 project participants. Section 2 of the WRIA 1 WMP provides detailed summaries of the work performed as part of the WRIA 1 Project as well as the approaches taken for the various tasks. It also includes information on technical work to be completed in 2005, and recommendations for future work. In addition, a list of the reports prepared in response to the technical work is included in the WMP appendices and are available on the WRIA 1 Project website ([www.wria1project.wsu.edu](http://www.wria1project.wsu.edu)).

- Socioeconomic Conditions/Methodology – A task associated with developing the WRIA 1 WMP included hiring a consultant to conduct a socioeconomic analysis for WRIA 1. The purpose of the analysis was to begin developing the tools that would help decision-makers understand the broad range of socioeconomic consequences associated with different management options. The tools developed include a baseline characterization of socioeconomic conditions in WRIA 1, water use and demand assessments, an assessment of methods to analyze non-market goods and services, development of the methodology to analyze impacts of management actions including long-term data collection protocols, and a socioeconomic analysis. Section 2 of the WRIA 1 WMP provides additional detail on the approach for performing the work and the content of the reports generated.
- Local Perspectives – In addition to meeting the WRIA 1 Project goals and requirements, efforts were made to address the needs of the WRIA 1 Project participants. To identify those needs, a number of opportunities and actions were incorporated into the project process including: participation in various groups such as the Staff Team, Technical Teams (Public Involvement and Education, Water Quantity, Water Quality, Instream Flow/Fish Habitat, Decision Support System, and Watershed Plan), Planning Unit, and Joint Board; participation in workshops, symposiums, fairs, and forums; questionnaires completed as part of

the caucus formation and survey work conducted in support of developing the March 2000 Scope of Work; and survey work through the Decision Support System worksheets conducted during the Phase II Technical Assessment work. These activities and opportunities were used to direct the technical and socioeconomic assessment work described in Section 2 as well as the WRIA 1 WMP program recommendations and implementation described in Sections 3 and 4.

### **SECTION 3**

The purpose of Section 3 of the WRIA 1 WMP- Phase 1 is to identify the initial solutions, actions, and alternatives for addressing the key issues identified in Section 2 and the requirements described in the WRIA 1 March 2000 Scope of Work. An overview of the initial solutions and recommended actions are provided below and are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.

- Early Activities – There were two components to the initial solutions: Early Action Projects and Multipurpose Water Storage Assessment. The Early Action projects were on-the-ground projects recommended by caucus members and/or WRIA 1 Technical Team members that addressed known or potential water quantity, water quality, instream flow, and/or fish habitat problems. The recommended projects were evaluated by the Planning Unit and Joint Board against project guidelines established as part of the Early Action process. Two Early Action projects, which are discussed in detail in Section 3, were funded as part of this effort. It is important to note that numerous complementary “Early Actions” were performed and continue to be performed throughout WRIA 1 pursuant to various governmental, private, and non-governmental agency initiatives (e.g., salmon recovery, TMDL implementation). The other early activity occurring as part of the WRIA 1 Project was completion of a WRIA 1 Multipurpose Water Storage Options Assessment. This effort was led by the Public Utility District No. 1 with grant funds received from the Washington State Department of Ecology. The purpose of the assessment was to compile and

reconsider all of the storage options that had previously been identified in studies or plans conducted within WRIA 1 and to receive new ideas on storage options from WRIA 1 participants. The approach to conducting the assessment and the outcomes of the report are provided in Section 3.

- WRIA 1 Management Option Catalog – The WRIA 1 Management Option (MO) Catalog is the outcome of an effort by WRIA 1 participants to document and describe potential management options for addressing water resource management issues. The approach to developing the MO Catalog is discussed in Section 3.
- Instream Flow Selection and Adoption Action Plan – In the adopted March 2000 Scope of Work for the WRIA 1 Project, it was agreed that the existing established instream flows would be re-evaluated as part of the WRIA 1 Project. The purpose of the WRIA 1 Instream Flow Selection and Adoption Action Plan (ISF Action Plan) is to describe the proposed process for re-examining the existing instream flows and for selecting, determining achievability, adopting, and enforcing instream flow levels throughout WRIA 1. The ISF Action Plan is an essential component in achieving the overall goal of the WRIA 1 Project - to have water of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of current and future human generations, including the restoration of salmon, steelhead, and trout populations to healthy and harvestable levels and the improvement of habitats on which we collectively rely. The current draft of the ISF Action Plan, which is included in the WRIA 1 WMP-Phase 1 Appendices, will be used as a guideline to implement Instream Flow Pilot Negotiations within WRIA 1. The information learned in the Pilot Negotiation process will be used to modify the ISF Action Plan over time. The Instream Flow Pilot Negotiations will be the focus of implementation actions for the WRIA 1 Project 2005-2006 Work Plan, which is described in Section 5. Section 3 provides detailed information on the approach to developing the ISF Action Plan as well as the process for approaching the ISF Pilot Negotiation projects.
- WRIA 1 Pilot Projects, WRIA-Wide Programs, and Other Recommendations – Section 3 of the WRIA 1 WMP-Phase 1 identifies a number of recommendations for projects and programs to address issues identified in Section 2 of the WMP. The approach for

identifying the projects and programs varied and is discussed in detail in Section 3. In all cases, opportunities were provided to WRIA 1 participants to identify, formulate and/or comment on recommended projects and programs. Following are the projects and programs described in Section 3.6 and 3.7.

- ◆ Drainage Based Management
- ◆ E. Hemmi Neighborhood Wetland and Stream Restoration
- ◆ Ground Water Augmentation of Streamflow
- ◆ Low Impact Development Facility and Road Pilot Projects – 1) Whatcom County Facility and Road Projects and 2) Guide Meridian Road Project
- ◆ Compliance Program
- ◆ Low Impact Development (LID)
- ◆ Natural Resource Policy Integration
- ◆ Water Use Efficiency
- ◆ Public Involvement and Education
- WRIA 1 Long Term Monitoring Program – The purpose of the WRIA 1 Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) is to evaluate WRIA 1 Project success, and ensure that the WRIA 1 Project goals outlined in the March 2000 Scope of Work are met. The LTMP serves as a fundamental building block to the WRIA 1 Project by providing on-going information on the status of various water resource concerns, potential trends, causes/sources of problems, and the effectiveness of management actions. The approach to pursuing this program is outlined in Section 3.

## **SECTION 4**

One of the fundamental premises upon which the WRIA 1 Project was developed, is the recognition that effective water resource management required a commitment extending beyond the development of the Watershed Management Plan itself. Section 4 of the WRIA 1 WMP- Phase 1 describes actions being recommended to address considerations outlined in the March 2000 Scope of Work relative to ensuring plan implementation. Included in the

described actions are an implementation and adaptive management strategy. The implementation strategy recommended is a multi-staged approach that considers resource needs for the short and long term implementation. The adaptive management strategy provides a very simplistic illustration of the strategy conceived as part of the March 2000 Scope of Work.

## **SECTION 5**

A summary of implementation actions, resource needs, schedule, and recommended lead entities is provided in Section 5. The focus of the implementation schedule is on actions that can be achieved within a two year timeframe (2005-2006) with existing and anticipated resources. Included in the tasks outlined are efforts directed toward obtaining additional funding through state grants, federal appropriations, and securing local funds.