

North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership

CHARTER

December 8, 2009

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Article 1 – Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership (“the Stronghold Partnership”) is to identify and protect a network of the healthiest remaining wild Pacific salmon ecosystems in North America to ensure the long-term survival of salmon, steelhead, and the many species that depend on them and inhabit these watersheds. A distributed network of wild salmon strongholds capturing key centers of productivity, abundance and diversity (species, run-timing and life histories) provides a foundation for a range-wide strategy to ensure the viability of wild Pacific salmon into the future.

- 1.2 The Stronghold Partnership is a voluntary, incentive-based initiative intended to supplement ongoing ecosystem protection and restoration efforts by providing leadership, enhanced coordination and public and private resources to support priority actions.

- 1.3 Specifically, the Stronghold Partnership will engage in the following activities:
 - 1.3.1 Identify a distributed network of wild Pacific salmon strongholds in western North America. The network will be sufficient in size, number and location to ensure the long-term survival of wild Pacific salmon and steelhead;
 - 1.3.2 Focus initial efforts on a small number of strongholds per state in order to develop replicable partnership models resulting in effective and enduring conservation;
 - 1.3.3 Integrate existing assessments and conservation plans to identify priority actions needed to accelerate restoration and protection of key ecosystem processes and functions;
 - 1.3.4 Work with communities to build local support and participation for conservation activities and develop innovative, science-based approaches to protect or restore each wild salmon stronghold;
 - 1.3.5 Utilize streamlined delivery mechanisms, where possible, to channel resources towards priority salmon conservation and restoration actions;
 - 1.3.6 Secure resources via federal, state or local legislation, public and private grants or contributions, or other means within participants’ organizational constraints;

- 1.3.7 Work with governments and NGO's to monitor long term trends of salmon and steelhead and ecosystem health in strongholds; and
- 1.3.8 Identify and pursue avenues for international cooperation with jurisdictions and nations within the range of wild salmon across the North Pacific Rim.

Article 2 - Definitions

The definitions set forth below apply to this initiative:

- 2.1 **Biological Diversity** The full range of variety and variability within and among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which they occur. This definition encompasses diversity at the ecosystem, community, species, and genetic levels and the interaction of these components.¹
- 2.2 **Learning Network** Linking the knowledge, experiences and know-how of participants in this initiative by sharing conservation approaches and best practices, research and monitoring methods and data; conducting joint training; and striving to create compatible and comparable data systems to assess the status, trends and health of salmon ecosystems.
- 2.3 **Network** A conservation concept operating on multiple scales that expresses the importance of ecological processes, ecosystem function and connectivity across the range of wild Pacific salmon. A network at regional scales implies the site-specific delineation of an interconnected set of freshwater and estuarine habitats. Through the continuum of habitats, the network supports life history diversity and productivity of salmon populations and run/race. At continental and global scales, a network supports an interconnected set of distributed metapopulations that are resilient to long term anthropogenic changes or changes in climate and habitat suitability.

A "Network", as defined herein, is based on the following principles of conservation biology:

- 2.3.1 Provides sufficient habitat and sustains the ecological processes necessary for persistence of the target species;
- 2.3.2 Is sufficient in size to maintain the range and variability necessary to stimulate the evolutionary changes likely to maintain species diversity;
- 2.3.3 Is adequately protected from edge and external effects;

¹ Canadian Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Vancouver, Canada, June, 2005

- 2.3.4 Supports populations within the stronghold that are at sufficient distance to reduce likelihood of being affected by the same disturbance;
- 2.3.5 Supports populations large enough to be self-sustaining in the face of demographic or genetic stochasticity.

2.4 **Protection** Putting in place mechanisms which allow the natural ecosystem processes of a site to continue to function over a short or long time span. On public lands, examples might include establishing land allocations or management standards which emphasize the protection and restoration of watershed health and aquatic and riparian dependent resources. On private land, examples might include the purchase of riparian conservation easements or purchase of land by a conservation land trust.

2.5 **Restoration** The recovery of watershed functions and related physical, biological, and chemical processes to promote recovery of riparian and aquatic ecosystem structure and function. Restoration may include a mix of passive and active management techniques.

2.6 **Salmon Stronghold** Status conferred to a defined geographical unit which meets biological criteria for abundance, productivity, diversity (life history and run timing) habitat quality, or other biological attributes important to sustaining viable populations of wild Pacific salmon throughout their range. The term stronghold refers to a watershed, multiple watersheds, or other defined spatial units where populations are strong, diverse, and the habitat has a high intrinsic potential to support a particular species, or suite of species.

2.7 **Viability** Capacity for survival; capacity for living, developing, and reproducing under favorable conditions. Viability indicates the ability of a population to persist for many generations or over long time periods.

Article 3 – Background and Conservation Assumptions

- 3.1 Wild Pacific salmon are a central part of the culture, economy and environment of Western North America. Salmon generate billions of dollars of economic activity, provide thousands of jobs and are a keystone species, supporting food webs in freshwater and marine environments.
- 3.2 Wild Pacific salmon have suffered severe declines throughout their southern range, leading to large-scale restoration efforts. Many of the efforts to reverse population declines have been directed at highly impacted systems.
- 3.3 Salmon will continue to face significant challenges in the future. During periods of rapid environmental change like that anticipated over the next several decades, maintaining key ecosystem processes and functions, population abundance, and genetic integrity are vital to ensuring the health of wild salmon populations. In light of these challenges, it is vital to make strategic investments now as a cost-effective strategy to establish a range-wide network of salmon strongholds to ensure wild salmon survival for future generations.
- 3.4 Salmon are often a keystone species and an indicator of ecosystem health. Maintaining healthy populations of salmon requires the close coordination and cooperation of federal, tribal, state and local governments, public and private land managers, fisheries managers, power authorities and others. No single government agency has the authority to lead a broad-scale effort to protect salmon strongholds. Thus where protection exists within a stronghold, such as the Key Watershed designations on federal lands, new efforts should build on this foundation.
- 3.5 Current measures to recover threatened or endangered stocks should be complemented by identifying and sustaining core centers of abundance, productivity and diversity in the healthiest remaining wild salmon ecosystems throughout their range. A synergistic network of core wild salmon centers of abundance and diversity is intended to complement, not substitute for, work in impacted systems and will maintain and can increase long-term resilience by securing genetically diverse source populations of wild Pacific salmon that may also help re-populate or provide other ecological benefits to adjoining areas.
- 3.6 Creating a learning network to share best practices and approaches, employ consistent and comparable metrics, and assess regional status and trends

will benefit wild salmon conservation and sustainable use. An ecosystem approach to protection, restoration and management is imperative.

- 3.7 Greater coordination between public and private actors can help deliver conservation benefits to strongholds by marshaling and focusing resources on high priority protection and restoration actions.

Article 4 – Principles

The principles set forth below provide important guidance for this initiative:

- 4.1 **Voluntary Cooperative Approach** The Stronghold Partnership is a voluntary public-private partnership entity promoting cooperative conservation.
- 4.2 **Ecosystem Function** During periods of rapid environmental change like that anticipated over the next 50 years, maintaining key ecosystem processes and functions is vital to ensuring healthy wild salmon populations and the ecological and economic benefits they provide.
- 4.3 **Best Available Science** The Stronghold Partnership will employ a science-based approach to salmon ecosystems, informed by and using the best available science.
- 4.4 **Long Term Reliance on Natural Processes** Management within strongholds will be encouraged to rely on natural processes rather than engineered approaches to increase biological diversity (e.g. hatcheries, fish farms),
- 4.5 **Building on Local Efforts** Extensive efforts are underway to identify causes for decline and promote recovery of listed salmon and steelhead throughout much of North America; the Stronghold Partnership will support and build on these efforts.

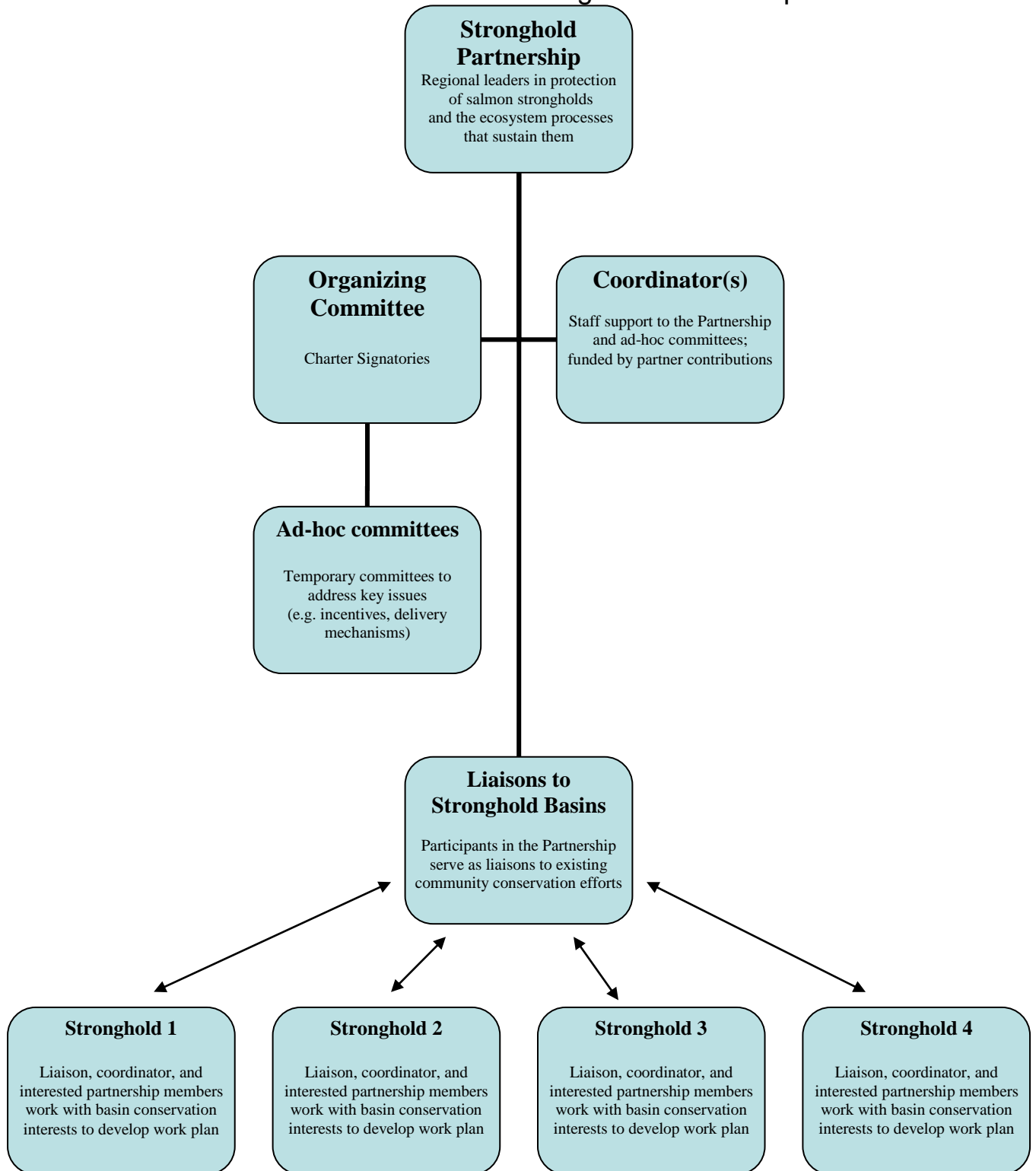
- 4.6 Improving Delivery Mechanisms** Where possible, the Stronghold Partnership will seek to streamline and improve existing conservation delivery mechanisms in salmon strongholds.
- 4.7 Ecosystem Monitoring** Long-term monitoring and assessment is essential to understanding ecosystem trends and identify limiting factors and threats. Stronghold Partners will work together to support monitoring and assessment through enhanced coordination, information sharing and funding, as appropriate.
- 4.8 Policy toward Local Communities** Stronghold Partners will work closely with local communities and their elected representatives to ensure that actions taken under this initiative are locally supported and, where appropriate, are led by local groups or individuals. The Partnership recognizes and supports the role of working lands in the culture and economy of rural areas, and is counting on the participation of landowners and managers in this effort.
- 4.9 Governance** Participation in the Stronghold Partnership is voluntary. Membership is established by concurrence of existing members. A Stronghold Partner may cease participation at any time. The members will adopt guidelines for decision-making, in-kind and financial contributions, staffing and related matters. Nothing in this Charter diminishes or limits the authority of any Stronghold Partner.

Article 5-Funding Priorities

- 5.1** The Board shall convene at least annually prior to the solicitation of projects to: 1) determine priorities for funding, and 2) establish criteria for evaluating proposals. The Board shall consider the parameters below when determining annual priorities for funding. The Board shall develop specific criteria to be used in evaluating project proposals that directly support annual funding priorities.
- 5.2** The NASSP Board will determine priorities based on one or more of the following parameters:
- 5.2.1** Address government policies and programs across multiple stronghold basins to remove obstacles to and increase the effectiveness of existing salmon conservation and recovery efforts;

- 5.2.2 Advance development and implementation of high value, on-the-ground protection and restoration actions that:
 - a. Promote the long term viability of currently strong populations,
 - b. Provide long term conservation benefits, or
 - c. Prevent harm to strong populations, including contributing to the resolution of urgent threats or risks that are not currently being addressed
- 5.2.3 Document and/or mitigate effects of climate change on salmon populations
- 5.2.4 Address key gaps in monitoring the status and trends of salmon populations or ecosystem conditions in strongholds
- 5.2.5 Protect, improve, or promote local economic opportunities associated with healthy salmon stronghold habitats and or/populations, including responsible and sustainable resource use related to fishing and recreation

North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership



ANNEX I

Governance Framework

Functions and Services

The North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership (“Stronghold Partnership”) is a private-public effort working across political boundaries, government jurisdictions and land ownerships to identify, restore, and protect North America’s healthiest remaining Pacific salmon ecosystems. Entities participating in the Stronghold Partnership will use their collective knowledge and influence to provide services in the following areas:

- Improve the coordination of salmon habitat conservation and fish management activities within and across Salmon Strongholds.
- Enhance the mechanisms for leveraging and delivering financial and technical resources to support conservation and restoration initiatives in Salmon Strongholds.
- Support stronghold conservation planning and management by providing expertise and supporting local conservation efforts with best practices and lessons learned from elsewhere.
- Create a learning forum for communicating information on status and trends of wild salmon populations and ecosystems, conservation planning, restoration and fisheries management among Salmon Strongholds and local salmon stewards.

Stronghold Partnership

The Stronghold Partnership is the governing body of the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership comprised of representatives from private, federal, state, provincial and indigenous entities in the United States. Representatives (“Stronghold Partners”) are regional leaders in the protection of salmon strongholds and the ecosystem processes that sustain them. Entities joining the Stronghold Partnership will have the capacity to commit minimal financial or in-kind resources to carry out the Stronghold Partnership’s goals and functions. Stronghold Partners are signatories to the Stronghold Partnership Charter.

Organizing Committee

The Organizing Committee will serve as the executive body of the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership, and will be responsible for developing the Stronghold Partnership’s annual work plan, naming and disbanding ad-hoc work groups, providing leadership to the Coordinator, determining the timing and location of Stronghold Partnership meetings and conducting other business as

appropriate. The Organizing Committee will be comprised of a subset of Partners selected by the full Stronghold Partnership.

Coordinator

The Coordinator will assist the Organizing Committee and Stronghold Partners by, inter alia,

- Working with Stronghold Partners to develop meeting agendas and supporting materials, including planning, drafting decision documents and meeting summaries;
- Helping coordinate Stronghold Partnership activities and communications, including internal and external communications, descriptive and outreach materials;
- Supporting activities in stronghold sites;
- Conducting outreach with key stakeholders

Liaisons to Stronghold Basins

The role of the liaisons is to work with local stakeholders to explain the purpose and intent of the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership; gain a better understanding of local conservation needs and priorities; and explore local stakeholder interest in engaging with this initiative.

ANNEX II

Federal Annex

Section I: Support for the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership




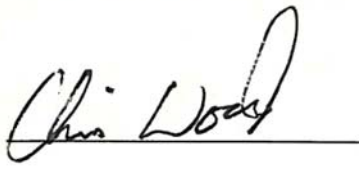
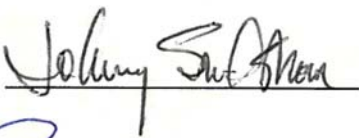
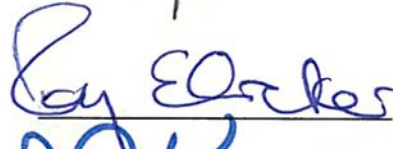

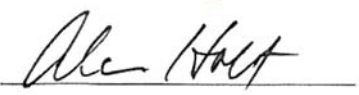

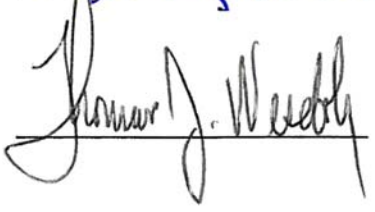
The federal agencies signed onto the Stronghold Partnership Charter support the protection and restoration of wild salmon strongholds around the Pacific Rim, and will participate in the Partnership to the degree that it does not compromise or jeopardize our agency responsibilities and authorities.

Section II: Federal Agency Limitations

- Federal participation in the Stronghold Partnership should not be construed as setting priorities or take actions contrary to the ESA, NFMA, FLPMA, NWPA, or other federal authorizing legislation;
- Federal participation in the Stronghold Partnership will not interfere with federal agency responsibilities and limitations regarding lobbying or federal budgeting; and
- With respect to the federal agencies' participation in the Charter or subsequent agreements relating to the Stronghold Partnership, any federal participation or commitments shall not entail expenditures which exceed appropriations available at the time of the participation; further, nothing in the Charter or subsequent agreements relating to the Stronghold Partnership shall be interpreted as implying that the United States Congress will, at any later date, appropriate funds sufficient to meet any deficiencies.

Section III: Definitions

- Accepting, as a long-term goal, the concept of a “distributed network of wild salmon strongholds” is assumed by the federal agencies to mean that protecting one or several salmon and steelhead strongholds within ecoregions and/or states is a sound conservation practice.
- “Utilize streamlined delivery mechanisms” is assumed by the federal agencies to mean that federal agencies will work with our non-federal partners to reduce any unnecessary and burdensome procedures to protecting and restoring salmon and steelhead habitat.
- “Securing resources” to implement protection strategies is assumed by the federal agencies to mean that we will work within our respective regulatory and policy guidelines to in support of these strategies.
- Federal agencies assume that the “Stronghold Partnership role in long term monitoring” of salmon strongholds will be consistent with our federal agency requirements where federal participation is desired.
- As with all Stronghold Partnership participants, federal agencies reserve the right to oppose any long term protection “mechanisms” that are not supported at the local level or consistent with agency missions and authorities.

Signature	Organization	Date
	WILD SALMON CENTER	11-20-2007
	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	12/18/2007
	Bonneville Power Admin.	12/20/2007
	Trout Unlimited	11/21/2008
	THE SIUSLAW INSTITUTE	2/19/08
	OR Fish & Wildlife Dept.	2/25/08
	Wash. Dept Fish & Wildlife	3/10/08
	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	3-14-08
	OSC	2-8-08
	California Trout	6-26-08

