PSAR Large Capital Scoring Rubric

2023-2025 State Biennium Grant Round

This document provides clarity on the PSAR Large Capital project evaluation criteria for the 2023-2025 grant round of funding. These criteria provide detail concerning the specific project attributes project proposals will be evaluated and scored against.

This scoring guidance will be used to evaluate a proposed project's contribution to salmon benefit and is intended to apply to both restoration and acquisition projects:

- For *restoration* projects, scoring will be determined based on the narrative description of project goals, actions, and expected outcomes over time. Considerations will be made depending on salmonid population(s) addressed, VSP benefits, habitat and water quality, connectivity to other projects, and urgency of implementation.
- For *acquisition* projects submitted for funding through the PSAR Large Capital program, the projects will be scored using the same considerations for restoration projects. For acquisition projects that aim for future restoration, projects will be scored based on the future vision and expected outcomes for the restoration project. For acquisition projects that aim solely for protection or conservation of ecologically important land, projects will be scored based on the quality of existing habitat conditions for the target species.

Viable Salmonid Population Parameters (maximum 25 points)

Points for this section will be allocated based on how well projects improve or protect viability of salmonid populations using the Viable Salmonid Population parameters (McElhany 2000) of abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and/or diversity. When scoring projects for VSP parameters, project reviewers will score based on these details:

- Table provided clearly links populations and life history types to VSP parameters.
- Project addresses high priority and/or multiple salmonid populations and life history types.
- Additional VSP questions are addressed in Question 1a:
    - Further details on specific VSP parameters provided in table;
    - Expected magnitude of change, persistence, and expected timeline for specified VSP parameters addressed; and
    - Summary of potential impacts on other VSP parameters included.
- Expected outcomes are supported by modeling and/or scientific literature.
- Expected salmon habitat outcomes using estimates of Common Indicators are provided in table for Question 1b.

Priority Watershed Stocks (maximum 15 points)

This section seeks to determine whether projects will provide benefits to selected priority stocks. Scoring for this section will be based on the answers provided in Question 1. Stocks that meet the priority criteria include Chinook in the Dungeness, Stillaguamish, Nooksack, Skagit, and Mid-Hood Canal watersheds, and Hood Canal Summer Chum.

Direct benefit to priority stocks (10 points)

Scoring Criteria:

10 pts: One or more populations addressed in Question 1 are listed as priority stocks, and answer to Question 1 demonstrates a significant benefit to named stocks.

7pts: One or more populations addressed in Question 1 are listed as priority stocks, and answer to Question 1 demonstrates a meaningful benefit to named stocks.

5 pts: One or more populations addressed in Question 1 are listed as priority stocks, and answer to Question 1 demonstrates a moderate benefit to named stocks.

3 pts: One or more populations addressed in Question 1 are listed as priority stocks, but the answer to Question 1 does not demonstrate a measurable benefit to named stocks.

0 pts: Populations addressed in Question 1 are not listed as priority stocks (regardless of the benefits demonstrated in the answer to Question 1).

Direct benefit to more than one priority stock (5 Points)

Scoring criteria:

5 pts: Project provides a direct demonstrable benefit to more than one named stock.

3 pts: Project provides an indirect or less certain benefit to more than one named stock.

0 pts: Project provides a direct benefit to one or fewer named stocks.

Probability of project success (maximum 15 points)

The probability of project success will evaluate the likelihood that a proposed project will achieve the project sponsor's goals and objectives. When scoring projects for probability of success, project reviewers will consider:

- Project vision and proposed or existing ecosystem benefits to salmon;
- Project objectives, effectiveness of restoration methods, and success criteria;
- Future maintenance of the site;
- Expected or preserved habitat condition(s) and the ability to measure success criteria.

Project success scoring criteria:

15 pts: Restores and/or protects natural processes or landforms; uses effective restoration method(s); provides measurable objectives and success criteria; is self-maintaining; has little to no risk of detrimental effects; requires minimal maintenance for project success and avoids engineered solutions to produce anticipated outcomes where possible; has high certainty regarding benefits to salmon; and is designed to be flexible over time as conditions change.

12 pts: Largely protects or restores natural processes or landforms; uses effective restoration method(s); provides measurable objectives and success criteria; likely to be self-maintaining; minimal risk of detrimental effects; manageable project complexity; and minimal uncertainties regarding benefits to fish.

9 pts: Partially protects or restores natural processes or landforms; uses effective restoration method(s); provides measurable objectives and success criteria; potentially self-maintaining; some risk of detrimental effects; manageable project complexity; and moderate uncertainties regarding benefits to fish.

6 pts: Partially protects or restores natural processes or landforms; uses restoration method(s) of unproven effectiveness; provides measurable objectives and success criteria; unlikely to be self-maintaining; moderate potential risk of detrimental effects; moderate project complexity; and moderate uncertainties regarding benefits to fish.

3 pts: Unlikely to protect or restore natural processes and landforms; unproven or risky restoration method(s); provided objectives are unlikely to achieve success criteria; will likely require frequent maintenance; moderate to high risk of detrimental effects; excessive project complexity; and high uncertainties regarding benefits to fish.

Habitat Quality (maximum 10 points)

The habitat quality score will be evaluated based on the confidence the proposed project will promote juvenile salmon production through improved foraging, growth, and growth efficiency, and/or increased survival. When scoring projects for habitat quality, project reviewers will consider:

- The effectiveness of the proposed actions for restoring and preserving a natural process, landform, or habitat feature target species and life stages (restoration projects);
- The quality of existing natural processes, landforms, and habitat features for target species and life stages (acquisition only projects);
- Diversity of habitat types and structures existing or proposed within a given project area;
- Amount of proposed habitat to be preserved or restored;
- Ecosystem functions protected or restored;
- Amount or treatment of exotic or invasive species that may impact salmon survival;
- Available or expected channel and edge network and large wood available or protected (for estuary and floodplain projects);
- Available or expected prey resource production and export; and
- Maintenance of structural flexibility over time.

Habitat quality scoring criteria:

10 pts: Maintains or restores natural habitat complexity (diversity of habitat types and structures within a given area) and ecosystem functions (flow regime, sediment transport, temperature patterns); has extensive channel and edge network in appropriate amounts and locations, and well-justified placement of large wood (e.g., taking into account effects of fetch [in estuaries], topography, natural sources, and not artificially fixing in place); provides prey production and export; has little to no invasive species or nuisance predators; designed to be flexible over time as conditions change; and provides ideal water quality and temperature regime for target species.

8 pts: Maintains or restores good to excellent natural habitat complexity; maintains or restores natural disturbance regime and ecosystem functions; very good channel and edge network and large wood in appropriate amounts and locations; contributes to prey production and export; minimal risk related to

invasive species or nuisance predators; and provides or expected to provide high water quality and ideal temperature regime for target species.

6 pts: Maintains or restores moderate habitat complexity and improvement in ecosystem functions; project compatible with current and future natural disturbance regime; some channel and edge network and large wood; moderate prey production and export; some risk of detrimental impacts from invasive species or nuisance predators; and moderate improvement in water quality and temperature regime for target species.

4 pts: Project results in moderate to low habitat complexity and minimal improvement in ecosystem functions; project may not be compatible with current or future disturbance regime; some channel and edge network and large wood; moderate to low prey production and export; potential detrimental impacts from invasive species or nuisance predators; and minimal improvement in water quality and temperature regime for target species.

2 pts: Project results in low habitat complexity and little to no improvement in ecosystem function; poor channel and edge network and large wood; little to no improvement in prey production and export; moderate to high potential detrimental impacts from invasive species or nuisance predators; and water quality and/or temperature will be unsuitable for target species.

Desired Outcomes (maximum 5 Points)

This 5 point criteria will be scored according to the degree to which the project will contribute to the selected Action Agenda Desired Outcome(s).