



Skagit River System Cooperative

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Request for Qualifications Salmon Recovery Communications Specialist — Skagit River

Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC) is seeking a qualified communications specialist to support the development and initial implementation of a communications approach for sharing scientific findings related to salmon recovery in the Skagit River watershed, with a primary focus on Chinook salmon recovery. The selected consultant will work closely with the scientific team to plan and translate findings into accessible, engaging communications products for the public.

1. Background

Substantial efforts have been made over the past decades to recover salmon populations throughout Puget Sound and within the Skagit River watershed. These efforts have included habitat protection and restoration, improved land and water management, fish passage improvements, hatchery and harvest management, and other actions intended to address the factors limiting salmon recovery.

Monitoring and research are now beginning to provide evidence that these actions are producing positive responses at sites, across salmon populations and over ecosystems that support them. However, we are still in their early stages, and the overall picture of salmon recovery remains complex. Chinook salmon continue to face multiple and interacting pressures, including climate change, changing river and ocean conditions, habitat degradation, development, sea level rise, and other ongoing impacts. At the same time, the scale, pace, and durability of recovery efforts are influenced by available funding, changing environmental conditions, and the ability to sustain restoration and management actions over time.

The emerging science therefore presents an important opportunity and a significant communications challenge. The findings are encouraging, but they do not represent a simple recovery success story, for example: restoration efforts in the Skagit estuary appear to improve growth conditions for juvenile Chinook salmon; however, the size of juvenile Chinook salmon entering the estuary from the river has been declining for reasons that remain unclear (Munsch et al. 2026). Although restoration actions and natural habitat changes can create additional habitat for Chinook salmon, ongoing losses from human development and natural processes can offset these gains affecting net habitat increases (Beamer et al. 2023). Communicating science effectively will require explaining both the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain, while placing recent salmon responses within the broader context of decades of habitat restoration, recovery actions and a rapidly changing environment.

The communications specialist will work closely with SRSC scientists and regional collaborators focused on Skagit salmon recovery science. SRSC leads and coordinates these efforts in collaboration with a broad network of regional scientists and practitioners representing state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations. SRSC staff will be the primary “Science Team”. The Science Team are adept at communicating findings to peers and resource managers and we are seeking additional expertise to support communications to the public. The Communications Specialist will be a consultant as part of this team. The successful consultant will be comfortable working directly with scientists and technical experts and will have demonstrated experience translating complicated scientific concepts into communications that are understandable and meaningful to non-specialist audiences.

2. General Scope of Work

The selected consultant is expected to perform the following core activities. Details of the scope of work will be developed with the selected Consultant.

A. Develop a Salmon Recovery Communications Plan: Working closely with the project team, the consultant will develop a comprehensive communications plan. The plan should be sufficiently practical to guide the project team in communicating findings during and following the completion of the scientific work.

B. Support Communications Content Development: In addition to the communications plan, the consultant will support the development of communications materials based on the needs identified in the communications plan. The consultant will help the science team to produce specific topics and to review those products.

3. Desired Qualifications

- Professional experience in strategic communications, science communications, environmental communications, or a related field, including an example of experience communicating complex scientific story to the public.
- Proven experience working collaboratively with scientists, researchers, technical experts, or interdisciplinary scientific teams.
- Strong writing and editing skills, including the ability to translate technical material into clear and compelling language.
- Experience developing communications strategies or plans for natural resources with specific experience in species recovery preferred.
- Strong facilitation, interviewing, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Ability to manage multiple communications products while maintaining consistency in messaging and scientific accuracy.
- Previous work with tribal governments or organizations, preferred.
- Must be available for in-person meetings.

4. Key Deliverables

At a minimum, the consultant is expected to produce in the following deliverables:

Deliverable 1 —Communications Plan

Consultant will develop in coordination with the Science Team a communications plan for salmon recovery science in the Skagit River system. The communications plan will identify

public interests in the Skagit and determine the most effective media and communication channels for sharing relevant information.

Deliverable 2 — Support Communication Content Development

Consultant will support content development in collaboration with the Science team. This includes identifying topics, content type and overall messaging. Science team will work on development of content narrative, and the Consultant will review material.

5. Anticipated Schedule

The anticipated period of performance is approximately [7 months], beginning December 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027.

6. Budget

The anticipated budget for this work is \$30,000 to \$40,000. Selected Consultant will be asked to develop a fee schedule during contract development.

7. Response Requirements

Interested consultants should submit a concise (3-5 pages) statement of qualifications by October 30th 2026 that includes:

- A. Key Personnel:** Identify the individual(s) who would perform the work and provide brief biographies or résumés highlighting relevant experience.
- B. Consultant/Team Qualifications:** Provide an overview of the consultant or consulting team, including relevant professional experience addressing the desired qualification.
- C. Work Samples:** Provide two work samples demonstrating relevant communications experience. For each sample, briefly describe the project, intended audience, your role, and how the work demonstrates the desired qualifications and other relevant experience. At least one sample must demonstrate the ability to translate complex scientific or technical information for a non-specialist audience. Work samples may be provided as URLs linking to publicly accessible materials or included as appendices to the submission. Work samples will not count toward the page limit.
- D. Audience Identification Process:** Provide a general brief description in how you would identify and prioritize public audiences. Describe how audience needs would inform communication products and methods.
- E. Scientist Collaboration Process:** Describe how you would work with subject-matter experts to develop content, verify technical accuracy, manage revisions, resolve conflicting feedback, and obtain final approval.

8. Submission and Selection Process

Please submit your response to this RFQ by October 30, 2026 5:00 PM PST, to: Mike LeMoine, Director of Research and Recovery, mlemoine@skagitcoop.org. We will review qualifications in the first week of November and conduct interviews for final selection the second week of November.