

Skagit Watershed Council – Final Notes

Meeting of the Board of Directors – April 13, 2017

(* indicates action item; indicates decision, parentheses indicate attachment #)

Attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt, Richard Brocksmith, Brendan Brokes, Steve Hinton, Michael Kirshenbaum, Colleen McShane, and Jon-Paul Shannahan

Not in attendance: Carolyn Kelly and Jon Vanderheyden.

Introductions, Determine Quorum, and Approve Agenda and Notes

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am with a quorum. An agenda item to consider approval of a contract amendment was added to New Business. Colleen moved and Michael seconded approval of the March 2, 2017 minutes as written. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

- Richard noted that at the last meeting, the Board did not appoint the membership of the M & AM. It's in the previous packet. ***The Board will vote on this at their next meeting.**

February Financial Report

- Richard noted there was nothing out of the ordinary this month regarding financials. Sub-awards are moving forward well. Regarding the certificate of deposit discussion at the last meeting, Richard noted the funds were moved into the SWC checking account ***awaiting the development of an investment policy and a decision by the Board.** The Nominating Committee met yesterday and will be ***looking for a person to fill Carolyn Kelly's role as Treasurer.** JP moved and Colleen seconded approval of the financial report. Motion carried unanimously.

Communications Policy

- Richard has not yet completed a draft of the new communications policy yet, but he has been looking at other policies to provide direction. ***Will be rescheduled for next meeting.**

Lead Entity Program – Letters of Intent (LOI)

- Eight LOI's were received. All appeared consistent with guidance and invited to the next step of the application. The TWG and M&AM Subcommittee concurred with this. Martin

Ranch Road Culvert Fish Passage is the only proposed project not explicitly in the four-year plan; as a result, PSP is evaluating it for consistency with the Recovery Plan.

SWC Comment Letter for WDFW Lands 20/20 Inclusion of 22-acre Estuary Acquisition

- Steve wants it on record that SRSC was a dissenting voice on this parcel, but they were outvoted on the TWG. With certain conditions, SRSC said they were on board, but they wanted to see the components of the hydrodynamic model. Steve noted that care should be taken with writing letters in the name of the Council.

Committee Reports: Technical Work Group, M&AM Subcommittee, and Engagement Committee - Richard summarized each committee's work. There were no additional comments or questions.

Old Business

Review 2017 Protection Strategy Update - This review's intent is to hear problem statements and proposed changes to the 1998 Strategy, and to hear from the Board regarding the fit with SWC's goals. Richard noted that two years of work by the TWG and Protection Subcommittee is coming down to just a few remaining issues. He noted that the changes reflected in the document are responsive to more recent comments by SRSC and recommendations by TWG at their last meeting, but they will not be reviewed by the TWG until next week's meeting. During this lengthy discussion, Richard, Bob Warinner (TWG) and Chris Vondrasek (staff) provided information about how the strategy works and how it addresses problem statements.

Richard provided an overview of the following problem statements addressed in this update:

- The update addresses the cost effectiveness (CE) scoring process which in the 1998 Strategy failed to identify some of the priority fish habitats.
- The update addresses the lack of connectivity and checkerboard issues by increasing the weighting of connectivity
- The update addresses the focus on mainstem aquatic habitats and floodplains which has disproportionately undervalued tributaries. We now know that certain tributaries are more important than previously thought for Chinook salmon.
- The update will include more steelhead protection by increasing focus on tributaries.
- The update incorporates ways to characterize and value areas with potential resilience to climate change by valuing water inputs. Protecting floodplains will have a high value in this effort as well.
- The update clarifies how uplands are considered and eligible.
- It creates a more rigorous process to document and address the degree to which a property is threatened. The threat must be significant for a threatened property to be greenlighted on that basis.

- 3800 parcels are being evaluated and webmaps are being updated. Of the 3800 parcels, ~1260 are theoretically among those which could be considered for acquisition (top 33%), but in practice hundreds of those have been proposed for exclusion. This list of parcels is useful for entities like SLT and SCL who make property acquisitions.
- In an effort to get at the benefit levels for Chinook salmon, Chris showed the factors the strategy considers in how habitat evaluations are done. They look at reach level habitat, floodplain habitat, riparian habitat and parcel area.

Issues remain with the update as brought forth during the discussion with the following questions and concerns emerging:

- ***The Board would like to know: 1) How many high-quality parcels are left. 2) Do we need to re-evaluate the threshold to accommodate for a lower number of high-value protection properties, if that is the case? 3) How can we incorporate more restoration review? 4) What defines a property as needing significant restoration?**
- Extenuating factors are part of the acquisition process: timing, willing sellers and buyers, available funding, and politics can impact decisions to buy a property. This process tries to focus areas of emphasis yet provide flexibility to address these factors. These conversations show we all care about the land. Flexibility and trust are key. Funding is a moving target, so we have to work together respectfully and with buy-in.
- Restoration vs protection is a policy wedge. The TWG will be trying to find a way to guard against protecting properties via these grants that would require too much restoration. They recommended inclusion of restoration practitioners from TWG in the greenlighting process.
 - In a memo, SRSC expressed strong opposition to properties with significant restoration being included in the reach level grants. They would like a separate discussion and process regarding restoration. And/or, SRSC wants the threshold for restoration-qualified properties set to a high bar.
- Adding the tributaries added land with different characteristics, so could there be two tiers? On the tribs, perhaps there could be more flexibility where we've not done work yet. SRSC would like greater clarity on the decision tree for tribs.
- Maybe the policy should be to reduce the value of impaired properties.
- Bring some examples in for robust discussion in the context of a bigger strategic picture. Is there strategic value of acquiring parcels that might have a higher level of degradation because of its geographic location and connectivity to other properties? These could be key building blocks that help build toward a bigger, even more impactful project.
- Shoeboxing looks like a pseudo-restoration strategy to SRSC. Steve feels a conversation needs to happen with restoration partners in the room and with the TWG. SRSC wants a separate landscape scale strategy discussion for restoration.
 - Block grants have provided flexibility in protection efforts; consider doing the same with a reach-level strategy for restoration. ***Is this something the Board would like to pursue in near future?**

- The Board appreciates the nuances, but doesn't want to be in the technical weeds. They want to trust the TWG to arrive at these values and then come back to the Board for a policy decision if needed.
- The Board appreciates the reasoning and importance of a small subset of parcels on the margin. There's no perfect filter, but they ***urged the TWG to come up with a strategic way to evaluate the outliers**. A member of the Board suggested creating if-then statements to help define the number of parcels on the margin.
- Members acknowledged the amount of work and time put into this, but urged the TWG and the Board to not let perfect be the enemy of the good. They have reached consensus on so many issues, and it's time to get this update to a final conclusion.
- Regarding threat path #2, SRSC felt line 3 is too broad and should require documentation, not opinion, regarding the real threat. ***Richard will clarify this threat path #2's wording and add in the need for additional documentation.**

***Bob and Chris indicated they can provide information outlining the number and quality of parcels that would fall into this review category. There was agreement that the TWG should review the scores on properties using this improved process.**

***The TWG will document the policy concerns and explain them to the Board in an executive summary with key points and policy implications for the Board to consider.**

New Business

Allocate Returned PSAR Funding

- PSAR funding is being returned from the North Fork Levee Setback Design and Acquisition since it is closing without purchasing the 22-acre site. There is about \$140K left to use by end of June or it is lost to Skagit. The TWG liked a spend-down approach (using money to continue to spend down the 2016 approved project list) as opposed to topping-up older projects. The Board agreed to empower Richard to take all returned funds from the N Fork Levee setback to be applied to two riparian projects and the Hansen preconstruction work (specifically up to \$50K to SFEG's 2016 Collaborative Riparian project, up to \$25K to SRSC's Nookachamps Riparian project, and the remainder to Hansen Reach 5 Restoration via one of their two RCO contracts) that could effectively utilize the money within the deadline. Brendan made a motion and Michael seconded to allocate the returned funds as outlined by Richard. The motion carried unanimously. Steve abstained from the vote.

SFEG - Riparian Contract Amendment

- \$1,112.81 is proposed to be contracted to SFEG for use for planting plan development which are required deliverables to complete SWC's riparian assessment project. They have up to ten sites consistent with project goals. This would be just a contract amendment into an existing riparian agreement with SFEG that would also extend the

term by two weeks to the end of the fiscal year. Steve moved and Colleen seconded to approve the Riparian Contract Amendment for SFEG. Unanimously approved.

Natural Systems Design (NSD) - Monitoring Support Contract

- SWC's competitive RFP got two monitoring proposals: 1) Sauk to Cascade Monitoring Framework met requirements to be invited to move on to draft application in the SRFB process. This discussion relates to a smaller proposal 2) \$19,860 for NSD to work with the M&AM Subcommittee to look at the role of wood in the Skagit Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan and develop a monitoring plan for that framework by the end of June 2017. The TWG has not yet been briefed on this given meeting schedules, but will next week. It offers an opportunity to weave this element into the status and trends work of the M&AM Subcommittee. As with other contracts discussed today, this is consistent with our financial policies and within our approved budgets. Brendan moved and Jon Paul seconded approval of the new NSD contract as proposed, contingent on the TWG's review. Motion carried unanimously.

ESA Riparian Project – Contract Amendment for Field Work and Assessment

- The ESA contract had limited field assessment budget. Many members have helped with field assessments; however, more time is needed to get into the upper watershed. ESA will get two additional field days and 5 more hours in the office to expedite this process quickly in light of limited staff time so that final classification can be completed. Michael moved to amend the existing ESA contract and Colleen seconded to approve as proposed in the amount of \$2495. Motion carried unanimously.

Nominating Committee

- Michael, as chair, handed out the Nominating Committee's draft notes from their meeting on April 12 and verbally briefed the Board. JP, Steve, Colleen, Richard, Michael, and Tim with Skagit Audubon participated.
- They reviewed Bylaws calling for 7 to 11 Board members. With Carolyn's departure in June, that leaves the Board with seven members. ***Regarding the replacement Treasurer, Richard will approach Jon Vanderheyden who is already on the Board and has budget experience.** They also considered speaking with Patsy Martin.
- They brainstormed a good list of names, set priority order among those names and between sectors including that they must be a member of the Watershed Council, and set a target of two to three nominees for the June Council of Members meeting. ***Board decision will be required in May.**
- They identified 6 different sectors not fully represented on the Board. While flexibility is required, the Nominating Committee and the Board would like priority given to an agricultural interest, then a representative from the community engagement/ environmental education field, and then federal (Forest Service). All agreed that towns and cities, timber interests, and private and recreational interests were also important. Michael wants to hold a spot for agriculture if it goes unfilled. The Board concurred.

- In September, Ken and Steve are both up for renewal, with JP not far behind that. ***The groups identified the need to stagger terms to avoid the loss of too many members at one time. *Committee members with good relationships with potential nominees will initiate conversations this week and will keep the Board apprised of progress via email during May.**

Adjourned – 12:01 pm

Next SWC Board Meetings:

- May 4, 2017 - 9am to noon (Board meeting)
- May 8 & 9 (site visits for LECC)