

Community Engagement Committee

Skagit Watershed Council, 815 Cleveland Ave. Suite 201, Mt. Vernon, WA

January 29, 2019 -- 9:30am – 11:30am

(Underline indicates decision point; *bold indicates action item)

Present: Lucy DeGrace (SFEG), Alex duPont, Chair (WSU Ext.), Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Kristi Carpenter (SCD), Lucy DeGrace (SFEG), Stacy Dahl (SLT), Zena Gavin (SLT), Cindy Pierce (SCD), and Andrea Reiter (SWC); Kalena Walker (SFEG), Allison Roberts (Kulshan Services)

Not Present: Scottie Schneider (SWC), Wayne Watne (WDFW), and Karen Summers (EcoNet)

Call to Order: 9:35am

1. Welcome and introductions – The 11 who were present, introduced themselves.
2. Approve November 2018 meeting notes – Approved with changes which Andrea noted.
3. No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Grant

Discussion:

The NCLI grant discussion was moved up on the agenda. Richard provided an update on RCO's NCLI grant which opened January 2 and is due by April 1 with grants awarded in July. Richard asked the CEC members to provide input on the grant ahead of his meeting with Mt. Vernon School District representatives. He asked if organizations (Conservation District, SLT and SFEG) present at the meeting are willing and able to help with this effort.

Richard will be meeting this week with MVSD to discuss details and wanted CEC input. He outlined a proposal to provide all 4th grade classes in the MVSD with two water curriculum-oriented field trips each. Teachers could pick from a menu of opportunities at a specific site. Richard wanted to hear from organizations who have capacity to participate.

Grant details:

The last time we applied, the proposed project did qualify, but we didn't get the grant due to a matching fund oversight. Andrea clarified this year's grant opportunity with three tiers. Tier one proposals can ask for up to \$25K and no match and Tier 2 up to \$50K with no match. Tier 3 requires a match and is for up to \$75K.

Outcome:

They agreed it makes sense for MVSD to write and apply for the grant with SWC supporting the process with information. There is support from key organizations to provide field trips using the water curriculum for 4th graders. However, they are not sure how many of the ~20 classrooms of 4th graders in MVSD they would be able to accommodate. The school district needs to know that organizations may not be able to meet their need without extra funding and programs are based on availability. Teachers will choose from a menu of choices. Programs will be reimbursed for providing the services. If MVSD could pay more, then more needs could be met. Land trust indicated that their sites could be accessed on a free or small compensation basis.

With \$1.5 million available, many organizations will be applying. In fact, BSD and NCI are also applying for this NCLI grant. This is the type of competition we try to avoid. Members discussed how to be most competitive. They asked if it's possible to find a significant match. Competition will be stiff especially for the Tier 1 (up to \$25K) does not require a match. Also, grants that do

their projects on state-owned lands will score higher, so it would be important to specify in the grant that SFEG would do programs at Deception Pass State Park in Coronet Bay and Bowman Bay. This could include replanting and maintenance service projects. Also, SFEG has done projects at Howard Miller and Razor (sp?) State Parks.

***Andrea will follow up on this.** Also, the Swinomish were awarded a grant to develop a place-based curriculum. They already have an education site. ***Andrea will look into whether they are working with LaConner SD in their new program development.**

This grant discussion also led to an extended discussion related to the limits of organizational capacity, the inflexible requirements of grant funding once awarded, meeting other field trip requests when limited resources become focused on one grade level in one district. It's worth noting that organizations feel their current operations are better suited to plug programs into the school schedule and meet requests from teachers who ask for the programs as opposed to offering the programs to all teachers in a particular grade.

The members felt we need to spend time looking at ways to do more and adapt as NextGen standards begin to influence the schools. Using the chart Andrea provided to the committee, they spent some time discussing current offerings in the various school districts by grade and curriculum. This topic would benefit from further discussion.

Richard also noted that the MV School Board championed this proposal two years ago and support continues. This year, the school district has budget issues and may be even more motivated to make it happen than before.

CEC member input regarding their ability to provide the services promised in NCLI grant:

- They all felt that the grant's focus on a single grade, while admirable, would tap organizational resources currently allocated to other programs. This could impact what they could offer and possibly jeopardize current programs in order to meet this new expectation.
 - SCD already has programs and funding in place, so the grant wouldn't really benefit them. They are already at capacity and already providing field trips.
 - If this grant were watershed-wide, then one member noted that there could be money in the NPDES grant to support this.
 - SLT indicated that offering their services in this grant would require time to support the teachers to pull off field trips. They could use the funding support and could provide locations for the field trips to visit. They don't have the time to apply for the grant.
 - SFEG's Kids in Creeks program could include going to the hatchery or doing a service project removing invasive plants. They do 6-7 every year based on demand. It would be possible to accommodate and focus outreach on MVSD for this grant but would not be able to do it watershed-wide. SFEG – The grant would work for them. They can always find ivy to pull or trees to plan no matter the season. CD also can deliver the Watershed model no matter the season.
- School districts want equitability meaning all kids in a grade are offered the same opportunity. For the organizations providing these services this can create some difficulties:
 - Students need teachers who prepare them ahead of time for the field trip. If the students don't have background knowledge provided by the teacher to make the tour relevant, they can be disinterested and miss the richness the field trip offers.

- Some teachers aren't interested in the topic, but a requirement for all teachers at a particular grade level to do the field trip can be counter-productive. The field trips are so much more exciting to teach when the teachers are excited about the topic vs teachers checking a box to show they did it as a requirement.
- Another issue has to do with the parameters and limits on grant funding. Organizations can't change their grant scope mid-stream and they need to report out on their grants regularly. Grants over one year in duration wouldn't be flexible to changes and this would need to be taken into account if local operations are being asked to change their scope or curriculums.
- Seasonal program scheduling requires coordination and time with teacher outreach. Also different school districts in the area have different curriculum offered at differing grade levels. This makes it hard to coordinate watershed-wide.
- Growing their offerings requires resources which are limited. Teachers who are long-time supporters have come to expect the program year after year. Organizations don't want to disappoint them. Teacher enthusiasm is a key motivator within the organizations offering the field trips.
- Programs are designed with certain ages in mind. Teachers come to the organizations requesting programs, but it's not always targeted to their grade level.
- Organizations want to avoid an expectation that a program should be available when the request is coming from a teacher of a grade level for which it is not appropriate. For instance, the watershed model is more appropriate for 5th and 6th grade, not 2nd grade. Organizations can tailor information on their tours to meet these needs – within reason.
- Andrea pointed out that most of the Skagit school districts are moving toward uniform NEXTGen standards. Teacher training and curriculum alignment to these standards is being pushed by curriculum coordinators. In the future, the teachers won't have the choice they have now to do a field trip if it's not part of the learning sequence for their grade. In this case, some of the most motivated teachers who currently do field trips with their classes every year may have to give this up. This
- With the exception of MVSD, other area school districts are planning scope and sequence into their curriculums. It would behoove organizations serving these populations to begin taking steps to adjust to this coming reality. This would require balancing a move towards the equity platform while maintaining capacity to meet the current choice current model. One member mentioned that the NSEA model works for them where they focus their efforts on one thing with a target population of 4th graders.
- Organizations were quick to note that Skagit nonprofits provide so many services at a much cheaper cost than the school districts or a contractor ever could.

4. Organization updates and event announcements

- WSU – helping others do their programs
- SFEG is bringing back Skagit Green Drinks, an opportunity to bring organizations together in a social hour for like-minded people as part of an eco-community. Target audience of younger adults and retirees. February 21, 5 pm, Ristretto. ***Members should share this Facebook event. Remember to hashtag #OurSkagit.** It's being shared through Instagram and MailChimp too. ***Lucy will get the admin to accept new members. Andrea will add to the public calendar.** Andrea explained the role of the host as it's done in Whatcom County

and how the paired nonprofit makes a little money from the monthly beer sales/tips. Andrea has a permit (costs \$10 extra to be able to serve alcohol – must be a nonprofit) Consider doing this for the free concerts on the Riverwalk. **Andrea will look into this.**

- SFEG – Annual meeting, week from Thursday, February 7. Someone from Whale Museum. 5:30 to 8:30 at the Sedro Woolley Community Center.
SFEG Trivia Night – tentatively planned for the week before Memorial Day.
- SLT – February 2nd work party at Fidalgo Bay Carstens; February 23 – Samish Flower Farm ivy work party with Libby Mills a birder doing an education event; February 8 – Kreschmer 10-1; February 16 – Barney Lake event to watch the birds; March 16 – SLT Auction and Dinner;
April 22 – Earth Day Trivia Night (at TrainWrecks partner restaurant – The Railroad)
- SCD – February 27,28; Professional Landscaping training for \$75 (rather than \$350) to earn Eco-Pro Certification (test March 1 is optional) hosted by two professional landscaping organizations. (Max 25 people); Backyard Conservation Stewardship starts March 20 every Wednesday night for 6 weeks. (They have 28 now and anticipate 40-50);
May 1 – Jessie Blume speaks on Creating Sanctuary – free, but pre-register.
- Note: Kalena is putting out the newsletter and CEC
- CD Plant Sale – preorders online now. Minimum is \$50 (compared to \$100 in Whatcom County). First year they are offering seed packet pollinator mix. Do a lot of social media marketing – one post a week. SFEG has a “How to be a Salmon Friendly Gardener” brochure. Kristi and WSU extension need more. Andrea will share this info and SCD will repost to beef up their Facebook posting.
- Everyone is encouraged to reshare partner posts on their social media.
- SCEA – September Skagit Water Weeks – grant has been submitted. The 5K Dash will be a part of WaterWeeks. They haven’t decided to do Trivia Nights again – not one scheduled.
- Village Books – Nature and Writing series – Authors do a signing. Once every couple weeks now through May. Speaker - Robert Michael Pile coming up at WCC.
- David Roberts of Kulshan Services is offering to organizations is Climate Risk talk. He can do a ½ hour, 1 hour, or up to 6 hours. Some compensation would be appreciated to cover costs. Perhaps consider this for a speaker series.
- Alex is meeting with the Salmon Festival committee today. How can WaterWeeks and Salmon Festival coordinate. Have the 5K Dash on the morning of the festival along the Riverwalk. MS bike ride has been happening at the same time. Tie them in...
- SCEA has mini grants up to \$500 for schools to use for field trips. No applications have been received yet, so chances are good if you apply. They have over \$4,000 raised from Trivia Nights. Print and fill out the application through SCEA’s website.

5. Adult Engagement

- The committee would like to take initiative in getting CEC more involved on the planning committee for Storming the Sound. ***Alex will reach out to their planning committee – Susan Wood and Callie Martin at Padilla Bay are on the committee.**
- ***CEC members are encouraged to share more of each other’s posts. Promote the new Skagit Green Drinks and share their events with Kalena who publishes the SCD weekly newsletter.**
- Members vetted an idea to provide volunteers for the Beer Garden at Riverwalk Summer Concert Series in exchange for proceeds. ***Andrea will discuss with the Chamber of Commerce.** She already has the appropriate nonprofit permit to serve alcohol.

6. Updating STEAM Resource Guide – Members decided to discuss at the next meeting due to time constraints. ***It was suggested that Andrea do a quick gaps analysis** for organizations that weren't included in the resource guide by checking the list for who attended Storming the Sound.

***Andrea and Allison will discuss ideas to bring to the committee next month on how and when to update the resource guide.**