

Skagit Watershed Council Final Notes

Meeting of the Board of Directors, via Zoom, December 3, 2020

(Underline indicates decision point; parentheses indicate attachment #; ***bold indicate action item**)

Attending: John Stein, Bill Blake, Jon-Paul Shannahan, Michael Kirshenbaum, Jon Vanderheyden, Brendan Brokes, Andrew Bearlin, Richard Brocksmith, Aundrea McBride (notes), Holli Watne

Absent: Devin Smith

10:03 am Call to Order

- Introductions, Determined Quorum, and Approved Agenda after moving legislative update to the end in case we don't have time for it. Motion by Bill, second by Brendan, all approve.
- Approve Board Notes as presented for November 5th, 2020. Motion by Michael, second by Jon, all approve.

Executive Director's Report

- Financials:
 - In the black for four months running. Since COVID has us buttoned down we aren't spending much.
 - SWC owes and has paid some late fees to the IRS. We have written letters asking forgiveness since they were during COVID outbreak. Serious discussion with bookkeeper, who has offered to pay the fees, but all hope that isn't necessary. IRS sent a check for \$1970, but we are uncertain what it is for at this time.
 - SWC has budgeted 3% COLAs for staff in January. The Social Security Administration suggests 1.3% (a national figure), while the Puget Sound CPI is higher. City and State COLAs are considerably higher. ***RB will investigate and draft a memo for next month. *Should we have a policy to standardize this in the future?**
 - Approved October Financial Reports. Motion by Brendan, second by John, approved by consensus.
 - 990 Federal Tax form is complete and was sent around privately. ***Direct questions to RB. *Will be filed later this week.**
- Council of Members is next week. 45 minutes will be WDFW presentation on estuary project status, 15 minutes SCL presentation on status of relicensing, vote on Jon-Paul's directorship.
- Committee and Staff Reports

- Aundrea: TWG did not meet. Protection is working on the semi-annual update to the Board. SWC and members are holding a conference on riparian restoration with two sessions: climate change adaptations and wetlands planting. To be held virtually January 19th from 9:30-4:00. ***Please share and sign up!**
- Holli: CEC is working on converting in-school lessons to internet platform and a possible summer program (TBD). Illuminight is January 29th, all virtual, but many programs happening in December and January with schools and online.

Old Business

- SWC Board Nominating Committee nominated JP for re-election at December Members' Meeting. Ballots were sent out to Membership. Board approval needed today. Motion to approve nomination of Jon-Paul Shanahan to the full Council as director by Michael, second by Jon Vanderheyden. All approve.
- County participation: RB met with Peter, new County commissioner, by zoom. He is very interested and ecologically minded. RB has drafted a letter to the commissioners stating what SWC would like in terms of county participation. ***RB would like comments on the letter.** This will be an opener for Peter to state his desire to join the SWC board. ***We will consider setting up a socially distant field trip in the spring for him to see projects and hear from other organizations/agencies how they collaborate with the SWC.** ***A spring virtual retreat may also be a good on-boarding idea. Exec committee will work a draft agenda.**

New Business

- Island Unit:
 - 4 management alternatives have been presented to tribes (Dec 1st) and public (Dec 2nd) for comment, including several restoration scenarios. Comments are due Dec 16th, with decision coming in January.
 - The 4 alternatives are:
 - Do nothing but repair dikes and tide gates
 - Remove dikes on the eastern island entirely
 - Remove dikes on the southern halves of both islands (less area than #2)
 - Remove all the dikes on both islands
 - Tribes preferred alternative 4
 - Public (mostly duck hunters) preferred alternative 1 (no restoration) to preserve hunting access. About 35 people spoke in favor of alternative 1, 2 in favor of alternative 4. Hunters are very attached to "best hunting spot on the west coast".
 - SWC will be writing a letter with following suggestions from board:

- Emphasize the success of salmon recovery thus far. Restoration is working! Data is very clear. Chinook will not recover without estuaries, particularly the Skagit, and progress to date has slowed dramatically.
- There are currently no conservation needs for waterfowl and any alternative is unlikely to impact overall population of waterfowl in the Skagit delta, though they may move to a different location.
- This project has similarities to Leque Island, where hunters were offered perks and hunting access options as part of the overall plan.
- We must respond to hunters' core issues.
- SWC support full restoration (option #4) with co-development of a hunting access plan, possibly on adjacent sites (Wiley or Milltown?).
- **RB will redraft the letter and send around for comment.**

For the Good of the Order and Adjourn 11:00

- We will get to legislative priorities next time