

Skagit Watershed Council - Final Notes

Meeting of the Board of Directors – December 7, 2017

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

Attendance: Acting Chair Brendan Brokes, Bill Blake, Richard Brocksmith, Steve Hinton, Michael Kirshenbaum, Colleen McShane, John Stein, and Jon Vanderheyden
Not in attendance: Ken Dahlstedt and Jon-Paul Shannahan.

Call to Order – 9:10 am

Introductions, Determine Quorum, and Approve Agenda - Added to the agenda: Lyman flood that severely compromised several homes and financial status due to the Capital Budget.

Approve Board Notes: November 2, 2017 - Remove extra “now” on page 2. Bill Blake moved and John Stein seconded approval of the November 2, 2017 Board notes as written and amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

- Monthly financial statements were reviewed, with October and year to date in black so far. However, with the impasse on the Capital Budget, SWC has had to restrict spending. This need has become more significant as there is an anticipated budget shortfall for the year as existing revenue sources tap out. To ensure continued operations, Skagit County and state Recreation and Conservation Office have expedited 2018 fund resources which will cover basic SWC expenses through February. Seattle City Light may also be able to renew 2018 which will cover us for another 6 to 8 weeks. Without action by the Legislature though by March, only SWC discretionary funding will remain and will impact service levels. Many organizations throughout the state are in similar situations, so the pressure to act is building. There is hope that solutions will be found in time. Michael moved and Jon seconded approval of the October 2017 financials. Motion passed unanimously.
- Committee Reports were included in the packet with a focus on accomplishments and activities of the past year.
 - Monitoring & Adaptive Management Subcommittee – The committee has fleshed out a more formal adaptive management and reporting process. It is nearing a draft report for habitat status and trends indicator data, recommendations for new indicators, and recommendations for adaptively managing the Skagit Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan along with other relevant parties. A draft will be ready for review by the TWG in early 2018 and the Board sometime in spring 2018. **Board members want to discuss the game plan for pursuing, delivering, and initiating healthy conversations on how this report will be rolled out.** The desire is to bring all the groups together and work out any differences or objections.
 - ***Note: Board members were apprised of the December 13 Whatcom Water Symposium at the Bellingham Yacht Club with registration by December 8.**

- Regarding the 2018 meeting calendar, several directors noted the ***April 5 Board meeting is spring break, so it will be changed to a one-hour phone meeting.** No other conflicts noted.
- Lyman flood event – A roughly five-year flood event caused an increased amount of water to get into the slough in Lyman. Two of the three houses now near the eroded slough bank were built only 10 years ago, apparently very near the 100-year flood plain. This represents a serious immediate and long-term concern for many including the town of Lyman, the County, property owners adjacent to the area, and the downstream landowners, as well as efforts to improve habitat rather than see it degrade further. ***It is felt these stakeholders should be working together to support community members while also ensuring sustainable fisheries, a role SWC should play to some degree.** In the short-term, decisions need to be made to setback or remove the two (maybe up to four) homes which are about to fall into the river; however, expedient removal of the houses is complex due to instability of the slopes around the houses, liability, compensation, and removal costs. If the houses aren't removed before the next flood event, they could end up in the river – a much costlier and environmentally-negative outcome to immediate removal. There may also be additional discussion about installing rock armor for property protection at the head of and adjacent to the slough, though this would be very difficult given the regulatory framework in place and have negative implications for habitat.

Board members shared information and context they have about the area. They agreed that this is a good test of the SWC 2017 Protection Strategy. ***The Board decided to revisit this issue in a couple months to discuss a long-term plan. They felt a geomorphologist could provide explanations to all stakeholders about the complex processes impacting this vulnerable spot – and others similar and adjacent to it in the area.** This information could provide lessons to apply to future management of the landscape.

Other potential actions discussed:

- 1) ***Further explore the county's and town's positions on buying out houses that are clearly in harm's way.**
- 2) ***SWC can be a resource for mapping and habitat information and financial investment.**
- 3) ***SWC should explore a coordinated approach with the County and others for hazard reduction. Initiate a conversation with the County about its hazard mitigation plan.**

Old Business

- SWC 2017 Protection Strategy Update - The ad hoc Protection Policy Committee met prior to the Board meeting to look at the strategy. The committee participants outlined changes recommended on pages 6 & 7 and 10 & 11. The Board discussed their input, discussing some important remaining considerations. There was agreement to delete the word "voluntary" on the title page as it was confusing without context (even though everything we do is voluntary); avoid using the words "passively managed"; avoid confusion in the 2nd paragraph regarding "real properties" by removing the word "real" and change "properties" to "property's".

- There was agreement the Strategy could be adopted today with the new conservation lands definition, with subsequent effort extended immediately thereafter to update the conserved lands layer and update the connectivity assessment and scoring that flows from it. ***Regarding reference to DNR lands there were several recommendations for action, including inventorying where they exist and what types of objectives and management they have, with final decisions about what is in or out made by the Board of Directors.**
- Steve moved adoption of the Protection Strategy to include the new definition for conservation lands, striking the word “voluntary”, striking the word “real” and changing “properties” to “property’s”. Michael seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

- Project Planning via SWC’s Work Plan
 - 4 Year Work Plan – Richard provided copies of the 4YWP and explained the color-codes in red, green, blue, brown, pink, and yellow. These handouts capture brief project updates as provided by the relevant project sponsors. Some projects are completed and will be removed. A couple of projects won’t likely be able to move forward in 4 years, so they will be removed for now. Many other projects are advancing, and the new phases expected to be implemented in the next 4 years are being updated. Finally, a call has been made to propose adding new project concepts.
 - A question was asked about the 4YWP’s purpose and history. The 4YWP informs the Legislature of upcoming projects and level of funding necessary. A useful planning tool, it streamlines the project review process at the SRFB level by allowing a regional review of how all of our projects fit the Recovery Plan in advance. And it could be used even more at the local level by proactively working together to move forward a shared vision of future work and necessary steps for each project. It’s also used to get hatchery, habitat, harvest, and hydropower initiatives aligned, particularly in other watersheds where hatchery issues are more prevalent than in Skagit. SWC has actively managed the scope and scale of the 4YWP to where it has become a fairly realistic set of concepts that could be moved forward in 4 years.
 - Richard has contacted all primary sponsors about where they are in their projects. We are still working with the TWG to flesh this list out. Chris published an open call to anyone who could be a potential project sponsor of projects consistent with the recovery plan and SWC 2015 Strategic Approach. At the beginning of January, the TWG will look at the 4-Year Work Plan and send it to the Board in February.
- Reach Scale Planning – The Board was updated on the list of project concepts that were generated in the Middle Skagit planning process in 2011 based on reach scale analyses and restoration needs. Richard also shared a summary regarding priority projects in the estuary from a farm, fish, and flood perspective coming out of the 3FI effort. The Board was hopeful this work would help stakeholders and property owners move forward in the estuary. We should continue to move forward with the remaining restoration

concepts on public lands in the interim. They also felt that the work in the middle Skagit is a good place to immediately engage with the possibility that similar reach-scale assessments and partnerships could be proposed in important areas of the upper basin as well. ***All agreed it makes sense to leverage and sequence resources in a further conversation, though the shape and timeline of that conversation is a work in progress. TWG will pick it up again later in December and January (and beyond), with any potential project recommendations to be captured in the 4YWP.**

- Community Engagement Strategies - ***The SWC should consider community engagement strategies in creating a restoration vision for the future through a multiple-entity planning process and strategy development.** This would entail discovering barriers and reducing community resistance in a collaborative process as well as reviewing lessons learned from multiple past efforts.
 - ***Discuss the role the CEC could play in working with the TWG regarding community outreach and engagement.**
 - ***Consider having a facilitator foster a focused conversation on Ross Island Reach regarding opportunities, for instance.**
 - ***Steve will help tee off a conversation regarding protection/restoration nexus about Ross Island reach regarding constraints, intrinsic potential, and the players for the Dec. 14th TWG meeting.**
 - ***Define other reaches that have high intrinsic potential.**
 - Discuss common indicators and how they are incorporated more explicitly.
 - Board members shared some lessons learned on community outreach:
 - The community sometimes isn't listening until the maps are on the wall.
 - Sweeten the pot, add some cost, and accept a few delays.
 - Identify the players. Build a coalition little steps at a time.
 - Bring data and share it transparently, but define the technical into simpler terms.
- Steelhead Plan – The strategy is to discuss it next winter for the 4-year work plan update in 2019. The Plan hasn't been final drafted yet, or of course vetted thoroughly, but ***it will be moving forward including through SWC, in the coming year.**
- Letter to WA Legislature re: Lack of Capital Budget (#8) – Richard shared a draft letter requesting a resolution to the Capital Budget ASAP. ***Richard will work with Colleen regarding wording to get this letter out this week.** The Board liked the content of the letter and the tone it expressed.

Adjourn 11:47 am

Next SWC Board Meetings: January 4, 2018 and February 1, 2018