

Skagit Watershed Council – Final Notes
Meeting of the Board of Directors, via Zoom
February 3rd, 2022, 10am to Noon

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

Attending: John Stein (Chair), Brendan Brokes, Bill Blake, Jon Vanderheyden, Devin Smith, Michael Kirshenbaum, Brian Lanouette, Aundrea McBride, Richard Brocksmith, Holli Watne

Absent: Andrew Bearlin, Peter Browning

Call to Order 10:07 am

- Introductions, quorum achieved.
- Review of Draft Agenda – Given the recent release of the draft agenda and lack of time to complete their policy review, the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe requested tabling of the 2022 Strategic Approach and 2022 Lead Entity Program Guide. The group agreed to address that topic when they got to that agenda item. Motion by Bill, second by Devin, to approve the agenda as presented. Passed unanimously.
- Approved Board Notes for January 6, 2022. Motion by Devin, second by Bill, approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

- November and December Financial Reports submitted for approval. Everything looks as expected. ***Richard will get back to the Board with details about the \$2,000 'sponsorship' item in December.** Motion to approve financial reports by Michael, second by Brendan, unanimously approved.
- Community Engagement Committee Report:
 - Illuminight went off well with about 700 participants. Tables by 6 organizations were successful at engaging attendees and sharing educational materials.
 - ***Revisiting the STEAM Train and making a map of programs are next on the to-do list.**
- Technical Work Group:
 - Received a presentation from Kristin Murray, SFEG, about the wrap up at Presentin Park project. 2.3 acres of off channel habitat created. 12 acres of riparian habitat planted. There was some flood damage to display area during November floods.
 - Revisited changes to 2022 SWC Strategic Approach regarding pocket estuaries and approved the Whidbey Basin extent at the north end from West Point to Rosario Head and new map. Recommended the Board approve both the Strategic Approach and 2022 LE Program Guide.

- Got an update on the Skagit Salmon Science Series (4S)
- Riparian Work Group
 - North Sound Riparian Conference had 160 participants.
 - Videos will be ready soon and published to our website.
- M&AM Subcommittee
 - Received a presentation from WDFW about a potential monitoring project for the lead entity to fund on warm water fish predation of salmonids in Big Lake. The M&AM determined this project did not meet the SWC criteria for monitoring funded by the LE due to limited Chinook salmon use of Big Lake, while recognizing the data gap might be very important to fill. ***Aundrea will send emails to Brendan.**
 - Discussed other possible monitoring projects for the 2022 grant round from the 4YWP that might come forward this year. USIT and SRSC are discussing.
 - Subcommittee did want to reiterate to the Board that monitoring, funded via the nondiscretionary set aside, is an important part of SWC's program.
- Several news articles came out over the past month about salmon in the Skagit.
- The giant copper mine tenures or mining rights were extinguished in the Skagit headwaters via voluntary purchase by British Columbia, Washington, and the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission. This is a big win for salmon and our community after 30 years of effort.

Old Business

- 2022 SWC Strategic Approach:
 - Both TWG (October, November, December and January meetings) and M&AM (October, November and January meetings) developed and recommended passage of this modest update. Specifically, we limited the update this year to a science-driven update expanding from just Skagit Bay pocket estuaries to Whidbey Basin pocket estuaries. This includes a narrative and a new map.
 - (There's also an update to riparian project eligibility, but we've currently described that in an appendix which is likely best attached to the Program Guide for this year.)
 - All board members but one are prepared to approve these changes today as written.
 - ***A special meeting will be convened to revisit this topic on February 15th at 2:00.**
 - We will continue to strive for consensus.
- 2022 Lead Entity Program Guide:
 - This topic will also be decided on at the February 15th special meeting. If a consensus cannot be reached 'plan B' could be to move the grant round forward with last year's Program Guide, only updating dates and dollar amounts.
 - ***Brian will send word to the Board if any issues come up in advance of the 15th meeting.**

- It was noted that having all TRC members rank all projects, including their own, would help with maintaining confidentiality when reviewing individual project scores (so that scorer identities cannot be determined by their conflicts of interest). Of course their own project scores would not be included in the actual tabulation.
- The Recreation and Conservation Office adopted new riparian eligibility requirements this year based on WDFW's riparian science for moving to site potential tree height (SPTH). TWG reviewed these. We must approve them all to be eligible for riparian grants. The TWG did discuss keeping some certain existing SWC requirements. Specifically, TWG recommends that the Board keep our minimum planting width of 132 feet for 2022 based on some concern about SPTH being determined by inaccurate soil typing and species identification. ***This should be revisited in next year or two. *A question was raised to clarify if buffer averaging for non-303d listed streams meant the average should be greater or less than the SWC proposed minimum width of 132ft.**
- It was noted that the RFP in the Program Guide includes Tier 2S-steelhead areas while we have only an interim steelhead strategy that is now 6 years old, and no steelhead recovery plan. ***The appropriateness of including Tier 2S should be discussed later in 2022.**
- Projects for which there is a set aside are sometimes scored, but they probably shouldn't be. ***This point will be added to the Program Guide.**
- SWC's commitment to small, steady investments in riparian and monitoring projects are a priority that is widely shared across technical and policy levels. These are a priority to maintain. These set aside pools of money come off the top of the total funding available, though they are typically submitted by the lead entity at the bottom of the list (i.e. wouldn't outrank an important estuary restoration project for instance).

Good of the Order

There is a new Fish and Wildlife Commissioner. ***John will reach out to him for a possible meet and greet with SWC board.**

Adjourn 12:17 pm