

Skagit Watershed Council

January 4, 2018 Meeting of the Board of Directors – Final Notes

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

In attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt, Bill Blake, Richard Brocksmith, Michael Kirshenbaum, Colleen McShane, Jon-Paul Shannahan, John Stein, and Jon Vanderheyden

Not in attendance: Brendan Brokes and Steve Hinton

Call to Order – 9:06 am

Introductions, Determine Quorum, and Approve Agenda

SWC Board Notes for December 7, 2017

John Stein moved and Jon Vanderheyden seconded approval of the December 7, 2017 Board notes as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

- November Financial Reports
Richard reviewed the November and December SWC financial status and the financial situation statewide resulting from the unresolved Capital Budget. Revenue has been secured for SWC operations for the next two months or so. In addition, if a resolution does not occur by March, then the grant round may not occur this year, a decision which would be taken up by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board in late March. Ken and others assured the Board that they will continue to advocate for the important work of the SWC and its members who are working on behalf of the watershed. ***Richard will notify all partners of the risks for the grant round funding. He will encourage them to continue putting together their proposals and letters of intent in hopes that a resolution will occur and the grant round for 2018 will not be affected.**
Bill moved and Colleen seconded approval of the November financial reports as prepared. Motion passed unanimously.
- Committee Reports
 - TWG met in December and will meet again on January 18. They recommended adjusting project scoring so that Tier 2 projects with positive biological impacts can compete more equitably with Tier 1 projects that might have less benefit. This month they will review final changes to the 4 year work plan and LE program guide for a Board vote in February. ***A subgroup will develop a list of questions regarding cost-benefits for large projects, though likely not in time for this grant round. *Next week a sub-group is meeting to consider how to coordinate protection and restoration programs as requested by the Board.** Any Board members wishing to attend this meeting would be welcome.
 - The Protection Subcommittee approved moving forward on several new parcels using the 2017 Protection Strategy adopted in December. The Board reiterated the need for effective outreach to implement the Protection Strategy, and restoration, especially in priority reaches.

Old Business

- The Riparian Assessment project has been largely wrapped up with the Recreation and Conservation Office grant manager. Because of this effort, so much more is known about the

Skagit River. The 77-page report contains amazing data and an online GIS portal with new mapping tools. ***Richard will be creating a webpage on the SWC website for this.** The TWG, M&AM subcommittee and potentially the Community Engagement Committee have the opportunity now to determine how they can use this information in their efforts, including further proposed projects in the 10 publicly-owned sites identified through the project as needing improvement. Richard asked how the Board envisioned rolling this out. ***It would be valuable to develop a bulleted summary for sharing results and conclusions and next steps with our members and the general public.** We do know that a lot of trees have been planted in priority riparian areas, though we've also lost some riparian areas over the same general timeframe. Ultimately, it would be nice to see a project that would look at the effectiveness of these tree-planting efforts in the watershed to validate directly the initial observation that we are gaining riparian habitat.

- 2017 Protection Strategy Update - Review property types to be included in the conservation lands database
 - DNR lands - Chris spoke with several DNR representatives regarding this issue. He looked at the 79 DNR parcels in the riparian corridor and while one is in agricultural production (near SR9 bridge) the other 78 are designated trust land and as such are covered by the Trust Lands HCP and the Riparian Forest Restoration Strategy. For these lands, DNR does not cut within 100-feet of the 100-year floodplains, which was deemed to be protective of salmon habitats over the short and moderate term. It was also clarified that only acreage within the Tier 1 and 2 and 2S Target Areas would be included, not the entire DNR parcel.
 - The group concluded that it is appropriate to give a bump to 78 of these 79 DNR parcels (taking out the ag parcel).
 - Skagit County lands - The Board discussed Skagit County lands within SWC priority areas that might qualify as conservation lands for the adjacency bump. Chris identified about 250 county-owned lands and culled infrastructure lands which left about 30 properties to consider further. These county properties include: parks, well protections, tax foreclosure pieces, rails to trails, and other tax-exempt properties. While County resources are limited for an in-depth inventory, Richard and Chris could meet with County Public Works staff to determine these parcels' level of protection, their value to fish priorities, how they are managed, and possible disposition and future management. ***The Board agreed to take a conservative approach for now by only including in the conservation lands database county lands with known, permanent protections and primarily fish management, as well as park lands (as referenced in a recent Board meeting).** This will likely only be a handful of sites along the river. ***The Board also supported having a conversation with the County about the remaining properties and assessing which might be valuable for a higher-level of protection than they currently enjoy.**
 - Other
 - ***Add in NRCS Wetland and Reserve Program and Emergency Preserve lands**
 - ***Take out lands in the NRCS Farmland Reserve Program**
 - FEMA properties (of unknown number) – Assess these on a case-by-case basis as to likelihood of active salmon management. It was noted that these properties could be a more complicated “can of worms.” ***Chris will take a shot at cataloging which properties are in or out and make sure the committee supports it. He will not come back to the Board on this.**
- Status of Lyman projects
 - Ken clarified that an application to FEMA has been submitted with \$1 million in funding already set aside. Willingness to move these ahead of the process as this is time-sensitive. There is potential for this money to be approved. Uncertain about whether FEMA will fund it, and this won't be determined for a month or more. FEMA money is a better bargain for these folks.

***Wait for the FEMA process to play out over the next couple months as it is the best option for the affected parties and hope that the houses don't end up in the river. Continue to discuss options with the landowners as we work to help as best we can.**

New Business

- Richard asked that the Board add this as New Business – Kari is stepping down from the Protection Subcommittee, and SLT is proposing Jane Zillig as a replacement. Jon V. moved and Colleen seconded the appointment of Jane Zillig to replace Kari Odden on the Protection Subcommittee. Motion approved unanimously.
- Note: Janice Flagan from the County is retiring (Congratulations, Jan!!), so this will affect the Protection Subcommittee membership. Current members include: Bob Warinner, Janice Flagan, Rick Hartson, Scott Heller, Denise Krownbell, Chris Vondrasek, Jane Zillig, Kate Ramsden/Steve Hinton as guests
- Jon-Paul moved and Bill seconded the appointment of Emily Derenne, Skagit County Public Works, to the Technical Work Group. Motion approved unanimously.

Note: Jon Vanderheyden will be absent from the February and March Board meetings. He may be able to participate in the April phone call.

Adjourn – 11:28 am

Next SWC Board Meetings: February 1, 2018 and March 1, 2018