

Skagit Watershed Council – Final Notes
Meeting of the Board of Directors – November 2, 2017

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

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

Call to Order – 9:15 am

Introductions, Determine Quorum, and Approve Agenda (#1)

Quorum established. No changes to the agenda.

Approve Board Notes for October 5, 2017 (#2) –No comments or other changes proposed.
Brendan Brokes moved and Bill Blake seconded approval of the October 5, 2017 Board notes as written. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director’s Report

- Richard indicated financials were in good shape and nothing unique to report this month. Brendan Brokes moved and Colleen McShane seconded approval of the financial statements. Motion carried unanimously.
- Richard noted that SWC federal tax preparation has been started.
- Richard shared a draft copy of the 2018 meeting dates for the Board, all committees, and the lead entity program. ***Richard asked the Board to pencil into their calendar and that any conflicts be sent to him for reconsideration. He will forward an electronic version of the calendar to the Board members.**
- Ken asked for feedback about the quarterly meetings. Richard said that the elected officials to whom he has spoken feel informed by the meetings. No negative comments have been received and turnout seems solid. No changes proposed.
- Coastal Volunteer Partnership status: The Padilla Bay Foundation and National Estuarine Research Reserve decided they won’t be the fiscal sponsor for the CVP any longer. CVP provides an education and training coordinator for the Salish Sea Stewards and a volunteer program. The MRC and Friends of Skagit Beaches as well as other organizations need trained volunteers. Preliminary discussions are in progress with Skagit Conservation District (SCD) to provide these services under contract. The SCD Board will consider it this month with an agreement possible by December. The SCD feels it is a win-win arrangement since they don’t want to lose a good program and a trained volunteer base. The SWC Board agreed this is a good direction.
- Richard will be speaking with a reporter with the Skagit Valley Herald and he asked the Board to weigh in on what to communicate about the status of Orca whales and Chinook. The Board provided the following input: We’re doing great habitat protection

and restoration now in Puget Sound's most productive salmon basin and we need to keep this up. Continue to focus our work with updated science such as the riparian and protection strategies that ensure we are doing the best we can with the resources we are provided.

- Riparian Assessment - ***The TWG has been asked to provide comments before the next meeting.** The comment period closes November 9.

Committee Reports

- Written reports were provided for TWG, Protection, M&AM, and CEC.
- Community Engagement Committee met earlier this week. Lots of exciting things are happening with Illuminight activities. The Wild and Scenic Film Festival was well-attended; lots of new members signed up. There is some disappointment with lack of funding certainty to hire an outreach coordinator at 0.5 FTE.
- Richard shared a summary of parcels (130 acres in total) acquired since the Protection Subcommittee last reported to the Board, about a year ago. They are doing great work.

Protection Strategy Review

- Richard presented the Protection Strategy changes that have been made since the last meeting at the request of the Board: clarify Figure 1 and what is called protected land.
- Steve expressed that some of his concerns have been addressed, though there are some continued areas of concern; as such, he's not prepared to approve the Strategy today. He acknowledged the effort of so many to get this tool to this point. This is all about how to allocate precious resources to the best good. He feels these concerns are fundamental. His main concerns are: 1) A tool is only as good as the underlying data. The protected lands database still needs further definition. We need a process to better clarify what conservation land is. He envisions this as a stand-alone database for protection and restoration efforts. 2) He's not sure we have the degradation thresholds quite right yet. ***He would like the Board to have discussions about restoration in the future.** Concern regarding emphasis on protection for parcels that are intact and functioning. It's important how we deal with the degradation issue in a more deliberate manner with some kind of relief valve as Michael called it. 3) Also, when and how would updates be made to what we all hope is a fairly dynamic program. How do we reopen this strategy when we have new data/science without a whole lot of extra process?
- The Board would like to address these issues over the next month and bring the document to the Board in December for final approval.
- After much further discussion, ***Jon-Paul proposed an ad hoc protection policy committee to address the issues over the next month with 1-2 meetings. Bill, Michael, Jon-Paul, Brendan and Steve volunteered to work on this. The group will lay out the short-term and longer-term issues and what can be addressed now and what can be addressed in the future.** Decide the parameters, the timeframe, and what to address now and what to address later. Agree now on the policy and protection strategy documentation, and let the mapping updates follow soon afterward.

- The Board agreed they are all ready to have this done soon. Ken expressed confidence that we can get these areas of concern discussed and finalize the Strategy soon. They also thanked Chris for his efforts on this process.
- Spend some time to do restoration planning on the longer-term issue over the next year. ***One possible approach is to develop a proposal for a SRFB grant to resolve the restoration/degradation issue.**
- Further discussion revolved around concern over lost opportunities to acquire land if it doesn't fit the model. There is a significant danger of applying the rules without a relief valve to address special situations. Many Board members acknowledged the lost value in not being able to acquire parcels at the time there is a willing seller. If it's not acquired, then it could be converted to blueberry farm and will never be available. Some acquisitions are building blocks for future protection and restoration.

Capital Budget

- One director noted a potential solution is surfacing in Olympia to the Hirst issue and the Capital budget. Pressure is mounting on Legislators who are getting fed up with the lack of a capital budget.
- Richard indicated that RCO and PSP are putting in place backup plans to provide funding for our operations through June 2018, improving our funding outlook.

Debriefing about Salmon Recovery Council

- Funding – Ken expressed that we need to propose longer-term funding sources. Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council divides up money for every watershed as though every watershed is critical. To some degree, he feels if funding isn't allocated according to where the greatest chance of success is, we may have to address our needs ourselves. He suggested going to our federal delegation for additional help.
- Puget Sound Partnership Call for Near-term Actions – Steve provided context about NTA's – Near-term Actions. The Tribes are pushing for expanded protection and restoration given the critical nature of salmon. The NTA's put projects/priorities on the list which sets the stage for the next four years. The NTA's will be solicited this month. They are due by the end of January and reviewed by March. All would like to have a dialogue on this to help refine the proposals that are being advanced in the watershed. ***Steve will bring some ideas for the Board to look at in December regarding the Bold Actions. *December's agenda will set aside time for Board members to provide information about what they and other stakeholders are doing.** Ken is encouraged by our collective efforts and the progress we are making even regarding hard conversations. There is some skepticism from the counties on these Bold Actions. The WA Association of Counties voted against the Bold Actions because of the challenges created when trying to implement SMP and GMA processes in addition to the Bold Actions. In Skagit we don't have an LIO that can work directly with the NTA's, but Tribes can interface with these entities. Anything that needs to be added to the process should be discussed here in our future Board meetings. (Note: Ken left the meeting and Jon-Paul took over as Chair (11:15 am)). ***Board members expressed keen interest in knowing what other NTA's are being proposed.** They don't want to duplicate efforts

and they don't want to pass up opportunities to collaborate or support a project that could be mutually-beneficial.

- John Stein provided an update about this week's PSP Leadership Council in Olympia. They took the 3rd option for regional priorities with some minor tweaks. The Orca resolution got adopted. Steve clarified some details around regional priorities.

Adjourn: 11:29 am

Next SWC Board Meetings: November 2, 2017, December 7, 2017, and January 4, 2018.