

Skagit Watershed Council – Final Notes

Meeting of the Board of Directors, SWC Office – November 7, 2019

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

Attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt, Bill Blake, Brendan Brokes, Michael Kirshenbaum, Steve Hinton, Andrew Bearlin, and John Stein. Staff include Richard Brocksmith, Aundrea McBride

Not in attendance: Jon-Paul Shannahan and Jon Vanderheyden.

Call to Order 9:05 am

- Introductions, Determine Quorum, and Approve Agenda (#1) – Quorum present, added congratulations to Brendan Brokes for getting Region 4 Director job.
- Approve Board Notes: October 3, 2019 (#2)—Notion by Michael, second by Bill, approved.

Executive Directors Report

- Approve September Financial Report (#3)—Motion by Bill, second by John, approved.
- Taxes due November 15th. The Board reviewed final 990 form and it was signed by Ken.
- Personnel Update—We had 12-15 good applications for Community Engagement position. Interviewed 4. Narrowed down to 2 for second interview. References still need to be checked. First three tasks for new person will be revving up the Community Engagement Committee, Illuminight, and classroom teaching. Big tasks in 2020 will be public outreach on Sauk project and steelhead recovery plan outreach.
- Committee Reports—Monitoring & Adaptive Management Subcommittee meeting discussed the Riparian Actions database revisions and new SRSC hydrography layers, as well as set goal to complete 2019 report by end of year. ***TWG will finish review of the Sauk Valley Road project when they meet.** Protection Subcommittee also met.

Old Business

- Lower Skagit Temperature TMDL
 - Too little has been done in the past decade to address rising temperatures and risks to fish, so this effort needs to show a new approach with real potential for improving implementation. There has been steady and sincere involvement with all parties in a series of recent meetings, refocusing our work on new incentives, financing, and staff commitments, as well as a commitment to working with other relevant interests to support multiple benefits. Ecology will produce an

updated “Strategy” by year end which will be fairly generic it appears. ***Thus sustained efforts will need to continue well into 2020.**

- The Board hopes we can keep up on-the-ground work while seizing this opportunity to refresh and hold a broader vision for a sustainable future.
- Ecology’s committee has reviewed several Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) improvements proposed by WA Conservation Commission to WA OFM/Governor. SWC supports these CREP revisions with the legislature, particularly if they can focus in the Skagit geography. ***SWC to write support letter. *Can they also include a re-assessment of the \$50K cap per landowner that is a barrier for large landowners?** We would like to see even more examples of ag and fish habitat together. Skagit and other conservation districts likely going after federal RCPP grant in early summer.
- WDFW has been meeting with stakeholders; reviewed well-received Volume 1 Riparian Science. Volume 2 included management recommendations and is being refined to include Best Available Science that says site potential tree height is the vision, though can be broken down to look at function by function at specific sites.
- Can we leverage existing salmon funds into these Lower Skagit tributaries without diluting our current focus on Chinook recovery?
 - Technical assessment - SWC staff should provide assessment on riparian. ***How about comparing site potential tree heights (as modeled by soil type) to current conditions to highlight opportunities?**
 - Conservation/protection actions could be elevated in some areas. ***Reach-scale grants could help with outreach and acquisition in priority areas; ask partners.** Otherwise combination SRFB proposals can be competitive.
 - ***Continue to expand riparian planting and outreach efforts into these tribs.**
 - ***Support development of a monitoring and assessment framework.**
- Need reach-scale planning starting with Nookachamps and Hansen (though a watershed plan already exists there) since they are SWC Tier 2 Target Areas (followed by Carpenter, Fisher). ***Temperature questions such as Big Lake and other research topics need more assessment. In addition, on-going needs such as drainage issues and wetland enhancement should get back on track if we are to cooperatively pursue progress. Board agrees there should be coordination if not integration among drainage, protection, and restoration at reach scales. Leadership required.**

- Culverts
 - An update was provided on the SRSC et al. steelhead fish passage prioritization project funded in 2016 for freshwater areas of the Skagit Watershed. Updated barrier inventories have been used to sort public and private culverts into bins that describe their passability and potential benefit, with reports to be drafted by the end of 2019. SRSC has been coordinating with the Fish Barrier Removal Board.
 - Various perspectives were explored on how to advance into fundraising and implementation. Areas of agreement in principle seem to be:
 - Desire to build a common knowledge base on barriers: where are the problems and areas of most opportunity, who owns them, who can lead on replacing them, how to fund, etc.
 - Firm agreement that the new information should leverage new resources for a package of important culvert replacements on public lands that can be advanced through common advocacy for new local, state and federal funds, outside of the SRFB process. Need to grow the pie.
 - Desire to ensure early phases of this work do not slow down Skagit Chinook recovery.
 - Give credit to partners working together, including for work completed to date by Skagit County.
 - ***The Board asked staff to work with TWG to assess options to support these principles, including ways to strategically provide financial resources from SRFB in 2020, but keeping in mind the goal of not distracting from Chinook recovery.**
- [Sauk River Tributary Culverts/Hobbit Corner Project Status](#)—There is an ongoing dialogue about the scale of benefit for our existing priorities (i.e. Chinook and channel migration zones/floodplains). ***Will be discussed/decided at the November TWG.**

New Business

- Returned PSAR funds—***An RFP will go out for the ~\$300k, focusing first on currently funded projects.**
- 2020 Draft Legislative Priorities—We already know about the need for CREP enhancements and WDFW budget increases, ***but need to track other emergent needs.**

Adjourn 11:25am