

Skagit Watershed Council
Meeting of the Board of Directors – Final Notes
October 1, 2015 SWC Office, Mount Vernon, WA

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt, Bob Everitt, Richard Brocksmith, Loren Everest, Carolyn Kelly, Colleen McShane, Michael Kirshenbaum, Jon-Paul Shannahan and Steve Hinton.

Not in attendance: Margaret Fleek.

Ken will leave at 11 am due to a prior commitment.

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am with a quorum.

Draft Agenda – Reviewed and accepted.

Meeting Notes

Colleen moved and Bob seconded approval of the September 3, 2015 notes as presented. Unanimously approved.

Executive Director Report

- August Financial Report (#3)
 - Richard made general comments about the August 2014 financials. SWC has finally executed our contract with RCO for SRFB and PSAR funds. There are 3 pay periods this past month (which happens twice a year) which resulted in negative numbers for our profit & loss statement.
 - Richard signed two subcontracts for \$2500 each for riparian project support: one with the Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC) and the other with the Skagit Land Trust. He anticipates signing another with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) for the same project, and ***will be back in November to discuss moving forward with a Habitat Work Schedule award to them as well.**
 - Carolyn moved and Bob seconded the motion to approve the August 2015 financials as included in the board packet. Unanimously approved.
- Goodell Project - Draft Letter of Support (#4)

Richard drafted a letter of support from SWC. Colleen provided Richard her suggested edits. The board agreed to provide one letter of support for the project and a second letter to the SRFB with concern about following a methodical process that respects local decision-making. ***Richard will adopt suggested edits and submit the letter of support. He will draft the second letter and send it to the board for review.**

Motion: Carolyn moved and Jon Paul seconded that we send two letters: the letter of support to go out before the October 13 deadline and the second to be drafted to the SRFB. Unanimously approved.

JP provided an update about their efforts to address three areas of concern in the POC: 1) need to highlight the benefits of fish work in tributaries; 2) need to more clearly define their intent; 3) need to confirm feasibility of partner participation and funding.

They have gotten letters of support from the DOT and the Park Service. Seattle City Light's letter is forthcoming.

- Community Engagement Planning Update (#5a & 5b)
Richard presented the track changes and the clean version of the draft Community Engagement Plan that came from the Board's recent work session. ***The Board will provide feedback to Richard by email if necessary. Work over the next month will wrap up Phase 1: reaching out to additional partners, finalizing goals, creating an inventory and gap analysis. Richard is meeting with North Cascades Institute (NCI) and the community engagement team will meet with WSU and the Forest Service as well. The Board will revisit the draft Community Engagement Plan at their November meeting.**
- Upcoming Staff and Committee Tasks for Fall/Winter (handout).
SWC is transitioning from a 3-year work plan to a 4-year work plan for large-scale capital projects, at the urging of the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP). Partners will be asked to confirm the draft translation and to submit new projects to populate the work plan, with the Board giving final approval. This work plan is used by PSP and SRFB to validate proposed planning and projects are consistent with the regional and local recovery plans.
PSP is requesting a large change in PSAR timing: they would like to have 2016 be the next year to plan for allocation of 2017-2019 PSAR funding, which would then leave 2017 as the smaller funding year. The plan is to go through back-to-back PSAR rounds in 2015 and again in 2016, which could present challenges. ***Board confirmed that sponsors/members need to have this knowledge of PSAR timing changes soon.**
Richard relayed conversations with steelhead recovery planners that there would likely be briefings to the TWG in near future for them to assess if small technical improvements could be made to the 2015 Interim Steelhead Strategy. Given early status of recovery planning, the recovery planners do not advise major adjustments at this time. ***Board requested that the recovery planners advise this body as early as feasible as well since this was also a policy topic relevant to our work.**
***An email survey of suggested improvements to the Lead Entity Program Guide will be sent to committee members soon. Board confirmed that they will edit as well as approve the final.**
The deadline for the Protection Strategy update (SRFB funded project) was extended to spring. ***Richard agreed to brief the Board in November or December on progress regarding the protection strategy update.**
Riparian Stewardship project is moving well now.
Community Engagement planning is underway.
- Richard spoke regarding the previously-funded Skagit County project to assess the feasibility of setting back a levee on the North Fork where the bridge connects to Fir Island. He approved administratively a \$25K request for Puget Sound Partnership regional funds after consulting with/briefing the TWG. The project ran into cost overruns after cultural resources were discovered on the land. The Board felt Richard was right in approving the funding to keep the project moving forward and briefing TWG; however, they would like Richard to inform the Board of such decisions and

reiterated that the TWG doesn't have policy authority, whereas the Board is in charge of policy and funding decisions. For this reason, the Board wants to be kept apprised of decisions made at the administrative level regarding policy and funding – even those decisions for which Richard has executive authority.

- Margaret Fleek will retire January 1, 2016. She could potentially stay on the Board until February given her role with Hamilton, but of course is looking forward to retirement. ***Steve Hinton and the nominating committee will be working on securing names for nomination to the Board.**
- Discussion regarding a Board Retreat in December resulted in a decision to move the Board's customary all-day retreat to January 2016. ***Richard will send a doodle poll.** The Board meeting will be conducted by conference call on December 3 from 9am – 10am, if deemed necessary by the officers.

Committee Reports

- ***Protection Subcommittee Report***

The subcommittee has been meeting monthly working mostly on the protection strategy update, but also progressing on acquisitions. They formally update the Board on acquisitions typically every 4-6 months (***next is due soon**), but monthly summaries are also provided. Check out the hotlinks in the notes for additional details related to their work.

Steve noted that Phil Kincare is retiring (December 3), and it will be 9-12 months before his position will be filled. Thus a new chair of the subcommittee needs to be appointed. Kara Symonds, Skagit County, is also stepping down from the committee. ***The Board will discuss potential subcommittee replacements at their November meeting. *Richard will write a letter from the SWC to Erin Uloth (FS District Ranger) and the new forest supervisor regarding the value of Phil's position to the SWC, the Skagit generally, and to the work all SWC partners are doing.**

- ***Technical Work Group Report***

No questions surfaced from the Board regarding the written report.

Old Business

- **Salmon Recovery Network 2017-2019 Capacity Request (#8)**

The Salmon Recovery Network was established to clarify messaging and define how communication occurs statewide among the watersheds, regional recovery organizations and governments. They are also looking at capacity funding and support for capital funding. The briefing material is a second iteration of SWC's response to the Salmon Recovery Network query of lead entity capacity needs, highlighting our collaborative need for additional capacity for adaptive management and monitoring and community engagement. Richard removed references to who within our partnership could likely receive capacity funds following recommendation from the officers. Steve wants to be on record as saying this request doesn't represent approval to increase SWC staffing but instead to utilize the resources and expertise of the membership and pass funds through to partners. Richard responded that neither SWC nor its partners are staffed enough to do the work that is required to meet their mission, but his recent conclusion is there isn't enough SWC staff to meet the demands of our work plan. ***The**

Board felt this was an appropriate topic for the retreat in January. This could also include upcoming project needs.

New Business

- Review Skagit Capacity Fund Awards (#9)

Five proposals were received for \$50,000 total. SWC's approved budget has just over \$100,000 allocated for capital project development:

1. Upper Skagit Indian Tribe – Tenas and Diobsud Creek data collection in preparation for project development
2. SRSC – Analyses of wood and morphology in Suiattle and tributaries
- 3, 4, and 5. SFEG, Skagit County, and the SRSC – Fish barrier culvert data collection and habitat assessments in preparation for project development

TWG recommended that four of the five projects (all but Suiattle) were technically adequate, presented by highly qualified sponsors, and ready for funding, with only a couple remaining but important policy questions for the Board's consideration.

The Board agreed that the USIT response to TWG requests for USIT commitment to long-term data collection and no further Skagit Capacity Funds were met.

The SRSC's Suiattle River proposal is a very significant potential project, proposed by highly qualified organizations. The Suiattle is not starved for wood load everywhere, but SRSC and the USFS want to take advantage of the presence of really large wood currently available for future restoration projects by finding the right locations to augment wood. TWG asked that their questions be addressed prior to any approval (to which Steve agreed was appropriate). The Board agreed that it's important to get the money out the door on the other four projects and we don't need to wait to consider Suiattle at the same time.

Carolyn moved and Bob seconded to approve all five proposals on the condition that the Suiattle project responses were deemed adequate by the TWG. After some discussion, Carolyn and Bob accepted a friendly amendment that all data refinements, habitat surveys, and project development efforts for the three culvert proposals need to be consistent with the 2015 Strategic Approach and Interim Steelhead Strategy (i.e. work only in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 2 steelhead-only areas and priority objectives).
Unanimously approved.

Note: Steve, Jon-Paul and Ken abstained from the vote.

The Board agreed to discuss the next iteration of the Skagit Capacity Fund at their retreat in January. They would like to refine the process RFP and consider further work on the eligibility of Tier 3, Samish and steelhead, for example.

- Puget Sound Partnership –
 - Ken spoke about his recent attendance at the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (SRC) and a presentation about the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (co-sponsored by WDFW and Army Corps of Engineers), specifically about the Skagit North Fork Levee Setback project which will be looking for non-federal funding to the tune of ~\$35M and an additional, local sponsor(s). If the SRC is looking to advance salmon and estuary restoration in high priority locations, they should get behind raising resources for this project, assuming landowners approve of the projects first.

- Richard distributed a handout with details about the PSAR grant schedule changes that the Board briefly discussed earlier that day.
- PSP Chinook Implementation Strategy Process – Richard briefed the Board on this PSP and SRC effort and noted it is in our work plan to ensure Skagit salmon recovery efforts are well represented. This process will be occurring over the next year, and will lead to answering some interesting questions about how to regionally prioritize salmon recovery. The message from SWC should be the Skagit watershed work is key to the recovery of salmon.
 - Currently, the grant system doesn't provide incentives for landowners to sell lands for restoration purposes above and beyond current values. Perhaps a land use classification on a regional basis with incentive bonus for landowners to enrolling their lands could be looked at.
- PSP call for Near Term Actions (NTA) for the 2016 Action Agenda – They are asking for NTA owners to submit their near-term actions by the December 31 deadline. Richard noted that salmon projects already eligible for funding and considered in salmon recovery processes need not be submitted as they are already covered by reference. He further noted that related to our work plan we may want to consider if it is worth our time to submit monitoring & adaptive management and community engagement activities through this process. ***Some support was expressed for considering that further, particularly M&AM.** Richard noted that the Skagit watershed was the only area in Puget Sound without a Local Integrating Organization (LIO) for integrating and proposing watershed-scale actions to the Action Agenda. He encouraged either the governments or this Board to consider at least informally and temporarily filling the function of just getting people and ideas together to find ways to strengthen our partnerships and proposals as opposed to what is likely to be a random collection of ideas that become known to locals after-the-fact.
- The PSP Leadership Council and Salmon Recovery Funding Board are coming to La Conner on October 15 and 16. Richard will speak to them about Skagit salmon recovery and lead entity work in the morning of October 15, while Steve and WDFW staff will speak to SRFB that same afternoon about estuary restoration. Other members from the SWC will be present on October 16 with estuary site tours in the area.

Updates: Funding from federal government is now in place via continuing resolution through December 11. The Land and Water Conservation Fund wasn't included in that funding, but the hope is it will be added in December. There is cause for concern however.

The Board appreciates Scottie's efforts in support of the Board as evidenced, only in part, by the missing coffee and goodies!

The meeting adjourned around at 11:11 am.