

Skagit Watershed Council
Meeting of the Board of Directors – Final Notes
October 6, 2016, 2016 SWC Office, Mount Vernon, WA

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt, Richard Brocksmith, Brendan Brokes, Michael Kirshenbaum, Carolyn Kelly, and Colleen McShane.

Not in attendance: Steve Hinton, Jon Vanderheyden, and Jon-Paul Shannahan.

Also joining the meeting at 10:30 - Ryan Walter, Kara Symonds, Mike See, Dan Berentson (all Skagit County).

The meeting was called to order at 9:12 am with a quorum.

Call to Order

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

Approved the agenda with no additions.

Draft Agenda and Notes

Review and approve Board Notes September 1, 2016 (#2)

Changes to the notes:

- 1) Page 2 should attribute the recommendation regarding a Skagit Herald story to Michael.
- 2) Page 3 The Old Business, 2nd sentence, should reflect that the citizens committee *and sponsors together* didn't have enough time.
- 3) Last full page regarding Rochelle Potter's contract, Jon-Paul seconded, not Jon.
Carolyn moved, Colleen seconded approval of the September notes with the three changes listed above. Approved unanimously.

Executive Director Report Approve August Financial Report (#3)

- Richard made general comments about the September financial report. The financials are on track and in the positive. The P&L and budget vs. actual were consolidated into one page and is both monthly and annual. The Board felt the new expense report was informative. For easier reading regarding consultant work, Richard removed projects that are spent down, included dates of service, and lumped similar program contracts. The Board asked why some contracts don't have much time billed in them and in some cases have only a little time left on the contract.
***Richard will do a contract amendment with SRSC for a no-cost time extension and talk with the County and SFEG regarding their projects and determine if a no-cost, timeline amendment is required. Richard will provide more detailed updates for all our sub-contracts at the November meeting.**
Carolyn moved and Brendan seconded the motion to approve the September financials as included in the board packet. Approved unanimously
- Communication and Strategy
 - The Board discussed strategies and messaging to assure adequate future funding in light of increasing demands and competition for resources. Project money is spread all over the state. Funding success depends on communicating effectively about successes, building

- collaborative partnerships, and speaking in a unified voice to those with influence. A broader approach to legislative strategy is planned this year.
- When it comes to the public, there is a danger in alienating them. It takes only a handful of people to kill a project and a group of many to ensure it happens. Anything not mandated by law most likely won't get the attention or the funding, while fish mandates are spread across multiple levels of jurisdiction. There's more relationship building needed with the ag community, rather than finger pointing. When it comes to property owners, we need to address their worries that government has all these ideas about their property. The public wonders if it is always about wanting more money. They want to know about other options. We want to maximize voluntary engagement; keep things from going to court and litigation.
 - Getting out front and communicating is key. Richard is representing our watershed and working on the large regional funding programs to keep the support coming in. Ken is representing all of the counties with the WA Association of Counties. In regards to community engagement, SWC needs to be honest about what's required. The reality is if there is going to be any recovery for Puget Sound, it will happen in the Skagit, where the fish have the best chance for recovery. We are getting results and if we keep communicating and engaging and planning good projects, as well as get more money, Skagit will get it done.
 - Board conversation shifted to harvest issues and thoughts that policy conversations should include discussions about escapement.
 - In response to the question, "Does the Skagit get a disproportionate share of the money," Richard explained that in the allocation formulas for salmon funding Skagit gets 15% of the pie and there are 15 watersheds. Others get 10% and some down in low single digits. The allocation formula is 30% spread equally, 30% spread to where the most fish are (6 of the 24 populations) and the remainder for areas where fish populations need to get to low-risk. Two efforts to continue to reform allocation include focusing Large PSAR into a program that only allows projects of regional significance and improving the regional salmon recovery plan to focus more squarely on main fish priorities. Richard, Ken, and Steve are appointees to PSP Salmon Recovery Council where this work is happening.

Committee Reports

Richard shared activities of each of the following subcommittees:

- Technical Work Group – cancelled, no meeting in September.
- Protection Subcommittee - no meeting in September; will be meeting in October.
- Monitoring & Adaptive Management Subcommittee – no meeting in September.
- Community Engagement met October 4.
 - Richard provided a verbal update summarizing their meeting earlier this week. EcoNet will have its quarterly meeting this month. PSP reviewed its Community Well-Being strategy and NCI presented more about their education programs which emphasize learning, stewardship, and sense of place. SWC hopes to reinforce and expand our community's sense of place. We want to provide after program stewardship opportunities for when kids and families return home from training.
 - The committee agreed the focus is first to target education and outreach. It's too early to talk about behavior change. The goal first is to build a broader community - listen, foster dialogue, gather information, and just start.
 - ***An implementation and communication plan will be proposed to the CEC committee and to the board in November.** This will entail such activities as publishing interviews about community, posts about events, social media, a photo contest, and blog posts. SWC's 37 member organizations are the choir, but they are our core, so we can start there to build the campaign. We can involve retired people who might be seen as more

neutral and who might engage more difficult neighbors and partners. We can develop ambassadors who don't have a political agenda to push. We can reach out to groups and political councils. We need major landowners involved too.

- Community Leadership: Richard has begun participating in 3FI oversight team discussions; they just removed their MOU which removed a roadblock for SWC involvement. ***We should further consider extending SWC membership and leadership for agriculture, forestry, and infrastructure interests.**

Old Business

- Riparian Strategy Project (#4) – Richard provided an update on the consultant selection process for the Riparian Strategy Project (#4). From nine applications, three consultants were interviewed, and from that group, ESA was tentatively selected. Staff is drafting the next iteration of a scope of work and preliminary outline for the update. The officers directed Richard to seek technical input from members of the Technical Work Group, which will occur by October 20.
- The following summary reflects Q and A about the project:
 - 1) There is a lack of detail in the field assessment methods
 - 2) December isn't best time to do vegetation field work and ***more time should be allocated to the field work.** Richard spoke about the very limited field-based assessment and using additional remote-sensing products to improve the accuracy and use our staff in addition to what is in the consultant's scope. We could ask partners/sponsors to help with a mapping meeting and crowd sourcing.
 - 3) ***Board members want accuracy to be better defined in the contract.** 75-80% is the status quo level of accuracy, but we can hopefully do better.
 - 4) Vegetation categories will be developed in Task 2.1. The issue is which should be used? SRSC, WDFW, DNR, County each have a classification process and these will be reviewed by the Advisory Group before they settle on the final metrics - which will take some time.
 - 5) SWC is not calling it a "Plan," rather it's an assessment and update to the 1998 SWC Strategy. The assessment will generate a next set of priorities and future maintenance and planting plans. Richard has held money back in the budget to assist with developing plans for the ten sites and planting plans, hopefully through members who want to work in identified reaches.

***The Board agreed to a special meeting by phone, October 24th at 2 pm to approve the Riparian Strategy scope of work and contract after TWG review.** Note: Carolyn can only participate for a vote, not the discussion due to other commitments that day.

New Business

- Info Sharing w/ Skagit County Staff (#5a & b) re: Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)
 - Board members learned about the VSP as an alternative to the critical areas ordinance. It aims to reduce litigation, bring more focus and transparency, and target existing resources toward common goals. With 2011 as a baseline, it requires better monitoring, establishment of benchmarks, triggers, adaptive monitoring programs, GIS and aerial monitoring to categorize buffers and ensure goals of protection and enhancement are being met. Of the counties adopting VSP strategies, Skagit County is ahead of the curve in the process. Until the plan is approved, which could be a couple years, Skagit County won't allocate resources into data collection or additional staff. It was noted that SWC's riparian assessment should complement VSP monitoring programs, but care should be taken not to duplicate efforts.
 - SWC's voluntary approaches might align in protecting critical areas and enhancing buffers.

- Public Works has been accepting a lot of input and this draft VSP Work Plan will be submitted to the State for a 45-day review. They will present the draft to their local watershed advisors on October 27. The Upper Skagit and Swinomish have also received a copy of the draft program. The process doesn't have to go out for formal public comment and County commissioners do not have to approve it. It goes forward as a recommendation from the local advisory group. Then they will work on another draft.
- ***SWC staff and Board will notify SWC members that the County is seeking comment on their draft VSP, and they should send helpful and constructive comments to Public Works.** SWC is not considering endorsement of this project, but if aligning and leveraging all of our programs can help our watershed, folks should chime in on that. Board members suggested county staff keep a responsiveness summary. Note: VSP – watch out for confusion with another acronym - viable salmonid population.

Comments:

- Public Work's one-pager could emphasize more that this program is focused on streams, opposed to wetlands or other "critical areas."
 - Look at the 303D list – What are the causes of water quality problems?
- Preparation for Officer Elections
 - Steve submitted his resignation as vice-chair of the Board, but is remaining on as a Board member. He felt his time was too limited and this would also reduce potential conflicts of interest. Ken is happy to stay as the chair, but was also very clear that we should consider others if they are interested.
 - There is one immediate Director position open with two more to fill later if we want to meet the limit of eleven. Board member suggested that SWC exercise caution in getting too large or diverse to be able to make decisions.
 - *** The Board would like to reconsider what watershed interests are needed to meet our mission, and asked the nominating committee to further discuss and prepare this topic, for both general membership and committee/director positions. Reenergize the nominating committee. Stabilize our officers on the Board with collaborative members. Seek a new vice-chair. Then over the next six months, all Board members work to cultivate interest in future Board members.** Carolyn agreed to be on the nominating committee with Michael Kirshenbaum, JP, & Steve.
 - Get more diversity on SWC, but seek leadership as well as membership; thus, any group being considered for representation on the Board, should first join the SWC. Western Washington Ag is our only major ag group. Skagitonians, Cattlemen, Farm Bureau, Dike and Drainage Districts, forestry interests, conservation groups, and an educational institution are possible entities.
 - Goal is to talk about what we have in common. For example, SURGE was extremely successful in bridging community. Our mission of fish is inextricably tied to the health of community.

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 am.

Next SWC Board Meetings:

- **Special Meeting by phone, October 24, 2 pm**
- **November 3, 9am to noon**
- **December 1, 9am to noon**

Next SWC Quarterly Council of Members is November 9, 9am to noon.