

Skagit Watershed Council - Final Notes
Meeting of the Board of Directors – October 5, 2017

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

Attendance: Bill Blake, Brendan Brokes (by phone), Michael Kirshenbaum, John Stein, Jon-Paul Shannahan (chaired today), Jon Vanderheyden, Richard Brocksmith, and Chris Vondrasek (for protection agenda item).

Not in attendance: Steve, Colleen, Chair Ken Dahlstedt

Call to Order – 9:00 am

- Introductions, determined quorum, and approved agenda
- Board Notes - John Stein moved and Jon-Paul seconded approval of the September 7, 2017 Board notes as written and with addition of information about identifying work plan tasks to be amended if there is a budget adjustment. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

- Financial Reports - Richard indicated financials were in good shape re: profit/loss for August and slightly in the black. Jon V moved and John Stein seconded approval of the August 2017 financial reports as written. Motion carried unanimously.
- WA Capital Budget and SWC Interim Budget & Work Plan - The impasse has not changed at the Legislature and a resolution does not seem imminent. It's hoped that by the end of the year there should be more clarity. The SWC budget has sufficient funds to last through December 2017. ***Skagit County has indicated they will expedite our contract starting January 2018 which helps extend operations to March 2018. *Richard plans to discuss the same topic with Seattle City Light as well.** Accessing reserve funding is a possibility after January 2018. Currently, base monthly expenses are approximately \$22.5K, not counting contractors and special events. This could provide five months of funding. With Legislative session starting in March and a resolution to the capital budget, it's hoped SWC will ride through this bump in the road without any lasting or serious impacts.
- The Board discussed status of sub-contracts, which for the most part are facilitating development of obligatory work items so would not be ideal to end prematurely. However, sub-contracts would be reduced prior to any staff reductions.
- Tribal Management Conference Recommendations at PS Salmon Recovery Council (SRC) – Richard relayed this passed the SRC at the last meeting, with county reps voting no and SWC abstaining given lack of internal policy consensus, though many of the recommendations are current action items being addressed by SWC and our members.

Committee Reports

- Community Engagement Committee (CEC) – CEC met September 26 with six to seven in attendance. Resource Guide outreach to school districts, teachers, and superintendents is proceeding well, but there is a clear lack of momentum for comprehensive implementation

given the lack of dedicated staff at SWC due to capital budget impasse. There is not enough partner momentum to keep these efforts going if SWC pulls back on its commitment. CEC will discuss the Implementation Plan at their next meeting. All partners report that they are benefiting from increased collaboration through CEC. At the same time some groups like the Conservation District are beginning to report that they are not attending some events due funding pressures.

- Monitoring & Adaptive Management (M&AM) – They will meet next Tuesday.
- Technical Work Group (TWG) – They generally take the summer off and met September 12 and will meet again October 19. They discussed the Capital Budget and suggested SWC summarizing impacts to projects as reported by sponsors. They further refined the Final Draft of the Protection Strategy which they recommended for approval to the Board. They reviewed the designs for side-channel habitat restoration by SFEG at Skagit County's Presentin Park in Marblemount – a specific requirement or condition on this project before they could proceed. This condition does not require further Board approval. They were hoping to review the Lead Entity survey results, but didn't have time for that discussion. The SWC riparian assessment results were presented, though sufficient time for input and approval will take a couple more months to complete.
 - In the context of the riparian project, the Board discussed tools such as a scientific assessment vs. policies (such as SWC strategies) which require adoption. The 1998 Protection Strategy was an organizationally-approved set of policies or strategies guiding future resource allocation. They asked whether this distinction would apply to the Riparian Project, and suggested that it is possible much of this work may not require formal adoption. ***Richard will bring this discussion about tools vs. policy to the TWG at their next meeting.**
 - The Board discussed what they would like the TWG to tackle after completing both updates.
 - Update the Lead Entity Guide. JP asked if cost/benefit was addressed to the degree necessary yet, as one example. What else is important?
 - The Four-Year work plan update is due in December/January. More importantly, the Board would like to know what projects are on tap or should be forwarded in coming years and how our council can support project planning for actions that will return the most value for our goals?
 - Complete the SWC riparian assessment and strategy update. In addition, they could work with implementers to scope out a new generation of project opportunities by looking at these new datasets. Since winter is the planning season for technicians, they have a window of time to do project development as well as update the SWC riparian actions database.
 - Tracking implementation of the new protection strategy.
- A short discussion addressed the fact that Skagit does not have a true Local Integrating Organization (LIO) and as such doesn't have a centralized process for submitting non-typical project like other LIO's, which are receiving funding (e.g. Stillaguamish is working on bio-digesters, creosote removal, and climate resiliency). However, project concepts can be submitted under a broader umbrella and not having an LIO isn't an immediate concern.

New Business

- SWC Communication Policy, v9.29.2017 - The Board discussed the new policy. The Board and the Executive Director like the policy's clarity, while also recognizing it is intentionally conservative. All Board members agreed it is quite comprehensive and suggested the Board ***revisit the policy in a year to see how it is working.** Michael Kirshenbaum moved and John Stein seconded approval of the Communications Policy as presented. Vote was unanimous.
 - (Brendan left the phone line at this point in the meeting.)
- Approve SWC 2017 Protection Strategy Update - The Board looked at the Final Draft of the Final Report particularly Figure 1, Table 1, and maps: <https://arcg.is/rveuz>
 - For the benefit of new Board members, the Board asked for background as to the purpose of the update, reach-level grant procedures, explanation about what the changes were, etc. The TWG has brought forward a technically-solid project as requested by the Board. Everyone on the TWG had to compromise to get this to the Board today. The committee has approved the draft and they don't anticipate working on the product any more unless there are Board concerns to address. The Board agreed Chris has done great work on the online map as a living tool for SWC and its partners. ***The Board considered Steve Hinton's requested delay, and without other Board members at this meeting, they decided to put off a vote until the November meeting.**
 - The Board asked that the following questions/clarifications be addressed:
 - ***Clarify the arrows on the decision support framework so they align more clearly the approach and provide clarification on the use of green, yellow, and red colors on Figure 1.**
 - The Board wanted to know what criteria were used to identify properties already permanently protected and thus excluded from the protected lands database and possibly eligibility. ***They felt that it would be clearer if Chris wrote a footnote in the update document on what was excluded.**
 - Chris explained that Table 1 addresses the level of degradation of the proposed parcel. The Board discussed the reality that some of the best lands have been acquired, leaving the remainder with somewhat lower habitat conditions. Steve's concern ties into this – that acquisition of degraded land crosses over into restoration too much. Some questioned whether this put too much emphasis on current conditions versus intrinsic potential for habitat processes over time? *How do we manage restoration costs while protecting opportunity for the future?*
 - ***The Board asked for further discussion at their November meeting about refining and operationalizing this authorization process.** They acknowledged that Table 1 reflects a compromise and is a big change. There is worry about lost opportunities if properties don't score and the landowner wants to sell. Concern was expressed that landowners may not want to wait years for a stand-alone review. ***At a minimum, SWC should monitor how the stand-alone review process for these parcels impacts future acquisition efforts.**

- Chris explained his map showing how the decision matrix impacts parcels because of vegetation degradation. ***The Board suggested they may consider adding a third column on Table 1 for some low-vegetation lands with more than 20-acres that have degradation but are of high intrinsic value.**
- First Review of Lead Entity Survey Results (#7) – Feedback from 8 individuals indicated generally positive experience. Board agreed that each year improves the process. A majority of respondents felt the process followed the rules and was timelier in getting information out; one responded less positively. Suggestions include using social media outlets, building in more time as possible, and trying to get the Program Guide out earlier. The Board heard and responded in brief discussion to the concerns expressed. *The TWG will follow up.
 - They discussed the Martin Ranch Road culvert and questions about whether the floodplain map was precise enough, if it reflected Chinook salmon presence versus geomorphic processes important to Chinook. ***Staff will flesh this out with the TWG & M&AM and what they can do in near and longer-term time spans with the mapping of floodplains and channel migration.**
 - There was a question about steelhead planning. Until a steelhead plan is done, we can't make it equal to the priority projects in the Chinook salmon recovery plan. However, our current process-based restoration strategy provides benefit to all salmonids already, including steelhead.
 - The Board considered what they would like the TWG to tackle next for the grant process. ***The following activities were suggested: four-year work planning, conducting a cost-benefit analysis, smolt and estuary protection, and ways to engage a broader audience and advertisement of the spring project process and emphasizing sponsors engage in greater outreach efforts with the public and project stakeholders. Suggestion: Build a 'Please Notify' mailing list which could include anyone with interest.**

Adjourn: 11:55 am

Next SWC Board Meetings: November 2, 2017 and December 7, 2017