Lead Entity Citizen's Committee Meeting
July 17, 2025, 9:00am-12:00pm
16650 State Route 536, Mount Vernon and via Zoom
Meeting Minutes Draft

LECC Members: John Stein (Citizen and farmer), Andy Haas (SCL), Michael Kirshenbaum (SLT), Emmett Wild, (SCD), Mark Knutzen (Citizen and retired farmer), Heather Spore (SITC), Brian Lanouette (USIT), Brendan Brokes (WDFW), Amy Fenlon (WSC), Devin Smith (Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, alternate), Alison Studley (SFEG, alternate). Michael left the meeting at 11:45

TRC Members (non-voting): Jessica Lange (SLT), Colin Wahl (SRSC)

Guests: Keeley Mathis (SWC, notes), Aundrea McBride (Executive Director, SWC), Megan Corbiere (SWC)

Decisions underlined; attachment (#); ***action items bold**

Beginning Business

- Convened at 9:11am.
- For the purposes of this LECC meeting, quorum is considered those present because the business of the committee cannot be delayed. Eleven of the thirteen members were present.
- Introductions and agenda review.
    - During this meeting we will review all projects and their technical ranking. TRC members are here to answer questions. We can request more information from sponsors directly as well to be answered before the next meeting.
    - Another goal for today is to give direction on a funding approach. We have less funding available than has been requested for the projects. Funding ideas will then be researched before the next meeting so that funding decisions can be made.
    - Announcement: there will be an Initiating Governments meeting on June 30th 9:00-10:00 at the WSU Extension. LECC members are invited.
- Approve meeting minutes

- Heather made a motion to approve meeting minutes from April (4 Year Work Plan meeting). Devin seconded. Brian abstained. None opposed and the motion was approved.
- Devin made a motion to approve meeting minutes for May (4 Year Work Plan meeting). Heather seconded. Brian abstained. None opposed and the motion was approved.

- Approve agenda
  - Heather made a motion to approve the agenda. John seconded. Brian abstained. None opposed and the motion was approved.

Meeting Process Review: General Role, Decision Making Process and Ground Rules

- Presented general role of the LECC as written in the program guide, page 5:

  The Lead Entity Citizen Committee (LECC) makes habitat project priority decisions as required in RCW 77.85. The LECC membership is defined by statute to include "representative interests of counties, cities, conservation districts, tribes, environmental groups, business interests, landowners, citizens, volunteer groups, regional fish enhancement groups, and other habitat interests." The Lead Entity Coordinator recruits representatives for the listed constituencies and brings the list to the SWC Board for approval to ensure the LECC meets the statute. Each LECC member gets one vote in the project ranking process, though we strive for consensus. We have always achieved consensus on the ranked project lists. Refer to the section below on Habitat Project List Prioritization for more information on the committee's role in that process. LECC members are required to attend both the information sharing workshop and the project prioritization meeting. If any member foresees missing one of these two meetings, they should either propose a replacement committee member or not vote.

- Presented the LECC decision making process. As written in the program guide, page 7:

  Committee meetings are conducted using the procedures laid out in this document. Committee meetings are conducted to ensure that each member and project sponsor is heard in a systematic and fair manner. It is the responsibility of the committee chair and/or facilitator to make sure that proceedings are conducted in a transparent, systematic and fair manner. Because the grant round schedule is published with the RFP far in advance and has little room for delay, a quorum for decision-making is defined as those voting TRC and LECC members in attendance at a scheduled and published meeting. Though organizations may have multiple representatives on committees, each organization has only one

vote, which will be established at the beginning of the grant round. The preferred mode of decision-making is by consensus or general agreement. It is the responsibility of each member to educate themselves on the projects under consideration by reviewing the project information provided, being familiar with evaluation criteria and guiding documents, seeking information, and networking with each other in hopes of finding agreement in a timely way. If general agreement is not achieved, the preferred mode is to continue to seek agreement, within a reasonable timeframe set by the group. For our SRFB process, this time frame is dictated by the established RCO grant round timeline. A vote will be taken only when it becomes clear that general agreement is unlikely to occur within the reasonable time frame set by RCO. At that point the chair may call for a vote, with the majority constituting two-thirds of the members qualified to vote (i.e., potential conflict of interest). Each organization has one vote only. Only members in good standing participate in decision-making, defined here as attending all scheduled committee meetings and field reviews, or informing the Watershed Coordinator of their absence prior to the scheduled meeting and having reviewed all project and meeting materials and provided input as requested. Voting by proxy is not allowed during the grant round. Further, questions presented by proxy must be provided in writing in advance of each opportunity to share input to both the Watershed Coordinator and the project sponsor before being allowed into the record and project dialogue.

- Ground Rules:
    - One speaker at a time
    - Keep your input concise
    - Discuss problems and ideas, not people
    - Everyone participate; no one dominate
    - Respect each other's thinking and value their contributions
    - Follow the agenda and procedures
    - Everyone come prepared and having read project proposals
    - Limit distractions such as cell phones

Review Potential Conflict of Interest Policy and Identify/Address Conflicts

- Reviewed policy from program guide, pages 7-8:

This potential conflict of interest policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest. This policy applies equally to all members of the lead entity SRFB committees and support

staff engaged in the SRFB review process. Our goal is to be objective in our acceptance, evaluation, and advancing of habitat project proposals, and to reach conclusions that advance salmon recovery in the watershed, hence the need for a policy to ensure our awareness of and sensitivity to potential conflicts of interest. A potential conflict of interest may exist when a participant responsible for acting in the best interests of the lead entity and SRFB grant program has another interest or loyalty that could influence or impair, or may appear to influence or impair, the individual's ability to act in the best interests of the lead entity. A potential conflict of interest exists where a lead entity SRFB committee member or member's organization directly or indirectly benefits financially, sits on the applicant's Board of Directors, or has a family relation who is, and/or is themselves significantly involved in the development of a project. Employees of project sponsoring organizations, their financial partnering individuals and organizations, and landowners are defined as such. Prior knowledge of the proposal or prior contact with the applicant does not constitute a potential conflict of interest, as long as none of these criteria apply to the reviewer. 7 The term "potential conflict of interest" includes: actual or direct conflicts of interest as defined above, potential future conflicts of interest (situations that could become actual conflicts in the future based upon foreseeable events or the passage of time), and perceived conflicts of interest (situations that others could reasonably perceive to be, or that have the appearance of, a conflict of interest)

- Identified and addressed conflicts
    - After discussion, the group filled out the conflict-of-interest matrix.

2025 LECC Conflict of Interest Matrix

	srsc	srsc	srsc	sfeg	sfeg	county	county	slt	scl
Project Name	IMW Dunlap Causeway Reconnection Prelim Design	2025 Riparian Maint - Nookachamps, Skiyou, Savage	2025 Collaborative Riparian Stewardship Hansen	2025 Collab Riparian Maint & Plant Skagit Sloughs	2025 Riparian Maint - Marblemount, Day	Mill Creek Bridge Design - Phase 1A	Lower Day Slough Culvert GN31 Construction	2025 Skagit Watershed Habitat Acquisition-SLT	2025 Skagit Watershed Habitat Acquisition-SCL
Brendan Brokes									
Marcus Reaves (alt)									
Heather Spore									
Devin Smith (alt)									
Scott Morris									
Andy Haas									
Kari Odden (alt)									
Michael Kirshenbaum									
Iris Caris									
Amy Fenlon									
Scott Schuyler									
Brian Lanouette (alt)									
Alison Studley (alt)									
Pat Stevenson									
Emmett Wild									
Owen Peth									
John Stein									
Mark Knutzen									

- John made a motion to approve the conflict-of-interest matrix. Brendan seconded. Brian abstained. None opposed and the motion was approved.

Discuss Projects: Process Overview

- LECC Habitat Project List Prioritization. As written in the program guide, page 17:
  The project list produced through technical scoring and recommendations by the TRC shall provide the basis for prioritization. The Lead Entity Citizen Committee prioritization process follows the two-meeting rule in this step, with a first meeting for information sharing and a second meeting at least 2 weeks later for decision-making where no new information can be presented without full consent of the group. Two or three members of the TRC shall be present at the LECC meetings to improve information sharing between committees. Members of the LECC shall bring forward any new information or concerns at the first meeting so that project sponsors have a clear understanding of those concerns and adequate and equitable opportunities for addressing them before final decision-making. These concerns, information requests, or comments should be finalized by the LECC after their first meeting and shared with the project sponsors as soon as possible. LECC members are required to attend both the information sharing workshop and the project prioritization meeting. If any member foresees missing one of these two meetings, they should either propose a replacement committee member or not vote. The following steps guide the LECC in its second meeting for deliberations and decision-making to develop the final prioritized list for the Skagit Lead Entity. An LECC member may make a motion to move a particular project up or down on the list or adopt a recommendation by the TRC. The LECC member making such a request must include rationale based on the prioritization criteria in Appendix D. The Committee will then engage in discussion regarding the motion to move a project on the list or condition a project. After discussion, the Committee will seek consensus on the recommendation. If consensus is not achieved, the Committee will vote – approve, oppose, abstain – on the motion to move the project on the list. The motion will carry upon a two-thirds majority of the eligible Committee members present (excluding "abstain" votes). The LECC has the authority to remove any project from consideration of funding for the following reasons: 1. if, through the proposal development process, the project no longer meets the criteria in the RFP, 2. if it did not address LECC comments from their information-sharing meeting or criteria sufficiently, 3. if it is insufficiently developed by the ranking meeting, or 4. if insufficient funding is available to meet requests of projects ranked low in the list. The result of this decision-making meeting is the final recommended and prioritized list of projects submitted to the SRFB for consideration for funding. The LECC may impose conditions on the contract. Any mandatory conditions placed on projects by the LECC will be formally incorporated into the sponsors' final funding contract. 17 At this time the LECC may also adjust funding requests relative to the target funding allocation given to our area, as well as recommend which projects are funded by SRFB and/or Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration (PSAR). Similar to previous grant rounds, the Skagit lead entity is required to forward habitat project lists that meet precisely the allocation funding target provided for our region. This step in the process will be discussed by the

committees and will be finalized administratively through discussions between the Watershed Coordinator and affected project sponsors should available funding fall short of a request. Affected project sponsors will be required at this time to go back to PRISM to update their final project applications to reflect any and all financial and/or design changes resulting from the review process or shortage of funds. Alternate projects exceeding our target allocation may be included on the list in the event a funded project is withdrawn before contracted or needs fewer dollars. Alternate projects need to have gone through the entire SRFB review process to receive funding at a later date during this grant round. The final prioritized list is due to the SRFB by the date published for the current grant round. The final technical scoring and final prioritized project list will be distributed to TRC and LECC members and project sponsors and made available on the Lead Entity website.

- Appendix D, LECC Prioritization Criteria

  The Lead Entity Committee will rely on the technical review process conducted by the Council's Technical Review Committee. The list produced by the technical scoring will provide the basis for prioritization. The Lead Entity Committee will use a qualitative process, using the following questions, to arrive at the final list for submittal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

    - *Are there projects that give you pause? Why?*

  COMMUNITY IMPACT & EDUCATION ISSUES

    - *Does the surrounding community support this project?*
    - *Who is that community and how can you substantiate that support?*
    - *Is there any community opposition to this project? Who is opposed and how will you address that opposition?*
    - *Does this project have any educational value? Who is being educated, what are they being educated about, and how can you substantiate that? Will this project educate the public and raise their awareness about salmon and habitat protection/restoration issues?*
    - *Will this project receive any publicity/visibility? How and whose attention will it gain? Will publicity be helpful to salmon recovery efforts?*
    - *Will this project elicit more support in the future? From whom and how?*

  PROJECT COST ISSUES

    - *Is this project expensive relative to other projects on the list? Is that expense justified? How did you determine the expense is justified?*
    - *If this project is funded, will it bump other (or several other) good projects out of probable contention for funding, based on historical Skagit Lead Entity SRFB funding?*
    - *Is this project appropriate for SRFB Partnership Salmon Funds?*

  PROGRESS TOWARDS SALMON HABITAT RECOVERY

- *Is the cumulative effect of the list of projects moving us closer to Chinook recovery?*

Discuss Projects: Project Summary and Discussion

- 2025 Skagit Watershed Habitat Acquisition-SCL: Seattle City Light is requesting $500,000. No questions or comments.

- 2025 Skagit Watershed Habitat Acquisition-SLT: Skagit Land Trust is requesting $500,000. No questions or comments.

- Mill Creek Restoration Phase 1A: Skagit County is requesting $600,500. No questions or comments

- IMW Dunlap Causeway Reconnection Preliminary Design: Skagit River System Cooperative is requesting $600,000. No questions or comments.

- 2025 Riparian Maintenance and Planting--House, Pressentin, and Youngs Sloughs: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is requesting $437,612
  - Concern: lack of clear benefits to salmon. TRC had asked for more clarity about benefit to fish. What were the revisions after that feedback?
    - The LECC reviewed written answers from the project sponsor.
  - The feasibility study is already funded with separate funding. Getting the planting done first may help the channel be sustainable if the plants get a chance to take hold.
  - Comment: There is a large area that would benefit.

- 2025 Riparian Maintenance-Nookachamps, Skiyou, Savage
  - Nookachamps Creek, Skiyou Slough, and Savage Slough need ongoing maintenance.
  - Skagit River System Cooperative is requesting $214,400.
  - This project is to maintain 107 previously planted areas.
  - It was clarified that all are Tier 1 floodplain projects.
  - Question: How is the water flow? Is there value in planting in floodplains?
    - Response: The Skagit River moves around over time. Many projects won't see a benefit immediately but are meant to benefit the future, such as 200-500 years from now. Mature forested areas would help with transpiration issues and add beneficial shade many years from now.
  - Regarding Skiyou project, one member had several concerns, laid out below and followed by responses from other members:

- Concern: The Skiyou project is located landward of an active agricultural property. Is this project only valuable if that ag property is eroded away?
- Concern in general about bundling projects: Suggestion that each project be presented individually. Can Skiyou be removed from this collaborative project?
  - Response: SRSC may be willing to remove part of the project given this feedback from the LECC.
- Concern: Do we have documentation of the landowner's willingness to cooperate?
  - Response: There is indeed a strong relationship and agreement with the landowner to do this work. Additionally, the river's migration pattern indicates that it may not have an impact on the owner's property. Noted that it is a cattle pasture.
  - Response: Community perception is important. Every project is unique and site specific. In some places if there were a landowner that is not on board, that could create community problems. However, in this project, there is support from the landowner.
  - Response: If there is nothing planted in the agricultural area, the river will take it away anyways.
- Concern: If the project is in the floodplain but not adjacent to water, is it of equal value as a project next to the water?
  - Response: This site is not adjacent to a waterway. For it to be adjacent would require the river to move through property. It's not riparian in the way that the other projects are riparian. Floodplain planting has value for ecological benefits to the riverine system and in case, in 100 years, the river has moved. Trees grow slowly.
- Concern in general about the way that we categorize riparian projects. Suggestion that we focus on the private property aspect and the fact that it is currently in use.

- 2025 Collaborative Riparian-Marblemount, Day Creek: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is requesting $91,031
  - Comment: This is the most intact project and the cheapest.
  - Comment: This property is not in urgent need and could be potentially postponed.
    - Response: If you postpone maintenance, you will take steps backwards. Maintenance is important to keep up with.

- 2025 Collaborative Riparian Stewardship-Hansen Creek
  - Skagit River System Cooperative is requesting $150,000
  - The project is to maintain previously planted trees.

- Question: Why focus on land habitat if the creek runs dry often? Is the waterflow monitored and considered? The Wildcat Steelhead Club has monitored Hansen Creek and recorded that last year the creek was dry until Sep 15th.
    - Other LECC members discussed that it is common for creeks to run dry in the summer. In grasslands, there is a lot of transpiration adding to the dryness of the creek. Reestablishing forests in floodplain areas helps prevent that. Adult salmon wait until the rain returns in the Fall and the creek fills up again.
- The LECC members are interested in collaborating with the Wildcat Steelhead Club. ***Brendan will access the Index Reach to pass on to the Wildcat Steelhead Club. *Aundrea will investigate as to whether Skagit County still does water quality monitoring at Hansen Creek.**
- Comment: Strong support voiced for the Hansen Creek project because most of the work has already been funded/completed and it could be a step backwards to neglect plantings that need care to survive and make it worth it.
- Comment: Support voiced because the creek is visible to the public and well known.

- Lower Day Slough Culvert GN31 Construction: Skagit County is requesting $375,000.
    - Comment: Given that it is located higher in the watershed, will this project benefit Chinook specifically?
        - The LECC reviewed the project summary, which says it will benefit Chinook, Coho, and other fish present. The LECC used maps to estimate the distance of the culvert from the main stem of the river and estimated that it is at least half of a mile from the river.
        - The LECC reviewed this project's scores from the TRC and saw that it had scored low in Scale of Benefit category and the Cost Justification category.

- TRC scoring criteria
    - Will be reviewed off line and sent out via email. ***Reach out to Megan with any questions**.
- TRC scores and memo
    - Reviewed ranking.
    - The TRC noted that due to the type of funding available, lower ranked projects were getting funded when a significant (called out in the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan) project was not getting funding. The TRC provided the following memo to the LECC:

There's high technical value in the whole list. The top four projects are the highest priority technically. If riparian funding is directed towards riparian projects only (not acquisitions), then the ranked list would be funded out of order and Dunlap would not be funded. Given this, the TRC recommends the LECC explore options to fund the list in order. The TRC sees no technical issues with exploring rebalancing the funds and following their technical ranking.

Discuss Funding Options

- We have regular SRFB funds and riparian funds in this grant round. There are different pots of money with different rules. The riparian pot of money was first available in 2024. See below for discussion of projects eligible for riparian funds.
- There is not sufficient funding for all projects. At this meeting we will brainstorm some funding options and identify some further research to be done between meetings.
- Funding Dunlap is a high priority for Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. Several members emphasized the importance of funding Dunlap. Dunlap is in ERSA, the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan and is an Intensely Monitored Watershed (IMW).
- Reviewed the burndown spreadsheets and ran different scenarios.
    - Option 1: Project Scaling (ask project sponsors if costs can be reduced by postponing elements of projects or doing less) Comments below:
        - Can the projects be scaled to allow for Dunlap to be fully funded? Shortfall is $353,260.
        - Which project sponsors are willing to reduce their funding request? Discussions will take place off-line as not all sponsors are present. Different options from sponsors will be presented at next meeting. ***Aundrea will meet with each project sponsor individually.**
    - Option 2: Decide which projects will not be funded. Comments below:
        - Acquisitions are the top ranked projects.
        - Does anyone have concerns about funding the top four. This brings up the question of whether there is a desire to change the ranking.
            - Suggestions that #3 and #4 could be switched.
            - Which riparian projects would have the most negative impact if maintenance were delayed a year?
    - Option 3: Borrow money to fund most or all projects. Comments below:
        - Aundrea discussed that LECC cannot fund all projects without borrowing money.
        - We would need to borrow $728,000 (before any scaling is done) to fund all projects. This could be covered by two loans from other lead entities and is available.
        - Loans would come from the riparian funds and could only be used for riparian or acquisition projects.
        - Funds would have to be paid back with regular funds next year because it is very unlikely any riparian funds will be available.

        - We are already in debt $1M to PSAR for next year due to the Rapid Response loan advanced for an important acquisition.
    - Opposition was voiced by one to undertake more debt.
    - Support was voiced by another member who stated, “if these projects are important and warranted, we should borrow against the future.”
    - Support was voiced to fund the top four projects with borrowed money as necessary.
    - Suggestion was made that we borrow just enough money to fund Dunlap, not all projects.
    - A lot has been invested in the riparian roundtable. We don’t know whether RCO riparian dollars will continue. Roundtable funding may become available for next year.
    - We can remove line item Skiyou for $90,000. Our second choice would be cutting Hansen Creek project in half.
    - Can both acquisition grants take a $50-$100K cut?
    - In the TRC meeting, SFEG representative had suggested that Young’s Slough project could be postponed.
    - If both acquisitions can reduce their ask by $100K each, then SFEG and SRSC could reduce their requests enough to get to the $353 needed to fund Dunlap.
    - It seems counter to the process for the top ranked projects to give up funding for lower ranked projects.
    - What is best for fish.

Riparian funding eligibility discussion

- Our program Guide and RCO’s Manual 18 state that riparian funds can be used for acquisitions. The 2025 RFP stated that riparian funds would be used for riparian projects based on the knowledge that our Protection Strategy was not compatible with the RCO riparian program requirements. We learned recently that RCO will allow us to use our Protection Strategy for riparian fund projects. This raises the question of “Does the LECC want to move riparian funds to acquisition projects so that regular funds can trickle down to Dunlap?” There is a desire to follow the letter of the RFP because sponsors made choices based on that language and a desire to follow the TRC’s recommendation to fund the projects in technical order because that order represents what is best for fish. ***We will explore this dichotomy further at the next meeting considering funding options identified by further discussions with sponsors off line.**

Program Guide

Manual 18

Beginning in 2023, RCO added a riparian project specific funding allocation that can be applied to planting, stew
gran
PSAF
appl

Eligible Project Types

Only the project types and specific elements described below are eligible to receive riparian-specific funding. These types and elements may be combined as described below.

rough the regular lead entity funds rather than SRFB and 8. Riparian-specific funding is ction.

Project Type	Eligibility
Acquisition	May be proposed as a sole, primary, or secondary project type.
Restoration–Riparian Habitat	May be proposed as a sole, primary, or secondary project type.
Restoration–Site Stewardship	May be proposed as a sole, primary, or secondary project type.
Restoration–In-stream Habitat	Some work types may be proposed as a sole, primary, or secondary project type if the primary goal of the project is to restore riparian function.
Planning–Design	**Not eligible as a standalone project type**. *Costs for designing the eligible in-stream elements in the project or developing riparian enhancement plans may be included in the administrative, architectural, and engineering budget.*
Planning–Assessment and Inventory	May be proposed as a sole project type, or as a combination project if an assessment is required as a necessary precursor to a site-specific restoration or acquisition project.

From the RFP (Appendix B, page 28, number 3):

3) Riparian-specific funds (Riparian Program) included in this RFP will fund riparian and floodplain planting and stewardship projects within Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 2S Target Areas. A maximum of $300,000 of the Riparian Program funds is dedicated to small-scale projects as a non-competitive set aside. Proposals received for this set aside will compete amongst each other for these dedicated funds unless sponsors are able to work in advance to present a coordinated proposal. All other proposals received for Riparian Program funds will compete amongst each other for the balance of the Riparian Program funds. Riparian projects seeking the Riparian Program funds must meet criteria specified in the Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) Riparian Policy in Manual 18.

- Riparian funds can be used for acquisitions through our Protection Strategy (recent confirmation from RCO). This is new information. We had interpreted the RCO policy to mean only single property proposals could use the riparian funds.
- Given the current state budget cuts, it is unlikely that there will be riparian funding next year.
- In the past, SRSC and SFEG have worked together to create small bundles of projects totaling $150k each by SRSC and SFEG for a total of $300k in set aside funds, as

determined by this body. The set aside was noncompetitive if the project sponsors could work together to plan the efforts to be funded by the set aside. This year SFEG did not prepare the expected $150,000 bundle of small projects for the set aside. They submitted two projects for

LECC Reflections and Information Sharing

- No additional reflections.

Public Comment

- None.

Adjourned at 12:19pm

Upcoming Meetings:
August 6, 9:00-12:00 Ranking Meeting