

**Final Notes, Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG)
November 21, 2019, 1:00 – 3:30PM, Skagit Watershed Council, Mount Vernon**

decisions underlined, **action items bold**

Attendees: Alison Studley (SFEG, Chair), Bob Warinner (WDFW), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Aundrea McBride (SWC), Jeremy Gilman (USFS), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), Jeff Fisher (Seattle City Light),

Absent: Doug Bruland (PSE)

Guests: Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Erin Murray (ex-officio member PSP, by phone), David Walde (Skagit County)

Beginning Business

September edited (ED) notes were approved by TWG.

Committee Reports

Board of Directors (Richard)

Protection Subcommittee (Bob)

- SLT and SCL provided a brief budget accounting of properties in the process of being purchased, recently purchased, and no longer under consideration for purchase, FYSA.

M&AM (Aundrea)

- Riparian database 2.0 update is happening
- SWC M&AM 2019 Report slated to be approved in December

Steelhead Culvert Assessment and SWC Strategic Approach

Background:

- In 2016 SWC adopted an interim steelhead strategy that was meant to step towards steelhead actions while we awaited the draft recovery plan and additional culvert prioritization.
- The goal of the soon-to-be-completed SRFB-funded culvert project was to update culvert and habitat surveys and to identify which culverts would have the most benefit for steelhead. County, state, tribes have been meeting.

- SWC Board agrees that we don't want to dilute Chinook recovery efforts, but we also need to be moving on a coordinated culvert strategy and steelhead actions, particularly with external (other than SRFB) funds.
- SRSC is almost done with the barrier inventory/database. The inventory included habitat surveys upstream for 38 streams. They used GIS to fill gaps when couldn't do surveys. Working on optimizing. There are lots of private culverts as well, but didn't have as much access for those.

Discussion: The culvert project is coming to a close; what do we do with it?

- SWC funded the inventory, but will/can it fund projects?
- Without a recovery plan including limiting factors it is hard to develop a strategy for funding projects.
- We could update our strategic approach to justify using SRFB funds for culverts/steelhead, but that impacts the current intention of not diluting Chinook recovery.
- We could say we are focusing on one limiting factor: culverts
- The existing SRFB scoring system would already allow for some culverts to be eligible (in Tier 1, 2, and 2S areas) if the project restores floodplain processes. They would likely score last since they are likely in lower tier areas. This might enable unallocated funds to be used if there aren't enough Chinook projects that year.
- We could prioritize steelhead with the goal of finding other funding sources only.
- County and SFEG are working together on a package of private and public culverts to maximize fish benefit. Packages of culverts make sense (rather than all public then all private).
- Does the TWiG need to create prioritization criteria?
- Do we earmark money for culverts?
- We could add a section to the Strategy that longitudinal connectivity is an objective.
- We could add language to the Strategy about getting other funding sources
- We could specify only using 'leftover' money for Steelhead.
- We could use the culvert inventory to make eligible very specific packages of projects with the most benefit (to Chinook?) and not take on or make eligible then entire inventory of barriers.
- We could set aside funds for design of a coordinated set of culverts, possibly to be funded for construction via another source.
- We could use SRFB to fund only private culverts coordinated with county culverts that are being replaced via other funding so that we have full tributary connectivity.

Resolution: ***Discussion to be continued in December, after members have a chance to mull over ideas and talk with their organizations.** The TWG felt the following were worth considering further:

- If there are not any Chinook projects to fund, remaining money could go toward Steelhead.
- The group may be able to reach consensus on funding some very specific projects, such as the first 1, 2, or few steelhead culvert priorities.

Concrete Sauk Valley Road/Hobbits Corner Design Review

Background: There are three alternatives for moving Concrete Sauk Valley Road that could have different benefits for salmon. The County has selected alternative 2 as their preferred alternative. Today's decision point is whether the preferred alternative sufficiently benefits salmon and if the scope of work for completing preliminary design is OK. This is the second meeting on this topic.

- Alternative 2- move the road up onto a higher bench and out of the highest flood danger zone into a medium risk zone and replace three culverts with three larger structures.
- The County presented a revised budget, down about \$190,000 from the original cost of \$648,000. The new budget amount is \$458,500.

Discussion:

- Should building the new road be eligible for funding, or just the habitat parts of the project?
- The project is eligible based on going through the SRFB process.

Decision: The Sauk Valley Road project has adequate fish value to use SRFB funds for design with the revised budget. Moved by AM, second by JF, TS no, JG abstain, ED abstain, all else in favor. Funding is awarded and the ***TWiG will review scope of work at the next meeting.**

PSAR Return Funds

- Anderson Creek project and Kukutali project are returning about \$300,000 to be reallocated for other projects. There will be an RFP shortly. We probably need to add to this the change in budget for SVR project, approximately \$190,000.
- It may be possible to apply these funds toward repaying the amount borrowed by the LE for the 2019 grant round so it isn't all taken off the top of 2020 funds.
- ***TWiG will review the applications at the December meeting.**

Adjourn at 3:37