

Final Notes, Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG) January 19th, 2023 1:00pm-3:00pm, Hybrid Meeting at Skagit Watershed Council

(decisions underlined, **action items in bold**)

Attendees: Alison Studley (SFEG, Chair), Aundrea McBride (SWC), Colin Wahl (SRSC), Regina Wandler (Skagit Land Trust), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Jeff Fisher (Seattle City Light)

Absent: Taylor Scott (Conservation District)

Guests: Richard Brocksmith (SWC)

Beginning Business

Introductions and check-in: quorum achieved. ***Richard to follow up with Marcus Reaves and Alison with PSE about membership.**

Agenda review: approved the agenda.

Notes: Motion to approve December notes by Emily, seconded by Rick, all approve.

Committee Updates

Board: Met January 5th. Discussed riparian database and next steps with that and status of the Sauk Plan and adaptive response language. Approved the Program Guide and RFP.

Protection: Met January 11th. Greenlighted three parcels for purchase and one for match.

- Question about how parcels qualify for match and do match parcels go through the Approval Process for Acquiring Restorable Lands. ***Send this agenda item to the Protection Subcommittee. This will be an agenda topic next meeting.**
- ***TWG would like maps of approved parcels in their packet and shown at meetings.**

M&AM: Meets next week. TWG is wondering the status of Britt Slough project and if there are any monitoring projects being put forward this grant round.

Riparian: North Sound Riparian Conference next week. RWG meetings following week.

Protection Strategy

2023 updates to the protection strategy was approved by the Protection Subcommittee. TWG asked some questions about if process to acquire degraded lands should apply to matching parcel projects. TWG will hold off on approving 2023 Protection Strategy until a discussion of match procedure happens (match procedures are part of the Strategy, Appendix A). ***Were comments received from CJ? *TWG members will look at the online map of parcels and look at the match policy.**

Adaptive Management and Adaptive Response Policy

The policy and procedures document was started a year ago and was also planned for discussion at state and SRFB level, but fell off their agenda. Marc Duboiski will try to get it back on the SRFB agenda for March or soon thereafter. SWC policy needs to wait on state policy to move ahead. In the meantime SWC can add a broad statement to the Program Guide about our strong support for projects to be developing adaptive management plans to clarify project level goals, measures of success, and triggers for adaptive response.

Discussion

- Does the SWC identify “more impactful projects”?
- Sometimes small projects are impactful. Size shouldn’t matter, but risk and uncertainty does.
- How do we fund adaptive management?
- Adaptive management plans might need to be considered a requirement for some projects, but that would entail more time and cost. ***This seems like an important topic to pursue over time.**

Motion to recommend the adaptive management language be included in the Program Guide as amended by Emily (removing “more impactful”, seconded by Rick, all approve.

Swinomish Channel Project Letter from SRSC

SRSC found an error in the smolt productivity they reported when applying for this grant in 2020 and in the interest of transparency wrote to the funders about the error. SWC appreciates that. The TRC (mostly TWG members) reviewed this project, so the goal today is to discuss SWC response to SRSC letter.

- This project came up in 2020 (COVID was going on—everything was out of whack).
- SWC reviewed all the notes from that time and the high smolt capacity estimate never came up as a public question in TRC or LECC or SRFB Review Panel discussion or comments. The error should have been caught then with many layers of review.
- We still feel that the proposed work is well-supported by the strategy and location and is essential to proceed.
- ***Richard proposes TWG initiate a letter (Richard will draft this week) similar to the one written by ESRP (the other funder of the project) to include the process we went through, where it should have been caught, and what to do in future rounds. The letter will be reviewed by TWG via email and sent to the Board for review before distribution.**
- ***TWG also would like to request more information about the models that go into these predictions (a presentation from SRSC).**
- ***A final response will be sent to the original email recipients to whom the SRSC letter was sent (2020 reviewers of the project plus current TWG and Board).**

2021 Riparian Report

Issues to discuss that came up while compiling the report:

- What do we do about projects in the Samish? They are not assigned a reach or Tier. Should we make a category for them/be reporting on them? It's fine to add them to the database, just report on them separately or clearly denote them.
- SLT and the county would like to have only one database to reduce administration. This may not be possible because different information is tracked by the county (i.e. the county dates their projects from when discussions with the landowner are started and the SWC riparian database dates projects from when the planting is actually implemented. These can be a year or more apart. The county also tracks hedgerows which may not be considered riparian plantings—What does SWC consider a riparian planting for the purposes of status and trends monitoring?)
- ***How do we fund improvements to the database?**
- ***We will put this report (and discussion of issues?) on our annual TWG workplan and bring here for review.**
- A draft of the report was sent to the county as part of SWC grant deliverables and will be presented to the Lower Skagit Temperature TMDL Advisory Group next week.

Riparian Proviso

SWC and CD are meeting with the county and tribes in the next two weeks. More money and technical assistance are needed to continue to implement the on-the-ground work. The core team plans to advance some of the generic recommendations to do some of the work now. They would like to create maps of where in the TMDL-limited areas riparian areas are not meeting SPTH standards and reach out to those landowners. We need to build organizational capacity.

Announcements

The Governor's budget includes \$100 million for voluntary riparian work.

Adjourn 3:00

Upcoming TWG Meetings:

February 16

March 16