

Final Notes, Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG)
December 21, 1:00pm-3:00pm
Hybrid Meeting at Skagit Watershed Council and via Zoom

(decisions underlined, action items *bold)

Attendees:

Rick Hartson (USIT, Chair), Colin Wahl (SRSC), Aundrea McBride (SWC), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Taylor Scott (SCD), Jeff Fisher (SCL), Yuki Reiss (SFEG)

Guests:

Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Jenny Baker (WDFW), Jess Lange (SLT), Alex Richard (WDFW), Holli Watne (SWC), Jess Pyle (WDF), Denise Krownbell (SCL)

Convened 1:05pm

Beginning Business

Introductions: Jess Pyle from WDFW is attending.

Reviewed the agenda. Motion by Emily to approve the agenda, seconded by Taylor.
Unanimously approved.

Motion to approve the October notes by Taylor, seconded by Alex. Emily and Jess L. abstained.
Otherwise, unanimously approved.

Committee Reports

Board of Directors – Met on 12/7/23. Discussion focused on hiring a new ED. There are some good candidates, and second interviews will take place in January. Richard will be here at least until the end of January. They discussed some contracting difficulties with Skagit County. The County's financial support of SWC next year is not clear. The Board preemptively approve a scope change for Barnaby Slough contingent on TWG approval to expedite the process for a contract change. The Board appointed Jon Stein to be the Skagit representative for PSP's Salmon Recovery Council.

Protection Subcommittee – Met on 12/12/23. A new "Campground" project came through at last minute. See Box for more info/maps. SCL is hoping for a decision today because the property may go back on the market. Some basic info about the site:

- This property is going through the Approval Process for Acquiring Restorable Lands (AKA Restorable Lands Process) because of some shoreline armoring.

- SCL will acquire and hold the property if we move forward.
- Bengt and Rick went out on a field visit as required by the Restorable Lands Process. There is a sparse, discontinuous string of rock along the bank, with some rocks completely entrained in tree roots and some loose. What remains of the armoring is low impact to hydrologic function and habitat in their assessment. LWD recruitment and erosion appear to be going on.
- There is a berm along the river, about 1ft. high, that may be flattened or not, not really a habitat/hydrologic issue. A few floods will likely take care of it.
- The owner is already making progress on relocating tenants due to county request/permit. All the vans are gone, down to 3 RVs, permitted for 2 RVs. The ADU is legal and won't be relocated prior to sale.
- 2nd buyer walked away and the property is no longer on the market.
- SCL has started an appraisal with SCL funds so that an offer can move forward ASAP for the landowner.
- SFEG wrote a restoration commitment letter. Plan for armoring: only remove loose rock for now. SFEG will do a study cost/benefit on pulling out the riprap. Short-term restoration planting plan + letters are done.
- Vegetation clearing <50% but presence of armoring requires TWG approval. Exact length of armoring not known/still needs to be measured. The existing hydromod layer does not go down as far as this property.

Motion to approve moving forward with plans for the Camprground project and greenlight purchase by Aundrea. Collin Seconds. Jeff and Jess L. abstain, otherwise unanimous approval.

M&AM subcommittee – Met on 12/23/23. Discussed picking sites for alluvial fan project. Will monitor 9 sites: 3 each for restored/refence/impacted. Also heard from Megan Wilson of PSP. The partnership is trying to standardize methods for data collection and is seeking input from M&AM on what they think. No commitments. Previous attempts at this have not succeeded. Started working on goals for 2024. Defining what the committee is doing and what their role is. Will talk more about it in January.

Project scope change for the County's Lower Day Slough project

Emily's report: At 90% design the County got a second opinion on the design. **The new consultant** did a review of the plan and came up with lots of red flags. Steel is a bad bridge material if submerged, for example. Geotech issues required special bridge piles. By state law, the County can't remove farmers' access, so the bridge has to be to road standards. Design can't be finished within current budget because design funds are spent. If we change the scope of this project to design-only, we can continue. PSE provided match. Likely there will be unused money from the original grant amount that would eventually be given back if the scope is reduced to design only. Construction will be sought under a different grant. Habitat gains are 0.56 slough miles, which equates to 665 smolts/year.

Motion by Yuki, second by Jeff to approve the scope change to design only. Unanimous

Barnaby Slough project cost decrease and scope change for not installing Martin Road culverts

Colin's report: The scope change was conditionally approved by the Board on January 4th.

Requesting scope change to eliminate restoration of the Martin Road culverts due to landowners backing out, 1 private and 2 owned by Skagit County. The project will close significantly under budget. SRSC is proposing to keep \$83k for adaptive management with the community. The remaining amount would be returned to the state and will not remain in the watershed. It will go into the cost overrun fund that's available to projects across the State. Approving the scope changes means the project does not close as "incomplete", which would look bad for SRSC and SWC. There is no reason not to approve the scope change.

***Aundrea will ask that in the future for projects like this PSAR money be spent last.**

Motion by Aundrea, seconded by Jess L. to approve the Barnaby scope change. Unanimous.

Large Projects (also called Targeted Investment Projects) funding update

\$20Mil will be available state-wide toward projects between \$1-5Mil each. Each region can rank up to 6 projects that then compete state-wide for the money via a SRFB process. The details are still being worked out by RCO. Though this is also called the "Targeted Investment" program, there are no targets anymore (at least for this round). RCO is hoping this will happen every 2 years.

Announcements

There is a new database/tool at PSP called RAFT: [Puget Sound RAFT - Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#) that includes an up to date list of funding opportunities in Puget Sound and beyond.

Taylor – SCD will be getting money for 6 new water quality monitors, to be installed this summer/fall, primarily in the lower river. **Feedback wanted** before deciding where to install. Homeowners don't believe that there is a temperature issue – how can these monitors be best used to illustrate the problem? Where would the best places be that are not redundant? Will be installed by ECY. **The data will be a communication tool for talking to land owners and at public events.**

- Richard noted that landowners also tend not to believe that buffers have much impact on things like water quality. It would be nice if some water quality was taken near an area with a nice buffer to help convince them. Downstream of CREP, for example. Need a map to show shade/restoration compared to the data.

- Jeff has some funding through SC2 for a temperature workshop this fall... probably no earlier than September. A lot of tributary monitoring in partnership with **park service**. One objective is to figure out a way to share/use data. Some political issues that need to be addressed. A workshop like this happened about 10 years ago, but nothing really came from it. No great consolidation. In January, we're letting a contract out for database development. This helps people appreciate the playing field. In very early stages of planning. Aundrea – it would be nice if we could combine this with our riparian data.

Adjourned 2:45

Upcoming TWG Meetings:

Jan 18

Feb 15