

## Final Notes, Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG) February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 1:00-3:00pm, Hybrid Meeting at Skagit Watershed Council

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

**Attendees:** Aundrea McBride (SWC), Colin Wahl (SRSC), Regina Wandler (Skagit Land Trust), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, standing in as chair), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Jeff Fisher (Seattle City Light)

**Absent:** Alison Studley (SFEG, Chair), Taylor Scott (Conservation District)

**Guests:** Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Pat Stevenson (SFEG), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust), Denise Krownbell (Seattle City Light), Jenny Baker (WDFW), Nathan White (SFEG)

### Beginning Business

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Introductions and check-in: quorum achieved. Rick will facilitate the meeting in Alison's stead. We reviewed the new committee member process: potential new members get invited to meetings and then recommended by the TWG to the Board who appoints TWG members.

Agenda review: approved the agenda by consent.

Notes: Motion to approve January notes by Colin, seconded by Aundrea, all approve.

### Committee Updates

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Board: Met February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Approved the adaptive management language to insert into the Program Guide. Richard is coordinating with Marc Duboiski to get the topic on the SRFB agenda. Discussed the letter from SRSC about the Swinomish Channel project application error. Decided to write a cover letter from the Board to SRSC, RCO, and ESRP to which the TWG's letter would be attached. Nominated Alison to the Board.

Question: does the TWG memo need to be reviewed by the Council of Members? Answer: no.

M&AM: Did not meet.

Riparian: Met January 30. Discussed the goals of the group as defined in the Riparian Replant grant. Discussed creating a public facing summary of riparian data from the database. Discussed data quality in the database based on how far back the data go. Brainstormed some ways to improve the database.

Protection Subcommittee: Met February 14<sup>th</sup>. Discussed TWG's question about match properties going through the Approval Process for Acquiring Restorable Lands (see agenda item below). Recommended educating the TWG about the match policy and proposing to the TWG that the match policy remain as is unless the TWG is in disagreement, in which case we set a threshold for TWG approval. Kari and Denise agreed to come to the TWG to present the issues.

## Approving the Protection Strategy

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Our Protection Strategy has a 1 page list of guidelines for approving parcels for match. The TWG raised the issue of whether the Approval Process for Acquiring Restorable Lands (APARL) should apply to match properties. We have broadened the Protection Strategy to include more properties with habitat stressors. Does the same process for match still apply? The Protection Subcommittee discussed three paths:

- Keep the match policy as is and advise TWG as we already do during Subcommittee reports,
- Advise and get consent from the TWG at some threshold, or
- Go through the Restorable Lands process for match properties when they have impairments

The conservation landowners presented the following points:

- Match funding is outside the SRFB grants. SCL and SLT are purchasing match properties with their own or other funds.
- Properties still get a deed of right as do all grant-funded acquisitions with the reach level grants and as such are permanently protected.
- SCL likely would not proceed with as many purchases because the APARL applies conditions that SCL cannot guarantee without grant funds. SLT needs SCL's match.

Discussion:

- TWG reviewed the match policy.
- Emily suggested a change to the existing match policy language in item f, deleting "some percent" and **\*replacing with "an inordinate percent" and adding some language reflecting the intent of that statement.**
- TWG wants to keep track of where in the watershed protection is going on. SWC is maintaining the Protected Lands layer. TWG would like location maps that include the Protected Lands layer with each parcel reported on.
- Motion by Emily seconded by Jeff to approve the 2023 Protection Strategy with the amendment above. All approve.

## Grant Round Update

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- See the timeline. Letters of Intent due March 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Emily requested if we only have 2 days of field visits out of the three reserved, if we could do them on Tuesday and Wednesday.
- Went around the table asking if anyone had more projects to submit. We have a \$4mil grant round and probably less in projects coming in. **\*Aundrea will ask DOT.** Maybe the Cascade project can move forward if someone at WDFW can champion it.

## Planning Presentation by SRSC About Fish Models

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TWG would like to learn:

- How the model works, how it is applied, and the context around it to better understand how to evaluate projects with it.
- Limitations of the model.
- Why/how were different estimates made over time (e.g. 3 estimates for Island Unit).
- How do model numbers compare to measured or observed numbers. This is probably beyond the scope of this specific discussion, but wanted to capture it here for future.
- **\*TWG members will continue to think about questions for Mike.**
- Mike will do a workshop for 2-3 hours, maybe over 2 sessions.
- This may need to be an extra meeting, not regular TWG meeting.

### Corps Permitting Issues

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Corps claims they are processing permits in 6 months or less 86% of the time. This is not sponsors' experience. Permits are taking more like 18 months. Calling every two weeks to check up has not sped up the process. Funding is on the line.

Discussion:

- **\*Aundrea will start a spreadsheet for sponsors to add their stories to so we can communicate those to the Corps.**
- Can you do work without a permit if the Corps takes longer than 6 months? No.
- Nationwide 27 should be straightforward for staff.
- We need to elevate this issue to the Colonel.
- We need to get a liaison, but it is not fair that we spend grant dollars to get the Corps to do their job.
- Government to government relations with the tribes may be an avenue for getting movement on this issue.
- We could contact congress.

### Riparian Planning

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- The proviso report by SWC, SCD, and WSCC compiles a list of barriers to landowner participation and proposes recommendations to address those barriers. Richard went over some of the proposals:
- A reach-scale planning and outreach proposal is also in the works (aka phase 2). This work is proposed to start in Hansen and Nookachamps creeks. A proposal has been sent out to the county, SDIDC, and Tribes to scope out this concept further.
- Available science will be assembled in an online library.
- DOE funding will put in some temperature gages (note: since this meeting the funding proposed for these temperature gages has been called into question).
- Riparian actions geodatabase being updated, with scope of work guided by Riparian Working Group and funding coming from SCD's Ecology grant.
- Other people/governments need to identify riparian reaches.
- **\*SCL has many temperature gages in the upper watershed and it would be valuable to coordinate better public mapping and data viewing.**

- A new legislative bill via DNR seeks to establish ecosystem services market for state lands forest management.

Adjourn 3:05

**Upcoming TWG Meetings:**

March 16

No meeting in April due to site visits the first week of May

Site visits May 2, 3, and 4 (may only take 2 days)

June 15

July 13, 9:00-4:00, TRC meeting followed by a short TWG meeting