

Final Notes, Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG)

April 19, 2018, 1:00 – 4:00PM, SWC Office, Mount Vernon

*(numbered attachments in parentheses, actions underlined)

Attendance: Alison Studley, (SFEG, Chair), (in alphabetical order), Doug Bruland (PSE), Ed Connor (Seattle City Light), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Lindsey Desmul (WDFW), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Erin Lowery (Seattle City Light), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), and Chris Vondrasek (SWC).

Guests: Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Denise Krownbell (SCL), Steve Hinton (Skagit River System Cooperative), and Jen O’Neal, (Natural Systems Design), Allison Roberts (note taker, Kulshan Services)

*(numbered attachments in parentheses, actions underlined)

Start: 1:09

1. Introductions. Review Draft Agenda (#1) (Alison Studley, Chair)

Approve March TWG Meeting Notes (#2) Alison spoke instead of Devin on bottom of page 3. Chris V. changed this during the meeting.

Tom moved and Emily seconded approval of the notes with the small change noted above. The motion carried.

2. Board Report (Richard Brocksmith)

Richard noted that he is looking at scheduling a strategic planning conversation with the Board to get input regarding future directions and work plan development.

3. Protection Subcommittee Report (Chris Vondrasek)

The Protection Subcommittee met on April 10 and discussed the following three conservation easements and acquisitions. Additionally, they met on April 18 to discuss a new property acquisition opportunity with a very short timeline.

- To review the recent conservation easements and acquisitions (#3) Chris handed out parcel synopses and projected maps of the three locations that the Protection Subcommittee considered at their April 10 meeting.
 - A three parcel conservation easement on the Lower Sauk River (one parcel on the left bank, two on the right bank below the Suiattle River mouth). These conservation easements totaling 5.54 acres were proposed by Skagit Land Trust. Protection Subcommittee discussion: There is conservation value of the easement on narrow parcels between SR 530 and Sauk. The person who is in the process of buying this property will limit access so that recreational users aren’t affecting habitat areas. This conservation easement was given tentative approval to be greenlighted after a site visit to verify the right bank parcels do not have a road parallel to SR 530

- running between them. This 'no road' condition appears to be the case in the new LiDAR bare earth digital elevation model (DEM). They have a verbal confirmation from the landowner that there are no roads allowing access to the parcels from outside them.
- Skagit Land Trust is proposing conservation easement on a nearly 20 acre parcel on Diobsud Creek. Discussion: Ten of the acres in this parcel are nearest to the creek with good aquatic and forested floodplain habitats well beyond 2 site potential tree heights, and this portion of the parcel scores based on its connectivity although the whole parcel does not. The parcel is adjacent to already protected lands. Diobsud Creek is eroding into the parcel demonstrating an active channel area. This easement was given conditional approval to use reach level grant SRFB funds on the 10 acre portion of the parcel. They will approach the landowner to see if they will accept this amount, meaning accepting less money, for the conservation easement. In the absence of a landowner agreement on this approach, the SLT will seek additional funding from other sources.
 - Skagit Land trust is proposing an 8.2-acre property acquisition where the former Day Creek channel was, that currently holds year-round side channel flow. It doesn't need any restoration and scored very high. The TRC will do a site visit in May to this location. The Protection Subcommittee unanimously approved this property acquisition which was greenlighted.
- Specific review of large upper Skagit property acquisition discussed at the Protection Subcommittee at an April 18 meeting:

Chris and Denise Krownbell provided details about a new opportunity regarding a property of 3 parcels in the upper Skagit in a reach known as "Car Body Hole." This has long been a high-priority property for multiple protection and restoration-oriented organizations. The reason for the additional special Protection meeting was to discuss options for acquiring the property before it goes on the market. The parcel will be sold to settle the estate of the current owners, and the concern is it will be acquired by someone else unless SCL or SLT act promptly. The property also has significant restoration needs, and according to the Protection Strategy will require additional review by both the TWG and the SWC Board to be acquired with reach level protection funds.

The TWG engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding how to structure the funding appropriately and be able to act quickly before the property is put on the market. The scenario of an acquisition and restoration combination project was discussed by TWG members who viewed this pathway as preferable due to the restoration needs. These TWG members emphasized their desire for assurance that the restoration work will happen in the future. Protection Committee members stressed that the reality that the short timeline due to the owner's interest in selling in the near term eliminated a combination project run through a typical grant round timeline as a viable option. The TWG also discussed the potential for other funds for the acquisition or restoration including SCL HCC committee funding. Denise outlined for

the TWG the currently available reach level grant funds, and the likely scenario of needing to use both 2016 and upcoming 2018 reach level grant funding to complete the acquisition. Members of the TWG put forward the concept that acquisition sponsors should also deliver a feasibility study for restoration work, and Denise confirmed that the reach level grant could fund one without a project amendment.

***Tom Slocum indicated the Conservation District could do the needed feasibility and design at low cost.**

***The TWG recommended to the Board that they approve the use of reach level funds for the purchase of this property because of the high quality habitat and connectivity, and the restoration potential here, with the inclusion of the condition that the purchaser must also generate a feasibility study for the restoration work that included both addressing the hydromodifications and the riparian replanting work.**

4. Monitoring and Adaptive Management Subcommittee Report (Richard)

Richard and Steve as M&AM Co-chairs discussed the Skagit Chinook M&AM Project Framework development and introduced the resulting report from the M&AM Subcommittee. They encouraged the TWG's review and invited input on the report work of the M&AM subcommittee. This report has been developed as part of the regional Puget Sound Chinook M&AM Project Framework. The regional intent is to create a common framework for a continued and long-term commitment to status and trends monitoring for Chinook recovery.

The purpose of this Skagit report and Phase II is to provide:

- Summary of status and trends data
- Recommendations based on this data for future M and AM work
- Present an adaptive management decision-making framework

Coordinated monitoring efforts provide empirical evidence regarding whether the Chinook recovery plan implementation is proceeding as expected or whether adaptive management is needed.

The TWG reviewed this framework which is currently in draft form. Steve invited TWG members to provide comment regarding the recommendations and strategies. He pointed out that there is a growing demand from the Feds (NOAA) to update these plans. ***The TWG was asked to read through the report and make recommendations/comments for its improvement during the month of May.** Eventually, this report will go to the Board with TWG and M and AM input and improvements.

Richard worked through the report section by section, presenting and explaining the charts and data in a PowerPoint. Charts included: Current monitoring data; progradation rates (growth of the river delta over time) in the delta; charts on sediment recruitment and transport; indicators on pocket estuaries; floodplain area comparisons, and large mainstem

edge length and presence of hydromods; backwater perimeters; floodplain channel areas; and large woody debris monitoring framework.

- He described the inventory work that is happening in the tidal delta and the losses to habitat on the bay front. Efforts are not on pace in the estuary to meet the stated goals for restoration. He pointed out the data showing that more sediment is coming down the river but is not being redistributed to rebuild the marsh.
- Regarding the chart on Large Mainstem Edge Length and Large Mainstem Hydromodified edge and effects of erosion, the ***TWG members recommended this table be altered for clarity on non-tidal delta data.**

SWC has been putting more reports on the SWC website which are available to TWG members and the public. ***Richard indicated he will put the large wood monitoring guide/report (by NSD) the website.**

- Seattle City Light (SCL) is in the project scoping phase of relicensing (required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission or FERC), but the process hasn't commenced yet. At this point, SCL is mostly focusing on geomorphology and hydrologic action. They will be gathering LiDAR data as well as landform mapping to look at different reaches of the river. This is a specific legal process that incorporates input from interveners (stakeholders). The official period for studies is after the notice of intent between November 2019 and May of 2020. Much data will be collected, much of which will be applicable to the Upper Skagit River. Richard spoke to the benefit of applying the data that SCL will commission as part of the FERC project into future versions of the monitoring report and our adaptive management work. USGS is also doing great data gathering which could be helpful to this process. Steve shared that pulling it all together is an immensely complex process and different entities use different methodologies to measure and study.
***Erin Lowery will ask Eric Grossman if he will share his PowerPoint presented on April 18 that described the USGS work on Skagit sediment movement.**

5. Updates on SRFB draft applications and Review of Draft Site Visit Agenda

Draft applications are now available for TRC review which should be done prior to the site visits that begin May 8.

Chris shared the draft site visit schedule of 14 projects. The TRC will go to first to projects in the middle Skagit May 8th, to project in the upper watershed May 9th, and then to the lower river and the estuary May 10th.

***TRC members have been notified to not bring dogs on the site visits in order to reduce distractions.**

Chris outlined TRC members who will be attending. Richard spoke about the Lead Entity Citizen's Committee members participating this year.

TRC Site Visits: May 8, 9, and 10

TRC Final Review Ranking Meeting: June 21 (at Skagit Publishing Community Room). This TRC meeting will include a 1-hour TWG check-in meeting. The SWC will keep this meeting on the timeline in case any projects require a follow-up meeting following the site visits. The next typically scheduled TWG meeting will be September 20.

Adjourn: 3:58 pm