

Final Notes
Skagit Watershed Council, Technical Work Group (TWG)
December 18, 2014, 1 – 4pm, SWC Conference Room

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Attendance: Alison Studley, (Chair of TWG, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group) Bob Warinner (WDFW), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), Doug Bruland (Puget Sound Energy), Eric Anderson (Aspect Consulting), Jeff McGowan (Skagit County), , Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust). Phil Kincare (US Forest Service) was absent.

Doug Hennick (Wild Fish Conservancy), Leah Kintner (Puget Sound Partnership), Erin Lowery (Seattle City Light), Martha Bray (Skagit Land Trust), and Chris Vondrasek (SWC) as guests. Allison Roberts, Kulshan Services, took meeting notes.

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 pm with a quorum.

Introductions, Agenda, Notes

- Introductions: Chris Vondrasek has taken the position as the new SWC Watershed Coordinator.
- Richard relayed that the Board approved additions of new members of the various subcommittees, including Rick Hartson (USIT is now officially a member of the Watershed Council even though Rick has been a long-time participant), Scott Heller (protection subcommittee), Erik Anderson, and Kari Odden.
- Approved agenda: Moved Skagit Capacity Funds above Comprehensive Project Updates.
- Approved November meeting notes with a requested clarification from Rick regarding Goodell Creek.

Short Updates

- Board Updates
The board updated committee memberships. They approved the Skagit Capacity Fund proposal, with some questions for TWG consideration later in the agenda. Hamilton and City of Mt. Vernon have joined the Watershed Council bringing the total to 33 members. Hopefully a few more will be coming on soon.
Board retreat update: Discussion included an orientation process for new members, discussion of ways to improve operations, and strategic planning. They also discussed exploring ways to create broader conversations about forestry, agriculture, and floodplain management, while recognizing our main priorities take precedence given limited capacity.
- Subcommittee Reports
 - Protection Subcommittee reviewed recent acquisitions, green lighted one other potential property, and discussed the update of the protection strategy. Skagit Land Trust closed on the Illabot conservation easement, including using 319 funds

(Ecology's nonpoint source program). ***A tally of acquired properties will be forthcoming.**

- Adaptive Management and Monitoring Subcommittee completed a review of accomplishments and gaps and reached a consensus about developing a draft monitoring plan which they have begun scoping. They will meet again on January 26, 2015.
- Steelhead and Bull Trout Committee will have its first meeting on January 15, 2015.
- 3FI Update: *** Richard will provide by email their draft project list for hydrodynamic modeling to support a final review at the next TWG meeting.** 3FI is nearing a contract with Battelle to begin modeling work and this is the last opportunity to weigh in on project concepts.

2010 Strategic Approach Updates

- Richard outlined the six Chinook housekeeping actions the TWG is currently working on. He indicated that we'll discuss all of them today with the exception of addressing projects with overlapping tiers. He proposed that this can be addressed in February when discussing scoring criteria in the Program Guide/RFP update. ***Devin indicated he can clarify and craft text about alluvial fan and adjacent lands, and will do so before the next meeting.**
- The main purpose of the Tier 2 tributary working group is to objectively look at what we know about rearing habitat in these tributaries and ID the most important for either current or intrinsic value. The working group presented current information and early observations from this work. This is the first time we've compiled this level of data (including spawning capacity and many watershed characteristics) on tributaries and now have information about existing, past and future potential. Information from the recently completed yearling study hasn't been incorporated specifically, yet. There is a lot of excellent information coming together, but our time to do housekeeping is limited. The RFP for 2015 projects is scheduled to come out March 5, which is the same day as the Board meeting final approval, thus lending only a few weeks for the conversation to be completed.
- The committee looked at the Skagit Tier 2 data set spreadsheet (Ed's work) and the many types of metrics that can be used to prioritize creeks/tributaries.
- Erin took suggestions and questions regarding the spreadsheet.
 - A suggestion was made to include ranking by total spawners by populations, though it was also recognized that current spawner densities don't reflect full intrinsic or historic potential.
 - One observation is that many of the Suiattle tributaries were rising up in the analyses done to date, particularly if one looked at percent of total spawners by populations. Much of their rearing area is already captured in the Tier 2 floodplain priorities, but likely not all of it. ***That needs a more thorough analysis. *Is this population of springers spawning limited, and if so, should those be prioritized differently than is done now?**
 - Someone asked what the % forest canopy data was based upon, but without Ed present we weren't sure.

- ***GIS and field work could be applied to look at underperforming streams and likely reasons.**
- Kari: Has there been thought to expanding areas we are able to work in that are outside of the flood plain but are areas of high risk? Richard confirmed this could be addressed in the future, but to do it thoroughly needs to be a parking lot item given our timeline and mandate. These housekeeping measures must be done before the next TWG meeting. No time to cue this up for RFP, so what can we refine now and what can we park for later? ***That said, the working group would look at if it would be valuable to show upper extents of areas within priority tributaries, to clarify if these areas are outside of currently mapped floodplain priorities.**
- Devin clarified that the mapping changes completed so far didn't change the content.
- Alison: Regarding the four tributaries shown on the draft map in purple (tier 2 tribs), are there areas we want to convert to purple now?
- Devin: If we focus on rearing, could we do a GIS analysis for juveniles and determine specific areas to focus? It could be done with some GIS work.
- ***Erin agreed that the Chinook yearling study could guide that and he would draft up some parameters for a GIS query with other members of the work group and then meet with Devin and Kate to see if the analysis could be done with existing information.**
- There was general agreement that a lot of good work has been started and that it was very important to continue that towards updating our strategy thoughtfully and not just to meet the housekeeping timelines.
- ***Richard summarized outcomes of this part of the discussion, including completing three analyses in the next few weeks if possible. These include completing a simple intrinsic potential model with mostly habitat attributes; starting a GIS analysis as outlined immediately above; and taking a more thorough look at proportion of each population spawning in the various tributaries. Together these methods could yield insights as to the final list of tributaries to propose for Tier 2 status.**
- Moving on to the remaining 3 bulleted housekeeping items, Richard reviewed updates to the mapping, riparian, and stewardship/education language in the Strategic Approach. The group did a quick review of track changes distributed by Richard, limited to these housekeeping items as well as the need to update dates and context to reflect a 2015 update. While not thorough, this provided an overview of where the housekeeping changes could potentially be incorporated into the Strategic Approach and where TWG members could spend time reviewing the draft.
 - ***Richard will address the following questions/comments:**
 - On pages 10-11, 3rd bullet, add wording to say "protecting and restoring" for Tier 3.
 - The group felt it was important to include Tier 3 in the text, even though the funding isn't there now.
 - Devin asked about the rationale for proposing to incorporate riparian activities into Tier 3 sediment and hydrology impaired watersheds. There were different perspectives on whether this was important for Tier 3; was that action left out as

a priority action on purpose or was it an oversight? ***It was agreed that this was a substantive discussion for later.**

- The group felt it would be helpful to know the methodologies used in creating the draft maps which are based on FEMA maps and geomorphic data but then tweaked over 10 years ago by some of the original authors including Beamer and Beechie.
- *Richard will track down the information to show the new Chinook distribution layer.**
 - *Devin will get the shape file defining the purple colored areas on Finney Creek and determine if the purple is accurately defined.**
 - *Richard asked that TWG member comments on the draft 2015 Strategic Approach be submitted by the 1st week of January so he has time to update it again before the January 15 TWG meeting.**
 - *Devin and Rick both volunteered to join the working group.**

Fir Island Farms 90% Design Review (materials provided previously)

- This is the final opportunity to provide comment and design input to WDFW, with the exception of reviewing their landowner agreement and AM&M plans in early 2015. Our review is one of the last steps before they can move forward to construction this summer. They have one month to complete the final design.
- The group expressed concern about budget items for relocating fences, signage, and 50% increase in construction supervision. WDW is completely revising the re-vegetation plan. ***Alison will document these concerns to WDFW. TWG also wants the opportunity to review the re-vegetation plan before it is finalized as well.**

Skagit Capacity Fund Final Review

- The Board asked the TWG to consider a range or a cap on the project amount. The TWG agreed a maximum of \$10,000 was appropriate. It was felt the loose steelhead language was adequate, though ***Richard should follow up with Leah about PSAR requirements** (which is the ultimate source of these funds and thus carries the same obligations).
- ***Richard will write an RFP by January 1 and distribute it to the membership list.** We'll give them until January 31 or so to make proposals. Proposals will be turned around to the TWG in the first two weeks of February, so that we can look at them at our February meeting. It is likely quite late in timing to facilitate project proposals in 2015, but it is possible.

Comprehensive Project Updates (Skagit River System Cooperative, Devin Smith)

- Devin presented five different projects. He shared any variations from the Watershed Council plan and any lessons learned. He shared remaining work to be completed.
 - Dashiell, Government Bridge, Bryson, Sauk River - 31 acres of riparian area plus pasture. Lessons learned: Dashiell and Bryson are not in the floodplain. They are very dry and this caused high plant mortality.

- Lessons learned: They modified their approach and added 4-6 inches of bark mulch to each planting with much greater success. Also, they couldn't get alder seed to grow and will look into better ways to do this.
- Savage Slough - 215 floodplain acres (53 acres pasture and 150 acres forested). They demolished two dwellings, decommissioned 400 feet of county road, added buffers and plantings, mowed the pasture, and put in gates. A desirable future action would be to decommission the remaining road, but that can't happen near-term. He shared a map showing three options for a newly routed road with cost projections at \$17 million. Doing this would allow the floodplain to be re-established on this area. Lessons learned: They had to do double plantings due to the elk. They installed taller tree protectors as well as applied other natural deterrents. This added to the cost of the project.
 - Suiattle (at milepost 12) - This project removed 900 feet of riprap. This was a different site than proposed to SWC, but had similar restoration value.
 - Downey Creek (at milepost 23) - This was a 210 foot bridge extension project. The entire alluvial fan is now open to Downey Creek and brought the entire floodplain down to grade.
 - Sulphur Creek Campground restoration - This project to address flood damage was a combination recreation/restoration project in collaboration with the Forest Service. SRFB funds paid for the restoration. The Forest Service built a bridge, removed some roadway and built a new campground loop and walk-in trail. There is some remaining riprap which will come out next summer.

Adjourn: 4:00

Next Meeting January 15, 2015, 2 pm - 4 pm.