

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

February 21, 2019, 1:00 – 3:00PM, SWC Office, Mount Vernon

decisions underlined, **action items bold**

**Attendees:** Alison Studley (SFEG, Chair), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Bob Warinner (WDFW), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), Aundrea McBride (SWC), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust)

**Absent:** Erik Anderson (Aspect Consulting), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), Erin Lowery (Seattle City Light), Jeremy Gilman (USFS), Doug Bruland (PSE)

**Guests:** Erin Murray (ex-officio member PSP, note taker), Catey Ritchie (SRSC), Scott Bohling (DOE), Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Jennifer Holderman (DOE)

### Beginning Business

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#### Introductions

- Scott Bohling, Water Quality Specialist DOE
- Jennifer Holderman, DOE (on phone) presenting Hydrology study proposal for feedback

#### Reviewed Draft Agenda:

- Added handout of Steve's comments on the DOE Hydrology study
- Added a handout outlining the proposed process for reviewing the Skagit Steelhead RP

Reviewed January TWG Meeting Notes: Approved January TWG Meeting Notes

### Committee Reports

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#### Board of Directors

(Richard Brocksmith)

Met February 7<sup>th</sup> and Approved as recommended by TWG:

- 4YWP
- LE Program Guide
- 2019 RFP
- PSAR Return funds: Approved equal split
  - Discussed evaluation process/criteria for the future and decided to not make another process with the assumption that it will not happen very often.
- **Erin M. is working with PSP Salmon Recovery Manager to send RCO a regional letter of support for use of local PSAR return funds**
- Council of Members Meeting: **Moved to March 27<sup>th</sup>** to have more time and roll-out Draft Skagit Steelhead Recovery Plan
- Question (Alison): Does the Board approve TRC membership? Can we recommend more people (ex: Jim Wright, Kevin Aitkin)? **Aundrea is sending this recruiting email out in the next day or two, and yes, Board will approve any new members.**

Protection Subcommittee met last February 12<sup>th</sup> and Discussed:

(Bob Warinner, Chair)

- County owned parcels to see what is necessary to secure permanent management and stewardship at county or if conservation status can be established in other ways. **Aundrea will compile maps for next Protection Subcommittee meeting.**
- Day Creek: South Skagit HWY
  - Rescored with two parcels scored as one
  - Protection Committee greenlighted
- Cape Horn Road Property: These two parcels have come to the TWG for greenlighting because the properties have a hydromodification in the channel. See discussion below
  - On the mainstem, mostly forested (33% cleared), across from Iron Mtn. Ranch
  - Has a piling hydro-modification (220 ft. long out of 2600 ft. of shoreline, <10%)
  - High elk use area, which may be hard for planting
  - Extra benefits: SRFB funds will enable a bigger conservation sale to a conservation buyer including parts of Alder creek
- Hurn Field Area
  - Scoring was inaccurate during landscape scale analysis due to poor resolution floodplain layer
  - Aundrea re-evaluated localized floodplain area and it now scores
  - Culvert is on WDOT lists for replacement
  - Protection Committee greenlighted
- Gilligan Creek Area
  - Access area for recreational vehicles, etc.
  - Scores well because of forested floodplain along Gilligan confluence
  - SCL owns big parcels adjacent
  - Protection Committee greenlighted
- Presentin Creek
  - Put through match criteria, not through block grant funds, but could be used for match if it meets criteria
  - Some imminent development (wells & road in place), if not purchased for conservation
  - Protection Committee greenlighted for use as match
- Reviewed new Acquisition form—How are these distributed? **(SWC will provide ahead of TWG meetings for discussion during the meeting)**. It would be helpful to provide location map of each property. **Aundrea will work with SCL and SLT to provide.**

#### Cape Horn Road property acquisition

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#### Discussion

- What is required through grant? Removal of all structure and hydro-modifications? SRFB requires the former, but not the latter
- Will funding be left over from the purchase to do a feasibility study prior to purchase?
- Should <10% hydro-modifications hold up the sale?

- What precedent are we setting? Concern of not setting precedent of exploring/not exploring hydro-modifications for future purchases, and the costs and time involved in that, prior to purchase. Feasibility, design, and construction should fall under restoration projects after purchase.
- What would perception of removal of hydro-modification be for downstream community?
- A course-level summary of impacts and options could be conducted prior to purchase and would inform the process.
  - What is it made out of?
  - What is its function? Is it a backwater?
  - How hard is it to get rid of? Permits? Bob can help with those if needed.
- **Land Trust to contact Marc to see if there is funding available for a summary assessment**
- **If no other alternatives exist, SWC staff will write up coarse-level habitat benefits and impacts and possible costs of removal.**

#### Decision

- TWG approved parcels for acquisition with condition that a coarse-level summary assessment will be conducted on the hydro-modifications to identify cost/benefit of removal.

Skagit Water Supply Task Force

(Jennifer Holderman, DOE)

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#### Summary from Jennifer

- Skagit watershed was excluded from the 'Hirst Fix' in the courts.
- The legislature created a taskforce and provisos to fill data gaps for some future process of allocating water rights in the Skagit.
- While the taskforce has been meeting (currently in little hiatus) the proviso is for Ecology to collect data in WRIA 4 upstream of Concrete to fill data gaps and for taskforce to recommend data collection in WRIA 3, assuming there will be similar plans for WRIA 4 & 3. Jennifer is working with DOE to fulfil obligations.
- The intention of the taskforce study is to provide recommendations to the Legislature in 2020 to work on water supply.
- The first pot of money is focusing on WRIA 4 (DOE, WDFW, AG). There is an existing scope of work for 1) existing out-of-stream water demand and 2) an inventory of water rights. Also looking at exempt wells and impacts on tributaries.
- Jennifer is trying to understand vertical hydraulic connectivity to identify reaches that may be important to restore (hydrologically) or protect to maximize water availability/recharge and thus maintain in-stream flows and provide for out-of-stream water uses.
- Jennifer has been working the past few months to think about a habitat question that ties in with the hydraulic connectivity question so that Ecology's goals can add synergy to salmon recovery goals. Mapping LWD and creating relative elevation models are her initial ideas after talking with local organizations.
- Once the taskforce gets back together, they will work with consultants pre-approved by Legislature. They will reach out to partners in the Skagit to help answer this question.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> half of proviso...once we have a groundwork in WRIA 4 then work in WRIA 3.

## Discussion

- Question: Is there an ability to subcontract under preferred contracts? Answer: Not an option at this point
- Question: How does studying location of LWD inform a study on hydrologic connectivity? Answer: LWD features create backwater and accumulation of sediment to promote connectivity (water storage and recharge in the hyporheic zone) and habitat benefit.
- Comment: It seems like you are narrowing it down to a small part of the hydrologic picture with LWD. Has your group done an analysis of what processes at what scale will make a significant difference in recharge? Answer: [basically no] They can look at existing geology, soils, impervious surfaces, recharge, flooding, etc. studies that exist.
- Question: Presumably backwater in recharge areas has some floodplain (mostly on the mainstem, not the confined tributaries) but the floodplain is occupied by farms. How much do you need to backwater to get recharge? Answer: It is possible to quantify and could be an intention of this work. Specifically looking at tributaries because have done other work in the main stem and have other ideas of offsetting impact there. Looking at tributaries and single-family homes.
- Comment: One thing Steve (via Catey) brought up as a procedural based comment – it's been 8 months (since last June 2018) since the M&AM subcommittee has met, but he feels this conversation would be beneficial/appropriate to start with that group. M&AM is looking at complimentary things, it's a place to start – and then that goes to TWG then goes to Board. Richard: It's time to convene M&AM subgroup. Ask people to be engaged.
- Comment (WDFW/USIT): Should a literature review proceed this investigation of LWD?
  - Jennifer: Curious of other factors (roads, impervious surfaces, LWD) do you have a good understanding of that in your Basin as original premise for 1998 strategy.
  - Richard: Good data on impervious surfaces and roads. Focus on bank armor b/c does affect floodplain connectivity. Upper Skagit completed a hydro modification survey and SRSC did a M&AM report quantifying floodplain connectivity. We need to better characterize the quality of the connection beyond hydro mods. Through relative elevation models and hydraulic models, how connected are those floodplains?

## Summary of Suggestions:

- Use a GIS exercise of classifying recharge based on wetlands, impervious surface, road drainage, forest maturity, geology, etc.– going straight to LWD you are looking at 1 indicator among many.
- Go through M&AM committee first, then TWG, then Board
- A REM will be useful.
- As for focusing in the tributaries, recharge is usually bigger in main stems. Big systems are hard to work in because there is a lot of risk. While it is easier in the tributaries, recharge is less effective. How much can we effect aquifers in tributaries?
- Provide a rationale for each investigation for how they would help figure out vertical continuity and sub surface recharge
- WRIA 4 as a template for WRIA 3 will be difficult, but should try to work from similar framework.

## Steelhead Recovery Planning

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### Draft Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Plan

- The SWC staff are submitting comments on behalf of staff and not members. The SWC has put together concise draft comments for Steelhead and brought comments to the Board. **There was an agreement to send out this draft to all members to include in their own comments if interested.**
  - Action on hydrologic function/vertical connectivity is not well enough developed
  - Climate Change needs to be integral rather than an afterthought
  - Community Engagement is a necessary part of recovery
  - The funding plan does not fully fund goals
- SWC is open to feedback
- SWC is willing to add points from the group to their letter (if commonly held) to amplify certain key messages.

### Skagit Steelhead Recovery Plan Review Process

- The local Skagit chapter of the Steelhead Recovery Plan (Plan) is being drafted by co-managers. Steve and Dave are the primary project managers/editors. Based on ideas from Steve, the USIT, and others about the possible pathways for collecting feedback on the Plan, and with the goals of getting maximum buy-in and minimizing major conflicts during the full public review process, Richard drafted a 4-step proposed process based on the SWC Board discussion. He presented it to the TWG for discussion and feedback. No decision.
  - Step 1: Once released, **SWC** staff will send the local Skagit chapter 'Version 3' to the **members**, including TWG, who all have the option of providing written **comments** to SWC. TWG will compile all comments from the 41 participating agencies, highlighting any themes that emerge across the member groups.
  - Step 2: TWG will submit these synthesis comments to the **Board** who will focus on policy or socioeconomic factors and then **finalize a package of synthesis comments**. These will be submitted to the Plan authors, along with the original, unedited member comments.
  - Step 3: **Co-managers** then **address comments** to create a new draft: Version 4. Version 4 will get a **watershed-wide rollout** and multiple community wide presentations.
  - Step 4: Then **the last draft**, labeled Version 5, would go to the state and federal government and would be **submitted for comments via the Federal Register**.
- In sum, all 41 member-organizations have 3 chances to comment as envisioned here. Everyone else in the Skagit community gets 2 chances to comment.
- We affirmed this is a scientific, not a political product. Science is the measuring stick.

### Other Updates

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- SRFB Letters of Intent will be discussed at next meeting in March
- Ecology TMDL process (Scott Bohling)  
Scott would like to coordinate for data sharing and synergy in achieving salmon recovery through his work on temperature and other TMDLs (i.e. mapping upwelling/cold water refuge, piggybacking with Jennifer on REMs). He will be back next month.