

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

June 21, 2018, 2 – 3:00PM

Skagit Publishing Community Room, Mount Vernon

*(numbered attachments in parentheses, actions underlined)

Attendance: Alison Studley, (SFEG, Chair), Doug Bruland (PSE), Erin Lowery (Seattle City Light) Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Chris Vondrasek (SWC),

Absent: Erik Andersen (Aspect Consulting), Jeremy Gilman (USFS), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), and Bob Warinner (WDFW).

Guests: Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Erin Murray (PSP)

Alison Studley formally ended the Technical Review Committee, and began the Technical Work Group meeting with the 6 TWG members present.

There was no formal agenda provided pre-meeting. Via email TWG members had been informed of the likelihood of an additional time-critical review of a property, depending on the outcome of an imminent Protection Committee action. This property was reviewed and approved by the Protection Committee only recently (6/19). The Protection Committee met within a time period less than one week before the TWG meeting due to lingering issues with the property owner, the realtor, and summer scheduling conflicts of members of the Protection Committee. This additional TWG review was required by the Protection Strategy due to a small amount of relict hydromodification at the downstream edge of the property. The high habitat value of the property and the pressing interest of other potential buyers urged a mid-summer TWG review.

Chris presented the 6/19 Protection meeting report, and maps illustrating the property in the Ross Island floodplain reach. These report and map documents were provided to the TWG on 6/19 promptly after the Protection Committee reviewed and unanimously approved them. He reviewed the key points about the property and the habitat condition metrics recorded in the Protection meeting report. The property scores 1.700 in the Protection Assessment and all of it lies in the Ross Island reach floodplain.

The property covers 213.8 acres, with over 6000 linear feet of Skagit River and off-channel aquatic habitats. The property has 150 acres of functioning floodplain forests. 64 acres of the property are former pastures or hayfields, lacking functioning floodplain forests. This amount equals slightly less than 30% of the property area in need of potential replanting restoration.

The reason for an additional TWG review of the potential acquisition is due to a length of relic hydromodification at the downstream edge of the property. According to the Protection Strategy protocol any amount of hydromodification initiates a required TWG review and approval. Depending on the accuracy of the GIS layers, either 100.9' or 563.1' of hydromods contact the property. The 2 hydromods are tenuously connected to the property at the downstream corner. Relative to the >6030' of aquatic edge habitat length, 100.9' equals 1.67% of that length, 563.1' equals 9.35%.

TWG Discussion: A TWG member expressed concern about the cost of the property. This member remarked that this property adds to a recent list of new potential acquisitions and funding needs, and that it also is a second recent site where the TWG had to review a question.

Other TWG members noted that this property was held up in the past as the reason the Skagit County could not remove all the hydromodifications at the County's upstream Robinson Road property (due to possible impacts on this property), and that gaining this property for salmon habitat protection would create those kinds of reach level opportunities for restoration.

A TWG member also expressed concern about future replanting restoration needs here. At this TWG member's request Chris produced a 300' buffer on the property map projected for the group. The replanting restoration needs within 300' buffer of the aquatic habitats appeared more modest than the 64 acres total. (For the TWG's interest, the GIS calculations of the replanting needs within 300' of the aquatic habitats total 9.74 acres. This computation was done post-TWG meeting. A map of these areas has been attached to this email, FYI.)

Several TWG members present expressed strong support for the acquisition noting its location, size, and amount of aquatic habitat to be protected. Another TWG member commented the property offers a special chance to acquire >150 acres of forested floodplain, if the property were viewed as a positive opportunity not as a replanting need.

The TWG members present supported this acquisition proposal, though no quorum was present.

At the 6/19 Protection meeting the Committee members also unanimously approved a 3-parcel 3.51 acre acquisition on the Cascade River. Chris reported to the TWG on this action also. The acquisition did not require TWG action. He presented the Protection Committee report and the property metrics, and maps of the acquisition. The property parcels score very well: 2.148, 1.650, and 1.606. All of the property lies in the Cascade River floodplain. Mature forests cover all of the property.