

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

November 15, 2018, 1:00 – 4:00PM, SWC Office, Mount Vernon

*(numbered attachments in parentheses, actions underlined)

Attendees: Alison Studley (SFEG, Chair), Erin Lowery (Seattle City Light), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), and Bob Warinner (WDFW), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), Aundrea McBride (new coordinator, by phone)

Absent: Erik Anderson (Aspect Consulting), Jeremy Gilman (USFS), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust), and Doug Bruland (PSE)

Guests: Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Erin Murray (ex-officio member PSP), Catey Ritchie (new project manager at SRSC)

Start: 1:05 pm

1. Introductions. Review Draft Agenda (#1) (Alison Studley, Chair) Moved the Carey Slough scope change up as well as Project Implementation Review and Support so some could leave early.
2. Approve September & October TWG Meeting Notes (#2 and #3) – with the following changes:
September: Already reviewed and it was felt they should be approved as presented.
October: The notes from the last TWG meeting required clarification on inaccuracies regarding Carey's Slough and Pressentin. Sue Madsen provided refinements in track changes of which the TWG members approved. Also add Emily as absent from the October meeting. ***TWG should receive draft notes within a week or 10 days of the last meeting. Notes approved.**
3. Approve Carey Slough Scope Change Amendment (#4)

The committee discussed the details as provided by SFEG on the SRFB grant amendment (#4). Sue Madsen wrote up the scope change request for the Carey's Slough project, as requested by Devin and TWG after their presentation at the October TWG meeting.

The change is required because the full span bridge design was too expensive for the original grant, and the town of Hamilton didn't want ownership of such a large bridge with its federal inspection and reporting requirements. This issue didn't emerge until after the funds were awarded.

Devin provided a general set of observations. Questions exist about whether there would be two access roads or not. SRSC supports the design work change if the proposed 18-foot option meets NOAA standards for fish passage. Bob from WDFW indicated that in this situation, fish passage is not that hard to achieve even with the smaller option. It would be good to know more about the other environmental improvements that could result such as sediment movement.

A sediment and cost analysis will address the remaining size options around 12 to 19.5 feet. Then it will go to nearly final design. Bob moved and Tom seconded the scope change as provided. Unanimously approved, with Alison abstaining.

4. Project Implementation Review and Support

- Informational Presentation on the Sauk Tributary Culvert Replacement Design (Emily Derenne and David Walde)

David provided a presentation that included some new photos of low flow conditions in late September in the Sauk and Hobbits and Osterman Creeks. He presented three most recent alternatives being developed by their team. Cost estimates are being prepared. He showed delineation of channel migration, with low and high-risk erosion areas. He discussed the three alternatives:

Option 1: Keep the road in current location. It may require some road work, new bridge, stream stability work, and installing extensive log jam structures in the river and along the bank. NSD modeled this alternative. The log jams downstream may not be needed.

Option 2: Do a slight relocate of the road outside of the high-risk erosion area. Buy some property to allow them to pursue the historic alignment of the road and do new crossings and grade control on all three tributaries.

Option 3: Completely relocate the road outside of the low-risk erosion area. Follow historic railroad grade which would involve a much longer (300'?) bridge, but still with a need to bring access to the three current property owners that have structures in the floodplain.

David also showed information about the historic road based on assessor information and showed a map of the different parcel owners. The only owner he's talked to is the Hobbit House. Emily added that one parcel nearer the river is likely to be auctioned off next year. If they could purchase, then they wouldn't need grade control on Hobbit Creek.

The TWG reviewed the project's condition as applied during the lead entity review process, which is "SWC requires TWG review and approval at key steps as the project moves forward. First, the TWG will participate in the alternatives analysis and selection being conducted separately by the County. If the selected alternative does not sufficiently benefit habitat to support a SRFB investment, the TWG may terminate the SRFB project. Second, the TWG shall work with the County and the SRFB to update the SRFB-funded scope of work to ensure preliminary design deliverables are appropriate for the funding type. Third, the TWG will review and approve the preliminary design work, before authorizing allocation of funds to complete the final designs."

TWG members discussed a few topics: 1) putting wood in the larger rivers in this watershed hasn't been a strategic objective. Wild and Scenic designation may require Section 7 analysis and determination depending on the alternative selected, which should be considered during project development. 2) What if this doesn't restore floodplain functionality? 3) Also, will the Sauk go to the other side of the bank and how long will that take, and how long till its back? 4) Culverts still need fixing, but that's on a different time scale and from a different funding source. 5) Main road on North Osterman Road will be a one-lane road soon with the current head-cutting. Since it's the only road in the area, it's important not just to the three houses (not full-time residents), but to upriver access during floods (which close SR20) and major haulers who use the route for logging. 6) The members thought that all three options are equivalent in providing fish passage, though

option 3 reduces stream crossings and maybe some instream work. 7) Steelhead do spawn in these creeks, but they are too small for Chinook spawning. 8) Would be helpful for sponsors to discuss potential funding options for the different aspects of the project (e.g. Sauk floodplain function, fish passage on non-tier 2 tributaries, transportation issues); specifically, how might salmon recovery grants be applied?

***Quantification of fish benefit is not currently in the contract, which needs to be considered. One idea was fleshing out further scenarios similar to Option 2 to reduce cost, such as reducing mainstem wood jams. An upcoming discussion is being scheduled now with the project team, so more to follow.**

- Martin Ranch Road Culvert (Emily)

This project involves raising the road two feet to make room for the new crossing which extends fill out into the current wetland. It had been scheduled for 2019. However, they need an Army Corps permit to place the fill which may affect their 2019 timeline. They'll need to do a bypass road. The adjacent timber landowner is willing to let them use an existing road as a bypass, but it needs some work to meet that use. There's a wetland crossing at the upper end of the slough habitat that could be restored after the bypass is no longer needed. County has access to a local gravel pit that could reduce costs if the materials meet specs. ***Emily is seeking more information about an alternative to getting a Corps permit which could allow it to proceed forward in 2019. She would need to run it through engineering.**

- South Fork Delta Channel Final Design (Emily)

The Diking District has some objections to any removal of rock to lower the inlet elevation. They are worried about erosion. TWG believes that controlled flow could be engineered, and a flow-through channel is needed for this to be a viable project given it has been silting in. Easiest path would be to just remove sediment layer above current bank armor rock, but that 2 to 4 available feet may not be enough. Anchor QEA has some ideas about how to proceed, but that meeting isn't until tomorrow. They are hoping that the modeling will show that water will flow well enough through the area if an opening below the one in the concept plan is excavated to 4 feet.

Emily confirmed that the opposite side of the river is very armored. Emily also voiced some concern about the timeline. TWG members noted a perception of risk on this project that seems very unlikely, or at least could be mitigated, but recognized it needs an engineering review. There are no TFI credits available for this project, but DFI may be relevant.

***Emily will provide a report at the next meeting.**

- Illabot Alluvial Fan Phase 2 (Devin)

Devin outlined the alluvial fan restoration project. They removed 1800-feet of dike in two project phases (completed in 2013 and 2018). There are now three bridges – each which can handle flows from the Illabot Creek. Both bids (bridge and channel work) came in under the bid price. They reconstructed two channels and different types of log structures for habitat. Habitat benefits include: doubling of the channel area, increased pools,

increased Chinook juveniles, increased Coho juveniles and more. Devin and Rick both expressed optimism in the opportunities to do some good fish monitoring for a freshwater project, which will complement their habitat monitoring.

***Andrea will provide historic information to Devin re: pebble counts.**

5. Committee Reports (Bob Warinner and Richard Brocksmith)

- Protection Subcommittee met on Tuesday, 11/13. They reviewed a few projects and made a few decisions. A parcel was approved for match purposes. Another project downstream of Mount Vernon was recommended as most likely to proceed only if it went through a combination proposal approach. A residential property near Alterra will be reviewed further before greenlighting. Several parcels near Barney Lake were greenlighted as they scored high and were near existing protected lands as well as intense development in Mount Vernon. Bob briefed TWG on an inholding that will be considered in timberlands in one of the lower tributaries. Two other large projects the TWG had already reviewed are still in hopeful progress. Two parcels near Marblemount are closing this week and another in the Suiattle closed and another in Suiattle was greenlighted.

Protection Subcommittee agreed to start using the parcel information and tracking form as a work in progress. They asked to remove the cost estimate section.

County Protected Lands update – SWC is in discussion with the County regarding some of their lands that may need a higher level of protection and stewardship. The county is open to that discussion.

- SWC Watershed Coordinator Hiring Status – SWC hired Aundrea McBride to fill the Watershed Coordinator position and will start part-time and then full-time in January 2019. She has decades of experience in the Skagit with a great skill set.
- The Board of Directors did not meet this month. Richard noted that he just sent out the November 28 Council of Members meeting notice. Eric Beamer will give a science update on estuary habitat status and trends and also fish monitoring projects. Richard will do a short presentation on the draft M and AM strategy adjustment recommendations. The HDM report will be presented. The agenda allows 30 minutes of informal networking. They changed the time to afternoon and shortened the duration. He's invited all of the City Councils and County commissioners, but it's a bit of an experiment to see how this new format might work occasionally.

6. Discussion about returned PSAR funds from Illabot Alluvial Fan Phase 2

- SWC received three proposals for the ~\$500,000 in returned funds. The sooner we allocate this money, the sooner projects can get started. The objective is to spend the money on the projects with the most benefit.
- Hansen definitely needs the requested ~\$300K but is getting better engineering cost estimates in coming weeks. There was a question about whether they could spend the money before June, but likely. Pressentin is assuming costs have gone up (\$300K) but they won't know until the County has a consulting engineer on board to re-estimate costs in next couple of months. They too don't need the money until summer, though both

projects are very important, and we need to complete our investments there to be successful. Acquisition requested \$500K and they are holding off on some new parcels as they await the decision of the two large parcels in process. They may also not need the additional money if the other two large parcels don't move forward.

- The requests all make good sense (even as costs continue to be refined soon), so if there is enough money to meet all requests (~\$1.15M), that's a good thing. If there isn't enough money to go around, then the TWG must weigh in on priorities.

***The TWG wants to know a close approximation of what the final returned funding will be, and how the three projects evolve in the next month. SRSC indicated there may be more than \$500k available but will not know how much until all the billing is finalized in the next month or two. However, in the interest of getting the projects started as soon as possible, they gave Richard enough support to bring TWG support for all three projects to the December Board meeting.**

7. Notice of Call for Updates to 4-Year Work Plan (December TWG agenda item)

As a step required for the SRFB Grant Round, Richard noted that everyone should make sure all of their projects on the 4-year Work Plan get updated and anything new should be submitted to him ASAP.

***Richard will resend the 4-Year Work Plan to everyone with a deadline for action.**

- Richard asked the TWG members for their input on the Orca Recovery Plan and its impact on what is happening in the Skagit. What are we missing, what ideas do folks and organizations have that need to be incorporated? They suggested we need a Chinook poster child. The recent Orca Day tree planting projects in both Whatcom and Skagit Counties brought out a number of people. More to come...
8. Adjourn – 3:52pm

TWG Meeting Schedule

- December 13
- January 17
- February 21