

Skagit Watershed Council, Technical Work Group (TWG)

July 17, 2014, 1:00 – 4:00pm, SWC Conference Room

Final Notes

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Introductions began at 1pm, including *Alison Studley, Leah Kintner, Bob Warinner, Rick Hartson, Devin Smith, Tom Slocum, Jeff McGowan, Ed Connor, Richard Brocksmith, Martha Bray, Dave Pflug, Erin Lowery, Doug Bruland (TWG members in italics)*. Guests included Brian Williams, WDFW, and Dave Cline, Shannon & Wilson. Erin was introduced as Dave's replacement. His involvement at the technical level is of interest to the committee and to Seattle City Light. The draft agenda and notes from March were approved.

Short Updates

There were several short updates, including from the SWC Board. Richard relayed that while the Board had been working more recently around updating foundational documents and organizational development, he thought that moving forward the Board was likely to concentrate the next few months on more content-rich topics with respect to salmon recovery. Update items from the Board included updating the 2014 LE Program Guide including various committees and organizational structure; member expansion to 28 with 8 full-time Board members now (have recently added Margaret Fleek (City of Burlington) and Loren Everest (USFS)); financial and administrative policy updates; nearing point to extend offer for new hiring process; completing website revamping; and upcoming membership meetings.

The TWG was updated on progress for this year's SRFB grant round process, including technical scores, notes, and recent SRFB Review Panel status. Richard relayed "lessons learned" from this year's grant round verbally, and ***will follow-up electronically with the TWG and TRC with an opportunity to review and provide input on that topic.**

The TWG was updated on the 2015-2017 Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) program. The local "representative" list of projects developed every other year (in the past by staff) to educate the legislature, which was scheduled this year to be developed by staff but reviewed by the TWG, is now no longer needed by the Puget Sound Partnership and thus won't be completed in 2014. Only 1 project in our local program qualified for large PSAR regional competition, Illabot Creek Alluvial Fan Phase 2, with about \$120M in other projects submitted from around Puget Sound.

The Protection Subcommittee supplied a summary sheet and individual maps of successful acquisitions since last reported in March, including about 5 properties for about 100 acres.

Downey Creek, Suiattle rip-rap removal, and Davis Slough fish passage are all under construction now.

Review of FIF Project Proposal

Brian Williams and Dave Cline presented an overview of the Fir Island Farms 60% Design and status of project development, including site details, goals, preferred alternative selected previously, timeline, teams rosters, design elements, grading and planting plans, outputs, pump station and maintenance details. The TWG asked how contingencies were developed and provided input as to how to incorporate into budgets. The sales tax seemed inflated compared to usual at 9+%. Questions about the cost of construction oversight were asked and answered.

After the sponsor and engineer left the meeting, concerns about budget inconsistencies were raised again, particularly how the PRISM budget estimate wasn't consistent with the newest budget estimate in reviewed documents. ***This will be brought to the RCO grant manager's attention.** It was proposed as a condition that we request an opportunity to provide input again at the 90% design stage to look very closely at budgets, planting plans, and any other final details. This was proposed by Richard and seconded by Tom Slocum, and had consensus of the group. ***It was recommended that maintenance costs associated with the pump station should be ironed out before proceeding to construction.** Finally, there was a motion to recommend to the Board for approval of the project with the stated condition. Richard made the motion and it was seconded by Tom Slocum, and had consensus of the group. Bob Warinner and Leah Kintner abstained given their agencies' involvement. Tom, Richard, and Ed were involved as steering committee members but the group agreed they should participate.

M&AM Subcommittee Report

The Monitoring & Adaptive Management Subcommittee presented the preliminary M&AM Framework for Skagit River Chinook Salmon, following work conducted at the subcommittee level since September 2013. A powerpoint presentation was given that laid out the various pieces of the planning process and concluded with some gaps that have been identified in the adaptive management and monitoring processes. Several questions and comments were provided:

- How are hatcheries and harvest integrated into this framework?
- Can the framework capture gains and losses in habitat?
- Note that "egg development success improved" should be removed from the tidal delta results chains.

- The Skagit Hydrodynamic Model proponents could utilize this framework to ensure their product fills gaps and needs recently revealed.
- How and where can we pull the Tidegate Fish Initiative (TFI) into this process?
- Is there new data being inputted into this framework yet? If not, how do we do that?
- Can this process increase involvement of other groups to reach the bigger picture?
- How is climate change built into this framework and how can we incorporate Skagit Climate Consortium into it?

The TWG generally felt that the framework is solidifying with a lot of very tangible information, coming a long ways since originally proposed years ago. There are likely many relevant pathways that the information should lead us down, such as working with governments on how their actions fit within the recovery planning process. ***It was understood that next steps include continuing to flesh out the viability process with existing and potentially new data; working to update strategies and actions; focusing on what we can agree on; and beginning monitoring plan development including connecting with Habitat Work Schedule.**

Updating 2010 Strategic Approach

Time was nearing 4pm, so the bonus agenda item to begin to scope out updating the 2010 Strategic Approach was compressed. Richard shared a working draft of concepts for updating that was quickly reviewed and augmented as they were discussed. Clearly the most significant question facing the organization's Strategic Approach is how and when to incorporate steelhead recovery into the local process. It will be important to ask policy folks for TWG direction on the topic. While it can be seen as diluting our current focus on Chinook salmon recovery, it could also provide increased financial resources and extra benefit to steelhead from existing projects. Several other, less daunting concepts were briefly discussed, such as fleshing out the rationale for Tier 2 stream habitats, Tier 3 impacts downstream, riparian clarifications and incorporation of project stewardship, adding guidance on assigning value placed on habitats that fit multiple tiers (like Illabot Combo project), and nearshore generically. ***This list should be drafted and distributed for input. *However, there was a conclusion that Richard should seek policy input from the Board and others about spending significant time (or not) on incorporating steelhead into the Strategic Approach for the 2016 grant round plus potentially smaller improvements in next few months to be completed for the 2015 grant round.**

Richard distributed copies of an email query from NW Natural Resources Group regarding landowner outreach they will be conducting in forested areas of the watershed. ***Please feel free to provide information back to Richard for sharing on the topic.**

The TWG adjourned at 4:05pm.