

Skagit Watershed Council
Technical Work Group – Final Approved Notes
November 20, 2016, 1:00 – 4:00PM, SWC Office, Mount Vernon

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Attendance: Chris Vondrasek (SWC), Alison Studley, Chair (SFEG), Bob Warinner (WDFW), Kari Odden (SLT), Erin lowery (SCL), Ed Connor (SCL), Devin Smith (SRSC), Jeff McGowan (Skagit County), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Tribe), Jeremy Gilman (USFS), Tom Slocum (SCD).

Guests: Mike Leach (ESA), Ilon Logan (ESA), Richard Brocksmith (SWC), Reid Armstrong (Kulshan Services)

Meeting called to order at 1:05 pm by chair Alison Studley.

Draft Agenda approved. October meeting notes approved.

SWC Committee Reports

Board of Directors - Richard Brocksmith provided a brief update that the Board had a meeting.

Community Engagement Committee – Richard Brocksmith provided a brief update that the community engagement group had a meeting.

Protection Subcommittee - Bob Warinner -Update will be covered later in meeting during the review of the Protection Subcommittee work on Strategic Approach.

Habitat Work Schedule - Alison Studley confirmed that completing ***updates on project work in HWS is required by March 2017**. She reminded the TWG members that Bengt of SFEG was available to help project sponsors to update their HWS entries.

Jeremy Gilman (USFS) was approved to join the TWG. Board approval to follow at the next Board meeting.

Riparian Habitat Assessment and Stewardship Strategy Development working meeting with consultant and TWG

Mike Leach and Ilon Logan of ESA came to present and discuss the Riparian Project habitat assessment methods and strategy development. The primary goals/objectives include: to assess the status and trends of current riparian conditions and to provide updated management recommendations for developing and implementing voluntary riparian actions in priority

floodplain and tributary habitats. Additionally, the Project will build upon and implement riparian components of the new monitoring and adaptive management framework for the Skagit Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan.

Key questions to answer include: What riparian work has been done already? What are the existing conditions in priority riparian areas? What are the status and trends of riparian habitat and function at the reach scale by habitat type and ownership? Within the target areas, what are the priority reaches and habitat types to focus future riparian restoration? And what are collaborative strategies and management recommendations for future priority freshwater riparian restoration efforts?

ESA will work with the TWG over the course of three meetings to review assessment methods (this meeting), assessment results (January 2017), and draft assessment strategy and update (March 2017).

ESA presented their preliminary riparian cover classification approach, the potential metrics, and the working conceptual framework. The riparian assessment is focused on Tier 1, Tier2, and Tier2s habitats. Mike provided a list of imagery and auxiliary data sources including one compiled from the Middle Skagit Assessment (SRSC, 2009/2011), Land Cover Classification of Riparian Areas on Ag Lands (Skagit Co, 2009), NAIP imagery, and land cover change detection mapping from WDFW.

Mike went over the Riparian Cover Classification Approach processes describing the input sources and ancillary data used and discussed how an object-based image analysis (OBIA) classification will be used to develop a classified map. Mike further discussed the Forest Cover Class and process of using rule set development in the classification. He described the computer software and the phoDAR methodology to create a canopy height model.

Training and Reference data to support the classification will be gained from a limited field assessment to groundtruth the composition and condition of known forest stands, and through the use of crowd sourcing tools (web based mapping tool). This crowd-sourced information will also be used to develop the Accuracy Assessment.

***ESA will provide login and password to give interactive mapping tool and ask for group to drop points or make comments on study area to both verify the past project database and to help build training reference classification.**

The web based mapping tool can be used as a collaboration tool for TWG to understand efforts and results.

Ilon went over the approach of assessing riparian quality through use of riparian cover classification, riparian function assessment, and restoration suitability and importance factors.

Ilon presented conceptual framework of the riparian assessment and described how inputs and metrics would help inform the priorities of assessment. Ilon further described the potential metrics used, the statistical stratification, the breakdown of reaches in the priority areas, the width class, habitat and edge habitat types, priority overlays and "Importance" factors, and status and trends (2013 riparian cover classification compared to 2006 conditions).

Devin raised concern of creating an artificial classification of habitats with the approach using multiple data sets from different years.

Bob raised question about including invasive species in the Riparian Habitat Assessment. Discussion by group concluded that available invasive species data can be updated with the web based mapping tool.

The TWG considered the maps of the proposed assessment reaches, and questioned to inclusion of Fir Island. The group discussed how to deal with riparian areas that are not classified for anadromous fish use.

Erin asked at what scale log jam data might be considered. Ilon and the group discussed that LWD information could be added onto the interactive web based mapping tool.

Ilon described ESA's use of Reach Sheets to give summaries of data by reaches as one of the strategy products.

Draft materials for TWG review will include data sources list, assessment and strategy reference list, conceptual framework, riparian assessment metrics, draft methods/approach document, web mapping tool

Jeremy raised question about LWD recruitment potential metric and will provide input of recent studies he is aware of.

***Provide feedback on the approach and the documents to Chris by December 1**

Review of Protection Subcommittee work on Strategic Approach

The two main document deliverables from the Strategic Approach work will be the "8-pager", the Strategic Approach and Step-wise Decision Framework document, and the parcel assessment synopsis and methods documents for the main stem floodplain and the tributaries. The "8-page" strategic approach document will be available the week after Thanksgiving.

Chris presented a review of main stem floodplain and riparian methods, and then a sample assessment of past ranked and acquired properties.

At the October TWG meeting, a question arose of how to account for isolating roads and hydromods, and about a different accounting between floodplain and riparian. Should all riparian forests be counted, or equally counted whether they fall beyond a shadowing or isolating feature between the riparian habitat and the main stem river? There is a 0.5 multiplier discount for "shadowing" in floodplain and riparian habitats and a zero multiplier for isolated floodplain and riparian habitats.

Chris illustrated the proposed approach; Do NOT count the riparian buffer habitat anywhere in the main stem or the tributaries there are 'isolating' features in the floodplain between the Skagit or tributary and the riparian buffer. DO count habitats in the riparian buffer beyond 'shadowed' polygons, as "shadowed" riparian habitats.

The issue is there are limits of the existing data. The 'isolated' floodplain polygon layer comes from earlier assessments (from the 2010 Middle Skagit Assessment or 1998 Chinook Strategy documents). The 'isolated' polygon layer does not extend beyond the floodplain and into the riparian buffer. However, the infrastructure polyline or polygon (the road or hydromodifications) that creates or causes the isolation often does extent beyond the floodplain or into the riparian.

In places where there is an 'isolated' polygon in the floodplain (within the data from Middle Skagit Assessment or 1998 Strategy) ends, but where the landscape feature causing the 'isolated' polygon (a road or hydromod) continues, there will be an expectation that the isolating feature will continue to act on the river and the landscape. Habitat in the riparian buffer beyond this continuation of the 'isolating' feature will also NOT be counted.

Chris presented maps and illustrated 4 scenarios that can occur with shadowed and isolated habitats. They provided examples of how to make consistent interpretations of habitats throughout the main stem assessment areas.

Devin raised a question about need for field visit component or some other qualifier to vet out bad calls from the model due to older or misinterpreted data. Chris offered examples such as the rock revetment and the "shadowed" polygon at Skiyou (where the rocks now sit midstream) and other "shadowed" polygons in the middle of the Sauk floodplain as places where data has clearly become dated and inaccurate. Kari pointed to the Protection Subcommittee as a resource for reviewing reinterpretations of current conditions as parcel assessments continue into the future.

A concern of the Protection Subcommittee as it has developed the Strategic Approach has been how the parcels in the tributary assessment might compare with main stem parcels. Chris presented a comparison to 6 past ranked acquisitions in the main stem floodplain, and compared them to the scores of the 195 tributary assessment. The comparison showed how previously scored parcels scored consistently in the top 1/3 of the scores done in the tributaries with the new approach.

A discussion followed about how the tributary scores and main stem scores would hopefully be comparable, or how adjustments might be made.

Outside of Agenda discussion

Devin asked about update on culvert transportation and budget request, and Richard provided update of local culvert in the two state packages.

TWG wanted to provide input to DFW and Fish Barrier Removal Board about how we do a better job of sharing local priorities.

SWC riparian database consistency of how data was entered. Alison and Chris will follow up on plants per acre? SWC will invite folks to meet in December on topic.

Alison – Will get data into crowd sourcing tool and then meet and review in mid-December.

Meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm Allison Studley.

Next TWG Meetings

- December 15, 2016
- January 19, 2017
- February 16, 2017
- March 16, 2017