

**Skagit Watershed Council
Technical Work Group
November 19, 2015, 12-2:00 pm, Skagit Publishing, Mount Vernon, WA**

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Attendance: Richard Brocksmitth (SWC), Chris Vondrasek (SWC), Devin Smith (Skagit River Systems Cooperative), Alison Studley (Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group), Jeff McGowan (Skagit County), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), , Rick Hartsen (Upper Skagit Tribe), Erin Lowery (SCL), Eric Anderson (Aspect), Bob Warinner (WDFW).

Guests: Denise Krownbell (SCL), Emily Derenne (Skagit County), Jen Lennon (Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe), Leah Kintner (Puget Sound Partnership), Ed Connor (Skagit Climate Science Consortium, Seattle City Light), Jon Reidel (National Park Service), Nathan Rice (Kulshan Services)

Allison Studley chairing.

Motion to approve past minutes. Unanimously approved.

***Draft 2016 meeting dates need to be reviewed and approved. Grant process timeline needs to be reviewed and approved.**

Grant process timeline discussion

LOIs were pushed out an extra week. Final applications pushed back. SRFB need two full weeks of review time.

Richard noted a weak spot in the grant process timeline between March 21 and March 24 when LOIs are due/reviewed. Now we should be better situated to make those calls, but will still need help of group members.

March 24th is an important date as are May 10 - 12 and June 30th.

Jeff noted the citizen committee brouhaha last year and asked if there a way to get them involved earlier. Richard thought that citizen's committee could come to Council of Member's quarterly meeting on June 15th. More time between the information sharing meeting and the decision meeting will help as well.

Allison asked if we should we require the LECC to come on June 15th? ***Devin Smith suggested that if the Council of Member's meeting is required it should go on the grant process timeline.**

Richard agreed. However, there were concerns that a hard requirement would be difficult to ask.

Richard said better communication will help the process. Folks need to express concerns earlier in the process and we also need to be clear about who's who at site visits, and to note critical comments.

There was support to have Council of Member's meeting presentation attendance required for LECC similar to the way that TRC are required to attend the site visits.

Richard said we don't need to adopt dates quite yet. Noodle on them. ***We will need to talk about comments made on lead entity timeline and meeting dates. If you have problems, let us know. This will be an agenda item for next meeting.**

Board Meeting Update – Richard Brocksmith

Not much new from the Board beyond recent updates.

Loren Everest will be resigning from the Board to work at Hiawatha National Forest in Michigan. That's a big blow to the Forest and to us.

Chair has assigned nominating committee. Five terms coming up, Loren is the sixth. Margaret Fleet is resigning. Carolyn Kelly, Colleen McShane, Michael Kirshenbaum will continue. Bob Everett has served his term and will leave the Board. Brendon Brokes has been nominated from WDFW; not known if he'll accept. Nomination for an agriculture-related organization but Brandon Roozen declined due to workload. Nominating committee has four names in place and we'll need to meet again to cover the others. The nominating committee now is Loren Everest, Steve Hinton (chair), Tim Manns, John Paul Shanahan, and Bob Everett.

Board has also approved Bob Warinner as Chair of Protection Subcommittee.

M&AM Update – Richard Brocksmith

At the last M&AM meeting the committee reviewed its future work plan and spent an hour hearing from Eric Beemer on data for critical indicators on pocket estuaries, and developed new data sources. ***We can share those notes with everyone upon request.** Also reviewed monitoring efforts, particularly SRSC edge habitat and floodplain habitat work, and riparian monitoring. Next critical ecological attributes to focus on are hydrology and sediment so we can update Chinook monitoring plan by middle of 2017. We need to build a partnership with SC² to integrate monitoring and research. Wood and floodplain are important as well. We submitted response to partnerships request for the kinds of things we want to be doing but we passed on some capacity funds because the bar was pretty high.

Is the edge habitat in mainstem complimenting steelhead recovery? Devin said yes, it's the same. We will have had three iterations of edge habitat monitoring.

Protection Subcommittee Update – Bob Warner

Met with Skagit Climate Science Consortium before this meeting.

Denise wants Protection committee to greenlight match property. ***This can be discussed later.**

***Next time there should be a list of suggested changes to the Lead Entity timeline. Track changes version of document.**

Previously discussed Steelhead/Bulltrout group meeting to discuss interim strategy. Group hasn't met. Is this still a priority item?

Loren was leading that and is now leaving. Group wanted to review it and tweak it so maybe we could do better than last year. Some folks said we shouldn't change too much. No one is interested in sitting on subcommittee. Everyone agreed that there was a flaw in our ranking last year, causing a high quality project to get ranked last.

Richard said a steelhead-only project was funded. Allison said Chinook will always rank higher until there's a steelhead recovery plan. Richard said people want to work on steelhead projects like culverts. Board is going to talk about capacity fund problems. Should we try to do something now to tweak it or nail it next year?

There is some low-hanging fruit for an interim strategy for steelhead. Should we work on it now or next year?

Richard said we could include in RFP projects that would work on steelhead. Full-blockage passage steelhead culverts in anadromous zones? A few people could talk about it to help the Board have some fodder. Someone likes idea of looking at culverts in the anadromous zone as a first step – seems simple. ***There was agreement to have a subcommittee meeting on this topic. Richard will send out a Doodle poll to schedule this discussion.**

Four-year work plan is a to-do. What's the intent moving forward? Are we going to update it?

Richard said we will start transitioning the three-year work plan to a four-year work plan. We need a call to sponsors for new projects. This may be approved in January or February? The Partnership hasn't finished their template yet. We haven't had time to finish this yet. Impetus for the plan is to line up with the legislature's biennial schedule.

Allison asked if we will add steelhead projects before due date or later? ***Richard said we should add them later since we don't really know yet if and how that may change.**

Steelhead projects can be SRFB not PSAR? More work for TWG because they have to review it.

If we don't have a four-year work plan, we may not be eligible for funding. We need to update with what we have before the RFP process. Do we call for new projects or not?

Richard said we need to do some strategic planning. People have big questions about where we are going. How can we work together? What are the funding opportunities? Priorities? Four-year work plan is the vehicle to have that strategic planning discussion. ***The group can consult with each other next month about what's possible.**

Fish Barrier Removal Board

Nominations for the coordinated pathway. Coordinated approach with a series of packages of culverts that are either partial or full barriers. This is the coordinated approach. Any culverts downstream of replaced culverts make sense to work on.

Devin asked what this means for a funding opportunity. We put a lot of time into that watershed pathway and didn't get anything out of it as a watershed. Richard said watersheds are supposed put forward a few packages and WDFW will look at packages and ground-truth and then rank them. Do we have a few packages that would rank? In September, FBRB would nominate projects from 25 lead entities around the State.

Richard noted that these packages are just concepts showing number of culvert and length of miles opened up. We should make sure they are real. Database is imperfect.

Allison asked who actually did this work? Kate put together Fisher, Walker creek package for last TWG meeting when we talked about this process. We had this list of tributaries and have been working to find which culverts are in those tributaries. Richard, Chris, Erin, Jeff, Rick, Kate have done the work.

Chris V. said we might consider a package based on how expensive culverts are to replace. He shared pictures of the culverts. For example, Walker Creek - less habitat opened but easy to access the culvert. Cheap fix. How far beyond number culverts / miles of habitat do we go? Cost? We can review them in the field.

Rick asked if FBRB will take cost into account? Bob said we shouldn't take cost into account. Devin noted that they didn't follow their own criteria last time, and suggested keeping this simple. This doesn't seem like a productive funding opportunity. Are these really the best sites? Allison said they asked for best sites for building on past investments.

Allison suggested taking the Samish sites off the table because the Board won't approve them.

This is not a comprehensive list of sites. Devin noted that there are many more sites where these criteria fit. Richard said the other culvert priority process is better but this is a quick process to get this package in the hopper. It's important to let the FBRB know that we think

there's a better way to do this; in the meantime this is how they've defined it. Leah said this was a compromise on a short timeline to get something to the board. Allison asked how does TWG feel about recommending any of these packages to go to board for possible funding?

Devin noted that this is not consistent with SWC processes and that it makes him a bit uncomfortable. It's weird that just because Olympia wants us to do this, we're going outside the normal process. Devin said he wouldn't want money to go to these projects over our other priorities.

Allison asked where do Tier 1 or 2 overlap these packages. Only in a limited number of places like Mannser Creek in the floodplain.

Richard asked if we should just submit all six packages?

Do these areas overlap with the Finney HUC10 we nominated earlier? Yes, Lorenzan, Red Creek, Mannser, Gilligan, Jones Creek. Will these be funded over that?

Devin suggested prioritizing the highest length per culvert? Red and Mannser? We should say in the letter that this isn't consistent with how we review projects.

Rick said he's comfortable sending Fisher Creek to them. Can we add Carpenter Creek to the Fisher Creek package as there's a gain of lots of habitat?

Devin asked what are the best fish miles per dollar? This criteria seems arbitrary. Bob said it's not arbitrary but it's not scientific. There's all this money being spent because of a lawsuit and there's more value if we build on past projects.

Richard said FBRB was set up to not look at injunction culverts, but instead to get ahead of tribes suing cities and counties. This would leverage the injunction but not funding the injunction.

Extended discussion of why this criteria/process was used and if it's appropriate. Lots of frustration with the process.

Discussion of Different Culvert Packages

Walker Creek.

Eric suggested submitting all six packages and let the fish board prioritize them since this process is already flawed.

Devin's concern is that if we submit poor projects, they may get funded. But he agrees we should just submit all six.

Discussion changed to finding any fatal flaws in these projects.

Red Creek/Mannser Creeks

Fourth culvert is a point of discussion between tribes and county.

Gilligan/Anderson Creeks

It boils down to GN18 on South Skagit Hwy, not including anything in Anderson.

Devin said Gilligan and Red Cabin are already in priority areas so they should be 1 and 2.

Lorenzan and Fish Creek

Richard said this is complicated. Decent rearing habitat low but in town so impacted. DOT will be replacing a culvert, so it's a good opportunity for leverage. Rick said he wouldn't count on them replacing that right away, there are other priorities, too.

Six culverts may be beyond the scope. Two are simple fixes and the rest are more complex.

Rick said Fish Creek flows into Lorenzan. DOT is scoping Fish Creek. Above that is County with road closed. Add the County culvert to Lorenzan. Could be added but may be too complicated by habitat restoration needs and being a lower quality site.

Jones Creek

Only a kilometer of habitat. Perhaps not a good package.

Discussion of priorities

Red Cabin and Gilligan are in floodplain and HUC10 area so they fit all our criteria. There was agreement that we shouldn't prioritize and that these packages are ready to be nominated.

***Richard will write nomination letter and send to TWG and then to board.**

Adjourned 4:24.