

Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG)

Final Notes

September 12, 2017, 1:00 – 4:00PM, SWC Office

(* indicates action item; __ indicates decision)

Attendance: Alison Studley, (SFEG, Chair) Bob Warinner (WDFW), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), Chris Vondrasek (SWC), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Ed Connor (Seattle City Light), Jeremy Gillman (USFS), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), Doug Bruland (PSE), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust).

Guests: Richard Brocksmitth (SWC), Nathan Rice (note taker, Kulshan Services), Denise Krownbell (SCL and Protection Subcommittee), Gus Kays (Herrera), Sue Madsen (SFEG), Leah Kintner (PSP).

Introductions. Review Draft Agenda.

Update on State Capital Budget and summary/outlook on possible impacts

Richard gave a short update on the capital budget. Some impacts of the lack of capital budget include projects being delayed by at least one year due to lack of easement and design funds, and having funds awarded for planting but not maintenance.

Richard will send out a request for members to detail impacts of lack of capital budget.

Review SWC 2017 Protection Strategy Update 8.1.2017

The Protection Subcommittee (including both 4 TWG members and Denise Krownbell) met for 90 minutes before the start of the TWG meeting and all remained to participate in the full TWG meeting.

There were some concerns and questions about Protection Strategy “problem statements” that have not been addressed. Protection Subcommittee recommended making problem statement “i” more general and reviewing it in the future as needed. The TWG concurred. Richard will rewrite statement “i” in the final draft.

Review analysis on hydromodified and impaired parcels

Richard reviewed the analysis of “greenlighted” parcels impacted by hydromodifications or parcels with areas in need of restoration replanting. He described the need to draw some

thresholds regarding these impacted parcels and the balance necessary to give the Protection Subcommittee some flexibility and allow TWG to review as needed. Richard drafted a new Table 1 into the draft Strategy Update which lays out possible thresholds and a process to review both hydromodified parcels and parcels with a need for restoration replanting. Very few of the “greenlighted” parcels will fall into these categories..

The Protection Subcommittee members present reviewed the new table and questioned if the Board need ever be brought in. However, there should be some flexibility if there is a very good project with minor impacts. The Subcommittee recommended increasing the thresholds for parcels behind flood protection levees up to 10% for TWG review. For hydromodifications, the Subcommittee wanted to look at parcels up to 10% or 25% and engage the TWG at up to 50%. For parcels needing restoration revegetation, the subcommittee wanted the right to review at any parcels with up to 50% without functioning forests and engage the TWG when the need from restoration replanting exceeded 50%.

A discussion about how best to engage the TWG during this review process ensued:

- Block grants give protection advocates a lot of latitude so the TWG should review these projects.
- Require at least 7 days to inform TWG members of the consideration of properties with hydromodification impairments or restoration planting needs so they can review them.
- TWG should be informed when the decision is made to make the purchase; otherwise, the TWG won't know.
- **There were some concerns about emailing a broad group with landowner information. The Subcommittee may want to review that.** They could include property location but not landowner name. Hardcopy would be fine.
- There was reticence to engage in a process that includes the Board and TWG for review. That's more time for meetings when we could get it right with fewer. Make thresholds bigger with trees and let subcommittee decide, but with hydromodifications, TWG should review more closely. Excessive review by board and TWG will be onerous. Skip multiple steps of review.
- Just invite TWG members to Protection subcommittee meeting to provide input, but don't require it. That makes sense in a block grant process.
- There is more uncertainty around projects that require restoration of hydromodifications compared to revegetation. With hydromodifications, some TWG review is fine.
- Protection subcommittee could come to next TWG meeting since there are fewer of them.
- Generally, the Board isn't necessary on project-level issues. Board would not want to get into this level detail anyway.

- There is a huge disconnect between the Protection Subcommittee and restoration practitioners in the wider SWC. There is no consensus on when TWG should engage on open space thresholds.

Flood Protection thresholds discussion:

- Keep flexibility of being able to buy a levee property. There may be exceptional situations when we need to buy them. There should be a quick TWG turnaround review if 10% or less levee impact.
- Parcels behind levees and dikes were not assessed or scored in the habitat assessment. Purchasing a parcel behind a levee will be stand-alone occurrence.
- Protection Subcommittee members will attend TWG meeting to discuss these parcels as needed. If that won't work, a special joint committee meeting will be held.
- Flood Protection thresholds: 0-10% threshold for TWG review. More than 10% behind levees will be ineligible for block grant use.

Hydromodification thresholds discussion:

- The appropriate threshold depends greatly on the size of the parcel.
- Is there no expectation of any restoration if a parcel is purchased with a block grant? Should we add a condition to be able to restore?
- If you keep threshold low, you won't have the change it to review smaller parcels that could be key connectors.
- Of 30 potential parcels, only 4 might come in the next 10 years. Very few parcels will need to be considered.
- There was some concern that 50% is too high, but recognition that having flexibility to consider exceptional parcels is important.
- **For the decision-making process, it would have to be a 2/3 super majority. Richard will confirm that.**
- Hydromodification thresholds: 0% for Protection subcommittee review. 0-50% for TWG review. More than 50% hydromodification will be ineligible for block grant use. No board review.. All agree.

Riparian thresholds discussion:

- Block grant doesn't include restoration but we can get funding and have been successful with that.

- Thresholds get tricky with smaller parcels. We could add a clause that limits this by parcel size. There are a lot of 20-acre parcels because of zoning.
- Riparian thresholds: 0-50% for Protection Subcommittee. Over 50% and less than 20 acres for TWG review. Larger than 20 acres with more than 50% in need of restoration replanting will be ineligible for block grant use. No Board review. All agree.

Review decision support framework

The Potential Threat step identified up to two dozen parcels that weren't appropriate to buy. Should TWG remove this step? Some clarification was requested.

SWC will track changes in the document and bullet changes in an email to Protection Subcommittee and TWG.

Unanimous consent to vote via email.

Pressentin Phase 2 (#15-1165) project review

Gus Kays with Herrera Environmental and Sue Madsen with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group presented maps and explained status of the project.

There are three footbridges to maintain connectivity. Parks wanted to upgrade the trail system and put in for an ALEA grant. Timing on that is unclear since it is tied up in capital budget. The ALEA grant ranked fourth but it has a 50% chance of getting funded. All three bridge approaches will be built but the third bridge won't be built if ALEA funds don't come through. We think we can do the project without the ALEA grant but not the third bridge. The grant ends in June 2019 and we are trying to save money wherever possible. Permitting will move forward even though ALEA grants haven't come through yet.

ALEA grant is responsible for all ADA trails. All hazard trees will need to be cut near those trails. We will talk to Brian at Parks about just making that area a walking path. Or we can shift it away from the forest to avoid cutting hazard trees. Those trees could be used onsite.

Questions and comments:

- The lower end is tightly constrained at the outlet and may affect fish ingress and egress. Does the third bridge have to be in that location? It seems to limit flexibility.

The property corner and the bench are factors. We would need a longer bridge if moved upstream and trails are already in that location. There was not a naturally wider delta in that area. It could be possible to move the bridge 20 feet upstream. The side channel appears to be in place and will probably not move much.

- Is there a contingency plan if the side channel moves?

Not yet. There is some risk of avulsion but we've designed it to avoid that. We should talk to Brian with Parks to know about risks with the bridge. The side channel would be activated at around 5000 cfs but that can be adjusted.

- Did you consider backwatering from Skagit?

Yes. This is included in the modeling in the report.

- Are chains necessary for structures?

Yes, to stand up to potentially higher flows. Deeper piles are riskier and more involved. Chain is less expensive and even with piles, you will need chains. Hemp rope, pins, or cable can also work.

- Is there rock all the way across channel? Why? That's concerning. It could eventually be a fish passage issue.

We could go deeper with abutments but it would be more expensive. The abutments will scour at 100-year levels. We can look at other alternatives. Not sure of cost difference.

- Did you look at different Skagit flows that could result from relicensing and how it would impact the project?

It would potentially aggrade, which would help the channel in the project. Those changes won't be as concerning in winter, which is the main kind of habitat here. If it goes dry, it won't affect existing habitat.

TWG agrees to move forward with this project to the next phase.

SWC Riparian Habitat Protection and Restoration Strategy

Richard and Chris presented a Powerpoint of final data products. Mike Leech from ESA Consultants also joined over the phone.

SWC and ESA have completed data development and is now trying to figure out how to slice and dice it. The least accurate part of the classification was forest type so all forest types were aggregated. The website has both of these datasets. The two different canopy height models show that there is less younger forest and more older forest, which can be quantified. The high-resolution change detection data shows loss of vegetation and also planted areas. We are losing more from stream than from development. Tableau reader lets you view the dynamic reach maps.

A shade analysis will add new data (not yet part of the riparian assessment). The model tracks the amount and the power of the sun during the day and creates a shade value for every pixel within the footprint of the 2006 LiDAR dataset. It quantifies shade or lack of shade, and one can use it as determining factor for where to plant, or where to acquire parcels with good stream

shade cover. This would possibly be most valuable if tied to public or willing landowner parcels. It may be possible to coordinate the shade data with Ecology's TMDL temperature data for tributaries.

The extent of the riparian assessment is smaller in this draft. The last iteration went beyond where it should have been, but this extent still includes all of the floodplain. All points that were outside of the extent were deleted and new points were added within new extent.

The data presented in the Tableau reach sheets is also available in spreadsheets. Although Tableau offers a graphically engaging way to organize and present the assessment data, it will be expensive if we want it to be editable and interactive.

If TWG members want particular data looked at, let SWC know.

Adjourned at 4 pm.

Next TWG Meetings

- October 19, 2017
- November 16, 2017
- December 14, 2017