

Skagit Watershed Council Technical Work Group (TWG)

Final Approved Notes

October 19, 2017, 1:00 – 4:00PM, SWC Office, Mount Vernon

*(numbered attachments in parentheses, actions underlined)

Attendance: Alison Studley (SSEG, Chair), Ed Connor (Seattle City Light), Jeremy Gilman (USFS), Rick Hartson (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), Devin Smith (Skagit River System Cooperative), and Chris Vondrasek (SWC).

Absent: Eric Anderson (Aspect Consulting), Doug Bruland (PSE), Kari Odden (Skagit Land Trust), Erin Lowery (Seattle City Light), Tom Slocum (Skagit Conservation District), and Bob Warinner (WDFW).

Guests: Ilon Logan (ESA Consulting, on the phone), Richard Brocksmith (SWC) and Allison Roberts (note taker, Kulshan Services)

Introductions. Review Draft Agenda (#1) Convened 1:11 pm

Approve September 12, 2017 Meeting Notes (#2) – No changes suggested.

Chris moved and Rick seconded approval of the September 2017 meeting notes as presented.
Unanimous.

Subcommittee and Board Reports

- Board of Directors – Richard Brocksmith
The Board discussed future TWG work activities and the new communications policy passed by the Board. Possible work activities for the TWG include: Lead Entity Guide update, project planning, scoping out next opportunities based on the Riparian Assessment Strategy, tracking new protection strategy implementation, and updating the riparian database. Note: Devin indicated May/June is better time for major riparian planning as they are still busy with planting in winter. ***Richard will forward the communications policy to the TWG.**
The Board discussed the Protection Strategy at length. However, they did not vote as some members were absent. They provided input on the Strategy including clarifying Figure 1, asked staff to add text to describe the inputs and ownership and land use definitions in the protected lands layer, discussed how to address acquisition of property with varying degrees of degradation, and how to operationalize the acquisition process. Their discussion will continue at the November Board meeting. They did not push anything back to the TWG. Alison expressed her support that the work be approved as is until something is determined to not be working, then issues can be addressed in the future.
- Protection Subcommittee – Chris Vondrasek
The committee finished updating the grants and properties purchased in the last year (129 acres) by SCL, Skagit Land Trust and City of Hamilton, which was presented to TWG. Chris showed several example maps of the parcels in these transactions. ***Chris will send a map of Lipsey property to TWG members since he didn't have one at the meeting. And all future acquisitions will be reported out with maps in the future with the new strategy.**
- M & AM Subcommittee – (Richard)
M & AM hadn't met since May but did meet in October. Steve, Tim, and Kate reported on floodplain edgework by SRSC. The committee is writing a report of status and trends from the M

& AM framework with new data. They are making recommendations of specific indicators as outlined in the Recovery Plan as well as filling some gaps for monitoring that was implied in the Recovery Plan. They are working to determine when to bring it to the TWG with a full report. They are also preparing information regarding riparian work and goals with tributary status and trend data.

With a small grant from SWC, Jen O'Neal of Natural Systems Design has completed an analysis for large wood (LW) in the Skagit, how it had been implicitly considered in the Recovery Plan, and can be assessed in the future. She made recommendations for a framework methodology, modeling, and metrics for assessment LW jams and future LW recruitment in the watershed. Jen O'Neal, Tim Hyatt, and Chris Vondrasek followed up with an additional meeting and a further literature review on methods, and especially the potential for using the new LiDAR acquisition for a remotely sensed assessment.

The committee is making a lot of progress. They will meet again in a month or two. They seek to create a common review process to present to the TWG for review by the end of the year. The committee discussed whether this type of document requires approval. Devin clarified that as a subcommittee of the TWG, the M & AM brings recommendations to the TWG for approval.

SWC Riparian Assessment and Strategy Update (Richard and Ilon (by phone))

Richard presented the draft report including draft results and strategies. He indicated the technical review/assessment of the plan was just released on October 17 for comments. Review is expected within the November meeting timeline. The TWG looked at watershed and reach-level results, datasets, tables and figures:

- *Richard suggested the TWG provide input on use of the Department of Ecology off-channel data (CHAMP, 2015) and to what level to use it. Some felt it needs more vetting, as it does not consider limiting hydromods for example.
- *They clarified that Table 12 should show more detail and hydromods by reach and show all reaches.
- *Richard asked Ilon of ESA to make sure all data from the geomorphic potential analysis is included in Table 10, not just the seven reaches as listed.
- *The TWG wants Table 10 to exclude all artificial off-channels. They want more of the mainstem river data included.
- *Figure 17, page 39. Members asked that the riparian cover data be ordered by geographic order from bottom to top.
- *Ilon will re-label Figure 20 and rerun the data if necessary to show variable buffer widths from 0-40 meters.
- *Regarding Tables 15, Table 16, and Table 17, the TWG asked if it is possible to use better spatial resolution to describe why the red on the Lower Sauk stands out as a catastrophe without an explanation as to why.

Riparian Protection and Restoration Strategies discussion (Richard provided a four-page document)

- *It was suggested that voluntary stewardship was a different strategy than regulatory protection. The TWG discussed the need to state the concept of preventing degradation through protection.
- *There was a question with why the water quality protection strategy looked more like an outcome than a strategy.

- *The TWG suggested that maps based on protected lands, riparian health, and maybe solar radiation or distance to channel be created as they are most helpful to show where work needs to be done.
 - They really want to know in the last three pages which actions are making the most impact. Devin wants to circulate this at SRSC and gather input as there are some impactful refinements suggested.
 - This info could be used in a protection formula if it is at a level that is useful.
 - The group spent some time analyzing and providing input on R1. *Richard will look at the use of sequencing and timing of the riparian strategies, tighten up the wording, and make it less prescriptive.
 - *Regarding R1 references, replace bluff with the word slope tops within 2 SPTHs.
 - They discussed the effectiveness of planting on flood deposits and a question about whether this should be included; it may not be the best use of funds to plant flood bars that are easily eroded and transitory.
 - *Change the phrase prioritizing “public” lands so it says “protected” or “conservation” lands.
 - Many TWG members agreed that the data should now be used to create maps that would inform their work.
- *The team will update the document and then send it out next Monday for TWG members to read and provide feedback on over the next 2.5 weeks. It seems like we may want to scale back on the strategies even further and focus on mapping to facilitate standard project development. Strategies are difficult for the TWG. It is much easier to tweak tools.
- We need to vet CHAMPS data more and have the time to do it right. RCO grants.
 - A great outcome of this would be to use filters to show the data on 4-5 maps which would show where the work needs to happen for the future.
 - Identify intact places to protect.
 - Keep ahead of loss of riparian and thus continue riparian plantings.
 - Keep Tableau-based “reach sheets” accessible.
 - Use ArcGIS online mapping tools
 - Outline review process in preparation for November TWG meeting

Lead Entity Program Guide (#3) and Strategic Approach (Alison Studley and Richard)

- Review SWC-proposed procedural edits - The changes that were made aim to cast a broader net using electronic means and newspaper to foster broader engagement and strive to provide information in a timely manner with sufficient public notice. TWG thought these were fairly straight-forward as presented.
- Discussed two potential scoring changes in Appendix C (target area score and cost benefit): **TWG members proposed that the SWC consider changing the weight of 4 to 3 on Target Area Criteria, and increase the weight of 3 to 4 on the Scale/benefits Criteria. This would give more weight to the actual benefit of the project to fish and lessen the weight of the project location.**
- *Staff will send out all strategic placeholders in the Strategic Approach for the TWG to review the critical uncertainties.
- The group discussed the Tier 1 geomorphic floodplain map vs. chinook presence map in terms of benefits and accuracy, sharing its history and some of its strengths and weaknesses. The map drives Appendix C Target Areas and should reflect the need to address benefits to certain critical stocks. The M&AM Subcommittee and various members have suggested we spend some time in the future to consider refinements to these foundational polygons.

- *Regarding the Guide, the TWG will make minor edits and review potential scoring changes so as to finish the updates by the end of February. All TWG members will be able to review the Guide before their January 2018 meeting.
- *To prep for cost-benefit changes, *staff will revise and circulate a 2016 memo to TWG as a framework for addressing cost-benefit.
- *They also discussed that expensive projects could be required, not just incentivized, to complete a third-party review.

Four-Year Work Plan (4YWP) and Project Planning (Richard) – The four-year work plan update must be completed every two years. Richard distributed a one-page double-sided version of the 4ywp for the TWG members to review. The TWG reviewed the projects color-coded in red in column two as ones needing to be removed from the work plan since they've either been completed or are no longer feasible in this timeframe. Next step is that *staff will update the database after TWG provides info on projects. *Getting new projects on this list once it's been cleaned up will be in December and January.

Future TWG Meetings - The TWG felt the meeting schedule should include one short meeting during the summer so as not to rely solely on email to make decisions throughout the summer months. *Staff will incorporate a short meeting for this purpose into the TWG or TRC schedule, and send out a 2018 proposed meeting schedule soon.

Adjourn 4:10 pm

Next TWG Meetings

- November 16, 2017, December 14, 2017, January 18, 2018, February 15, 2018, and March 15, 2018