

South Central Caucus Group Meeting Summary Notes

February 19, 2014

Tukwila Community Center

Attendees:

Fred Jarrett (Chair, King County), Doreen Booth (Sound Cities Association (SCA) staff), Chris Eggen (City of Shoreline & SCA), Don Fiene (WRIA 8), Jim Haggerton (City of Tukwila & SCA), Sara Hemphill (King Conservation District), Erika Harris (PSRC), Tom Kantz (Pierce County), Teresa Lewis (Pierce County), Paul Meyer (Port of Seattle), Kathy Minsch (City of Seattle), Alisa O'Hanlon (City of Tacoma), Doug Osterman (WRIA 9), Erika Peterson (King County), Dennis Robertson (WRIA 9), Megan Smith (KC Exec office), , Chris Towe (Pierce Conservation District & Pierce ECO Net), Heather Trim (King County ECO Net), Jason Wilkinson (WRIA 8), Bruce Wulkan (PSP)

Welcome and introductions

Fred Jarret convened the meeting.

Good of the Order

• Updates from Caucus members:

- The King Conservation District is developing plans for its future direction.
- The Port of Seattle's T117 cleanup will be submitting 90% plans shortly.
- Pierce ECO Net is working with the Russell Foundation & Bonneville on environmental education in the watershed. The partners will be meeting Friday.
- WRIA 9 is hosting a stormwater workshop Feb 27 on the results of the 3 year project funded by EPA. The workshop audience is elected officials & people working on stormwater. Councilmember Chris Eggen asked for more information.
- Mayor Jim Haggerton expressed his appreciation for volunteer river restoration work within Tukwila along the Green/Duwamish River, which is coordinated by BECU.
- The Puget Sound Partnership has a new executive director: Sheida R. Sahandy. Ecology is taking comments on a proposal to make Puget Sound a "No discharge zone," which would ban boater waste discharge in Puget Sound.
- Futurewise is partnering on a series of forums on shoreline restoration issues. Topics have included incentives for replacing armored shorelines and permitting. A session on the latest science and policy implications is planned for May 20. Audience is shoreline professionals and will be aimed at those who work in the field, not the public. When the June event is scheduled, Heather Trim will send info to membership.
- King ECO Net is using the "Puget Sound Starts Here" brand and developing a campaign around "the big thing," using material from Laura James. On Earth Day, people will be invited to take and submit pictures for a photo collage.
- In the Green River system, partners are meeting to develop a System Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) to address flood hazard reduction, habitat, levee vegetation issues. They hope to reach compromises around conflicting rules, such as those requiring removing or planting vegetation.

- The Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB) Regulatory Subcommittee will present their report to the ECB March 20 on tax incentives for shoreline property owners who remove hard armoring and replace it with softer alternatives.
- **ECB Funding Subcommittee reactivation and next steps:**
Fred Jarrett reported that the Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB) funding committee has been rechartered and has dedicated consultant support through PSP's EPA grant funding. He shared a graphic outlining the process and an updated list of members, which should support strong connections with the Leadership Council and Ecosystem Coordination Board. The group hopes to develop a strategy that considers federal, state, local, and private sector funding. They plan to have a final report in June. Fred Jarrett is chairing the ECB funding subcommittee and is optimistic about the outcome now that they have a clear charter, work plan, and resources.
- **PSP Legislative Update:**
Bruce Wulkan told the group that the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) puts together a weekly legislative update throughout the session, and holds weekly conference calls. Members are welcome to join these calls. Several members stated that the legislative update is excellent.

The group discussed whether it should comment on pending legislation, and Bruce suggested that their comments as citizens and local government representatives would be welcome. While the group is generally supportive of actions that simplify funding sources, they decided they would need more time to research and comment on a specific bill. The group could reconsider whether to comment if a bill makes it out of the house.

Update on process for Caucus review of National Estuary Program Grants for consistency with local action priorities – Chair & members

The group discussed the level of review that is required before the Caucus supports grant applications. Some members suggested that the review team should check with managers or implementers of plans to be sure that grant applications are implementing members' priorities. Others agreed that the proposed process of a 3 member review committee reviewing proposals for consistency with the LIO priorities was adequate, given the short timeframe for review. Kathy Minsch, Betsy Cooper, and Tom Kantz are on the team to review the applications. Kathy, who is leading the review, is expecting between 4-6 proposals by tomorrow (Feb 20). The Caucus's support letter will be worth part of a five point question on stakeholder and partner support on the grant application.

There was some discussion about whether five points is enough. Bruce suggested members comment on this issue at upcoming "listening sessions" being held by the 6 state Lead Organizations (LOs) regarding how to disperse the last two years of EPA funding. Bruce will forward dates for the listening sessions to De'Sean to send out to the group when he returns on Feb 24.

Review and approve template for Letter of Support for NEP grant applicants (please see attached draft template)

There was no further comment on the support letter template. The template letter will be customized for each grant proposal that is found to be consistent with the Caucus NTA LIO and signed by Fred. Kathy will make sure the final support letters are sent to the Caucus.

WRIA 10 Presentation: Overview of Puyallup Watershed Projects, Programs – e.g. salmon recovery, flood protection, river management

Tom Kantz gave a power point presentation highlighting a number of projects in the Puyallup-White watershed- WRIA 10 - that are meeting multiple goals including salmon habitat, flood protection, river management, and water quality. Projects included fixing a weir at a diversion dam, levee setbacks, and putting in large woody debris as revetments to protect roads and create habitat.

Tom also described the “Raise the Grade” approach, which assigns a letter grade to each stream based on a number of criteria. The average grade has increased from C to C+ since the program began. The four creeks that got worse grades will be the focus of “Raise the Grade” in 2014.

Tom described a process for developing a work plan for the watershed and the status: White River plan has been adopted by council; Nisqually River plan is going to council. Tom also distributed a Pierce County Surface Water Health 2012 Report Card” report which is also available on line.

Questions:

Members asked clarifying questions about the diversion dam.

There was a discussion about how well the regulatory mandate and the watershed approach mesh together. Tom said they are in conflict. The problem is funding. Agencies must focus finances on meeting regulations, which means fewer funds are available for a more holistic watershed approach. For example, the county is considering reducing monitoring on some streams in order to increase monitoring on regulated streams. In addition, in Pierce County, when flood control funding became available, SWM fees were cut, adding to the funding challenge. The group suggested Tom’s experience and perspective would be very helpful to the ECB funding committee.

The group discussed using volunteers to do sampling. Two foundations have asked the King Conservation District to develop programs for volunteers to do monitoring. In Pierce County, Pierce Conservation District and Nisqually Education Foundation collect data. Ducks Unlimited and UW Tacoma may also be resources.

Overview of Partnership Comments on local Near Term Actions, upcoming public workshops, and next steps in Action Agenda update

Bruce Wulkan provided a letter of thanks to the Caucus for submitting the Near Term Actions (NTAs) by October, 2013.

He reported some suggested changes on the Caucus's submitted list of NTAs:

- 1) Tracking: The Partnership would like to have one "owner" identified for each near term action. This person would be responsible for tracking the actions in the Partnership's performance management system and reporting quarterly. He mentioned that some local integrating organizations (LIOs) have decided to have the LIO gather the info and turn it over to the Partnership. Bruce suggested that the South Central Caucus coordinator De'Sean Quinn, gather the data and place it in the Partnership database each quarter.

The group discussed this approach to reporting. Some suggested that the "owner" of each near-term action should take responsibility for placing their information in the database independently.

- 2) Substrategies: Bruce said that the Partnership would like to have each near term action tied to a single substrategy, to help LIOs be more focused and clear about what is important to the local area.

Fred Jarrett expressed concern about this approach. He said that actions that meet many strategies may be priorities. Although he also acknowledged that if a project only meets one strategy, that doesn't mean it's less valuable. He suggested that this single strategy approach might "silo" projects. He suggested that the focus should be on moving actions that will deliver the outcomes, not whether they are implementing a single sub strategy.

Bruce clarified that the single strategy approach is a way of focusing on local priorities. He suggested Fred have this discussion with the ECB.

Regarding Partnership next steps, Bruce again mentioned that Lead Organizations are considering how to spend the last two years of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding and taking input at upcoming workshops.

The group discussed the need for more locally based funding sources, in addition to state and federal funding. They discussed the need for flexibility, since these projects are not one-size-fits-all. One member suggested LIOs should have a direct allocation of funds for implementing projects as part of watershed strategies.

Next Steps

- **ECB Meeting review agenda topics**

The agenda for the ECB meeting on February 20 was shared with the group.

- **Next meeting**

The group recognized the need to continue to discuss suggested changes to the near-term actions. The challenge is meeting the partnership's needs and making it meaningful for the South Central area. The Caucus NTA workgroup will be reconvened to discuss the Partnership's comments.

Bruce Wulkan said that the Partnership is working toward 2014 action agenda and will hold public workshops in the first week of April.

Heather Trim suggested in addition to discussing how to use the last two years of EPA funding, that the group should develop a strategy for getting another six years of EPA funding.