

Snoqualmie Watershed Forum
MEETING SUMMARY
November 16, 2016
7:00-9:00 pm
Snoqualmie City Hall, Snoqualmie WA

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jason Walker	City of Duvall Councilmember, Chair
Lee Grumman	City of Carnation Councilmember, Vice-Chair
Henry Sladek	Town of Skykomish Councilmember
Trevor Kostanich	City of North Bend Councilmember
Bryan Holloway	City of Snoqualmie Councilmember
Cindy Spiry	Snoqualmie Tribe (Alternate)
Josh Meidav	Tulalip Tribes (Alternate)
Eileen Carrel	Citizen Representative
Matt Gray	Citizen Representative
Jim Haack	King Conservation District
Chris LaPointe	Stewardship Partners, Non-governmental Organization (Alternate)

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

I. Introductions

Jason Walker, Forum Chair, welcomed everyone to the November Forum meeting. Chair Walker thanked everyone for their hard work during 2016 and acknowledged the uncertainty that recent election results may bring to federal funding and policy issues that affect the work of the Forum and many partner organizations. He urges Forum members, staff and partners to continue to “tell our story” to remind our elected officials, other community leaders and residents about the importance of the locally-directed work that we do on behalf of salmon and watershed health.

Janne Kaje (Salmon Recovery Manager) reminded the Forum that this is the final meeting as the non-governmental organization (NGO) representative for Jennifer McKeown (Mountains to Sound Greenway), but that Jennifer was unable to attend this evening. Chair Walker read a statement provided by Jennifer thanking the Forum for the opportunity to serve and pledging to stay engaged in the Forum’s work throughout the watershed. Beginning in January, Chris LaPointe (Stewardship Partners) will assume the role of the primary NGO representative.

ACTION: The Forum approved the minutes as submitted from the September 21st meeting.

II. Updates and Announcements

Black Canyon Hydro - Janne reminded the Forum about the recent termination of the licensing process for the Black Canyon Hydroelectric Project on the North Fork Snoqualmie River. The applicant (Black Canyon Hydro, LLC) informed the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that they would no longer pursue the project, having concluded that the project is economically infeasible due to the County’s policies and regulations pertaining to critical areas and shorelines in particular. The project would have posed significant impacts to rainbow and cutthroat trout, the City of Snoqualmie’s municipal water supply, whitewater recreation, as well as other natural and cultural resources. Diligent participation in the

licensing process by the Forum, King County, and numerous basin partners contributed to this positive outcome for the health of the watershed.

Middle Fork Coalition - Janne updated the Forum on the work of the Middle Fork Coalition, The Coalition's role is to facilitate cooperation and drive action to shape a positive future for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley in preparation for the completion of the 10-mile paved road that will dramatically improve access to the valley. The Coalition has formed several working groups to identify information needs and develop strategies as the new road approaches completion: Recreation / Maintenance & Operations; Gateway; Public Safety; Equity and Social Justice; and Communications. Mountains to Sound Greenway is spearheading a fundraising operation with a target of roughly \$20M. Due to extremely limited parking capacity, transportation is a major theme. Janne encouraged Forum members to complete an on-line survey regarding the need for alternative transportation options to a number of public trailheads in the upper Snoqualmie Valley.

Snohomish Stillaguamish Local Integrating Organization (LIO) Restructuring - The Snohomish-Stillaguamish Local Integrating Organization founding members and the Puget Sound Partnership, held a meeting on Nov. 4th to discuss challenges with the LIO process including lack of funding, lack of elected official engagement, frustration with the cumbersome process and overlap with other regional efforts. At this meeting, the Stillaguamish Tribe renewed an earlier proposal to establish a Stillaguamish LIO based on watershed boundaries rather than the larger, multi-basin LIO boundaries. King County is also leading similar LIO restructuring discussion at the South Central LIO. Snohomish County agreed to explore LIO restructuring in 2017 to look for efficiencies with other watershed based groups such as the salmon recovery lead entities (e.g., WRIA 7 – Snohomish Forum). These discussions will begin in 2016 at the LIO Executive Committee but the decision whether to change the LIO structure will not occur until later in 2017.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Funding for LIO Near Term Actions - The Sno-Stilly LIO Implementation Committee met on November 15th to recommend \$100,000 in locally allocated EPA National Estuary Program (NEP) funding and to discuss the regionally allocated NEP funding. Between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in regional NEP funding is expected to be allocated to Sno-Stilly LIO Near Term Actions (NTAs). Unfortunately, none of the NTAs from the Snoqualmie/SF Skykomish Watersheds were selected by the regional ranking committee. In addition, the Fish Farm Flood NTA was ranked as a high priority for the locally allocated NEP funding (\$100,000), but was not selected by the LIO Implementation Committee. This result is very discouraging since several high priority NTAs from King County and Snoqualmie Tribe were submitted for funding in 2016.

Proposed State Capital Budget for Salmon and Puget Sound - The Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) and other state agencies released their 2017-2019 state budget requests. The Governor will release his proposed budget in December 2016 and the state legislature will finalized the state budget in spring 2017. The state agency 2017-19 budget requests include the following priorities for salmon and Puget Sound:

- Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) - **\$55.3M** (*\$16.5M in FY 2015-17 budget*)
- Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) - **\$80M** (*\$37M in FY 2015-17 budget*)
- Floodplains by Design - **\$70M** (*\$35.5M in FY 2015-17 budget*)
- Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) - **\$20M** (*\$8M in FY 2015-17 budget*)
- Fish Barrier Removal Board - **\$51.4M** (*New budget request*)

CWM Grant Training Announcement - A Cooperative Watershed Management grant training workshop will be held on January 25th from 9AM-12PM at the King Street Center. This joint training between the Snoqualmie Forum and WRIA 8 is for all applicants to learn about competitive types of projects and programs, elements of a successful grant application, the contracting process and the grant close out process.

III. Snoqualmie Watershed Ten-Year Status Report

Beth leDoux (Technical Coordinator) and Perry Falcone (Project Coordinator) gave a presentation about the “Snoqualmie Watershed Forum Ten Year Status Report”. The report itself was distributed to the Forum in September. The report and a copy of the presentation can be found on the Forum website at <http://www.govlink.org/watersheds/7/>.

Beth provided a brief review of the history of the Snohomish Basin Salmon Conservation Plan (Salmon Plan), as well as the 2015 Snohomish Basin Protection Plan, which was adopted as an official addendum to the Salmon Plan by the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum. The report assesses the status of 10-year milestones in the Plan related to salmon population trends, progress in habitat restoration and protection, and reports on our findings from a variety of monitoring efforts. Finally, the report identifies key priorities for the next ten years.

Beth reported that key salmon populations in the basin are holding steady at best, declining at worst. Chinook salmon returns to the Snoqualmie continue to hover at roughly 5% of historical levels. The last several years have featured approximately 700 spawners per year, compared to a 50-year recovery goal of 25,000 fish, annually. Coho salmon, though much higher in total number, returned at their lowest ever recorded level in 2015 with only 13,000 spawners returning to the entire Snohomish Basin. Steelhead - which spend a longer period rearing in freshwater and are thus particularly vulnerable to habitat degradation in river and streams – are also returning at low levels, but holding fairly steady in recent years.

Beth explained that salmon abundance is affected by many factors, including ocean conditions, which have been notably poor in the last few years. But, this only emphasizes the need to continue to restore freshwater habitat in the Snoqualmie to provide salmon populations with the best chance at survival during less favorable ocean conditions. Juvenile salmon that are bigger and stronger when leaving freshwater are known to survive their ocean tenure at a higher rate.

Beth described several categories of monitoring conducted by Forum partners, including ongoing monitoring, one-time investigations, and periodically repeated efforts to gauge trends over time. Ongoing monitoring includes efforts like King County’s monthly water quality monitoring as well as the Tulalip Tribes’ operation of the juvenile salmon (smolt) trap in the winter and spring, used to estimate abundance and to collect biometric data. One-time investigations focus on particular research questions, such as the 2015 investigation of water temperature during extreme conditions (i.e., record low flow coupled with very warm air temperatures). The results of that study stimulated a follow-up effort in 2016 that focused on potential evidence of cold-water inputs to the Snoqualmie in a specific reach upstream of Carnation. Finally, periodic assessments of specific habitat conditions – such as riparian vegetation or instream habitat complexity – help us to gauge trends over time as a result of restoration efforts, changes in natural condition, as well as ongoing degradation due to human activities.

While monitoring efforts can be difficult to fund due to the higher priority that many funding entities place on on-the-ground projects, continuing to monitor both fish populations and habitat, and to conduct targeted investigations is critical to our ability to adapt our recovery strategy over time.

Perry described the ten-year status of habitat restoration and protection efforts, with specific reference to milestones identified in the Salmon Plan. Significant progress has been made on large, complex estuary and nearshore projects by Snohomish County, the Tulalip Tribes and other partners. For example, the ten-year goal of reconnecting 1,237 acres of estuarine marsh will likely be achieved just a few years behind schedule. Progress is being made on large river projects (like Upper Carlson, Chinook Bend and Stillwater) but collectively we are still far behind the ten-year goals. Importantly, we have largely exhausted opportunities on public lands (absent additional acquisitions) to remove levees and revetments, and construct set-back facilities where needed. Thus, progress going forward is highly dependent on the ability to work proactively with private landowners. This points to the importance of pursuing multi-objective projects that address other landowner needs, such as flood safety and other agricultural needs, and for project funders to embrace that approach. The Upper Carlson project, completed in fall 2014, is an example of a project that included multiple objectives including flood risk reduction for adjacent farms.

Good progress has been made on riparian planting in certain areas, but many of the benefits of those efforts lie decades in the future when trees reach maturity, and only if those planting sites are maintained over time. Finally, it is important to remember that we are measuring progress to date against the 10-year goals of a 50-year recovery plan. Thus, progress must be maintained and even increased going forward.

Funding for restoration has been in short supply during the first ten years of Salmon Plan implementation. However, in recent years a few promising State sources have been added to the mix, such as the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration fund (PSAR) and the multi-objective Floodplains by Design (FbD) program, which couples flood risk management and ecological restoration with other objectives, such as agriculture and recreation. The lack of predictable, robust funding also means that implementing organizations have great difficulty creating and maintaining the organizational capacity to move large projects forward when money is available. Organizations need project managers, watershed stewards, acquisition experts, planners, outreach professionals, etc., in order to effectively advance a major restoration project pipeline from year to year.

In 2015, the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum adopted the first-of-its-kind Protection Plan to specifically address the need to protect hydrologic functions in the watershed. Restoration generally refers to actions that “turn dirt” while protection refers to actions that protect current conditions. The Snohomish Basin Protection Plan (SBPP) identifies high-priority areas for protection throughout the watershed, and utilized the Department of Ecology’s Watershed Characterization model and the Salmon Plan as its technical foundation. The SBPP builds on existing tools, such as incentives, regulations, acquisitions, to create a strategy for prioritizing protection actions from the headwaters to the estuary, based on hydrologic importance. The SBPP also explicitly considers the hydrologic changes anticipated due to climate change. The implementation of the SBPP recommendations is reliant on securing funding and to the willingness of jurisdictions and partner organizations to take the lead in implementation. The City of Duvall provides a great example with its development and formal adoption of the Duvall Watershed Plan, which took a science-driven approach to guide the city’s policies and regulations in an effort to address open space, forest cover, land use, salmon, and stormwater. The city won a Green Globe award for its efforts from King County Executive Dow Constantine.

In an earlier status report that focused on the first five years of salmon recovery implementation, the Forum identified the resolution of “Fish, Farm, Flood” conflicts as a top priority for the next five years. King County, the Snoqualmie Forum, agricultural landowners and other partners have since engaged in the Snoqualmie Fish, Farm Flood advisory committee to develop recommendations for how all three sectors may thrive in the future. The committee reached an agreement in principle in spring 2016 and will shift to implementation in 2017, pending signatures of agreement from all participating parties.

Key takeaways from the Ten-Year Status Report:

- At worst, fish populations are declining; at best, they are static.
- Monitoring is giving us critical information to track our progress.
- We can’t control ocean conditions; provide best possible freshwater habitat.
- Leverage multi-objective projects
- Build on early Fish, Farm, Flood agreements
- Advocate for more funding
- Increase implementation capacity
- Protect watershed hydrology
- Communicate successes/issues to public
- Plan for climate change/increase resiliency. This is a major focus of the Tulalip Tribes.

Discussion

Q: Cindy Spiry asked whether the measures of restoration projects and funding included all project sponsors and actions.

A: We made every effort to include all sponsors and try to make sure that sponsors’ actions are updated in the State database that we use for tracking (the Habitat Work Schedule). Some sponsors and actions are undoubtedly missing, such as the US Forest Service who have undertaken numerous culvert replacement and road decommissioning projects in the upper watershed on federal lands. Perry also noted that some funding pots, such as EPA funds secured through tribal allocations may not be completely captured in the funding graphs.

Jason Walker commented that it will be important to “double-down” on telling our story and sharing this vital information with a broader audience. He suggested a possible on-line 10-year progress history or narrated version of the PowerPoint presentation as an option.

Trevor Kostanich (Councilmember, North Bend) echoed the importance of getting the word out and educating stakeholders. He encouraged all Forum members and networks to help get the word out rather than relying only on staff or the Forum’s website.

Q: Matt Gray (Citizen representative) inquired whether the Forum’s rule on allocation of grant funds to monitoring could be changed to increase the amount we spend on monitoring since it seems so critical to the work.

A: Yes, the Forum could decide to change its guidance and we will discuss that partly in the context of a later agenda item regarding funding for the Tulalip Tribes’ juvenile smolt trap. We also need to encourage other funders to expand their mandates to include monitoring as an eligible funding component.

Josh Meidav (Tulalip Tribes) noted that there are many categories of success that must be measured. Mostly we focus on implementation success – are we completing the restoration milestones that we set out to achieve? Additionally, we must monitor trajectories over time for habitat conditions and fish populations. Finally, we must also revisit some of the original assumptions in the Salmon Plan based on our experience to date.

IV. Forum Business

Forum schedule for 2017: Janne summarized the Forum’s meeting schedule for 2017 and highlighted the fact that the July meeting and preceding annual tour will occur in the Town of Skykomish on July 19, 2017. Look for information about transportation logistics as we get closer to that date, but expect an earlier start time than usual for the tour to allow for transportation to Skykomish.

Non-governmental organization Alternate: Janne summarized the results of the recruitment process for a non-governmental organization representative to step into the role of Alternate as Chris LaPointe becomes the main representative for the next two years. Jessica Lange of Sound Salmon Solutions submitted an impressive application and resume. Jessica and her organization have been active within the watershed for several years and are one of the only NGOs to not have held a seat on the Forum to date. The staff recommendation is to appoint Jessica as the new NGO alternate. Chair Walker echoed the strong endorsement of Jessica and of Sound Salmon Solutions.

ACTION: Forum moved to appoint Jessica Lange to the seat of Non-governmental Organization Alternate for 2017-2018.

Forum Chair and vice-Chair for 2017: Jason Walker shared his desire to step down from the role of Chair after several years in the position. Current vice-Chair, Lee Grumman (Carnation), has agreed to serve as Chair if no other members are eager to do so. Henry Sladek (Town of Skykomish) indicated his willingness to serve as vice-Chair.

ACTION: The Forum moved to name Lee Grumman as Chair and Henry Sladek as vice-Chair for 2017.

Tulalip Tribes’ Smolt Trap Funding Proposal: Monitoring of fish populations is imperative to understanding how the salmon populations are doing in the Snoqualmie and broader Snohomish Basin. Over time, the data will provide a critical measure of restoration success by helping to identify trends in juvenile salmon abundance and productivity.

For the last three years, and intermittently before that, the Tulalip Tribes have requested funding from the Cooperative Watershed Management (CWM) grant program. Since this is such a critical piece of monitoring for the Snoqualmie Watershed, the Snohomish Basin and the Puget Sound region, the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum has consistently awarded grant funds, typically at partial funding levels. In fact, the request typically ranks near the top of all grant submittals. The CWM Ranking Committee and Tulalip Tribes have requested that the Forum dedicate CWM grant funding to fund the screw trap for up to three years to provide greater assurance to the Tulalip Tribes about this critical funding source and to reduce the burden associated with applying for and ranking these applications that are substantially identical from year to year.

The annual cost of operating the trap is roughly \$120,000. In the past three years, the Forum has recommended an award between \$60-80,000 dollars, with the balance of trap funding coming from other sources, such as the federally funded Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund.

In a memo prepared by Beth leDoux, Snoqualmie valley staff have identified three options for the Forum to consider:

Option #1: Do not set aside dedicated funding and continue to have Tulalip Tribes submit requests through the annual competitive CWM grant round.

Option #2: Fund the screw trap at \$60,000 dollars for 3 years, outside of the competitive CWM grant round, and reevaluate for the 2020 grant round.

Option #3: Fund the screw trap at the full annual funding, of approximately \$120,000 per year, request for 3 years, outside the competitive CWM grant round and reevaluate for the 2020 grant round. Tulalip Tribes would inform the Forum of the need annually.

The CWM Ranking Committee recommends Option #2.

Discussion:

Q: Matt Gray asked if the funding for the trap would count toward the guideline of investing at most 10% of CWM funds on monitoring.

A: Yes, the trap funding currently counts toward that limit and would presumably do so in the future. But, the size of the monitoring allocation is something that the Forum could choose to adjust.

Josh Meidav (Tulalip Tribes) advocated for Option #3 (full funding) due to the uniquely vital nature of this data for long-term management.

Jim Haack (King Conservation District) shared that the Tribes' trap operation is located on his property and he is consistently impressed with the hard work and dedication of the crews that perform this difficult and at times dangerous work. Jim supports full funding for the trap.

Q: Trevor Kostanich asked about other uses for the data that is collected.

A: The data is currently used by the Tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to estimate outmigration for purposes of harvest management. The traps were originally installed primarily for that purpose, but are now also considered invaluable for long-term monitoring of population trends.

Staff noted that funding the trap at its full amount would more than expend the entire available amount of funding for monitoring and would make it more difficult to fund other monitoring priorities, absent a significant change in the monitoring allocation.

Trevor Kostanich suggested that perhaps the Forum should consider an additional option that is higher than Option #2 (but less than full funding) since it seems from the memo prepared by staff that the Forum has generally awarded less than the amount requested by the Tribes.

Chair Walker asked that the decision be delayed until the following meeting to allow for exploration of additional options and for staff to prepare a comparison of the pros and cons of each option. A decision in January will remain timely for purposes of the 2017 CWM grant round. The Forum agreed to table the matter until January.

V. 2016 Forum Highlights

Perry shared the Forum's accomplishments for 2016, highlighting the funding secured for projects in the basin, including more than \$850,000 for 14 projects allocated from the CWM grant program. Since 1998, the Forum has allocated over \$10M for projects that have leveraged roughly \$48M in additional funds from a variety of local, state and federal sources.

Capital project highlights include Wild Fish Conservancy's recent project on Langlois Creek, significant progress in the control of invasive weeds and riparian revegetation, and groundbreaking on the long-awaited 400-acre Smith Island project in Snohomish County.

Forum partners were able to secure more than \$2.3M for projects in the Snoqualmie and South Fork Skykomish watersheds through the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the PSAR grant program, with project support from Forum staff.

Other highlights include the distribution of more than 1000 "From Mt. Si to Wild Sky" posters throughout the community; completion of the Snoqualmie Watershed Ten Year Status Report; additional field investigation of high summer water temperatures; the defeat of the Black Canyon Hydroelectric Project proposal; active participation in a variety of local and regional advisory committees; and hosting two very successful tours as part of the July Forum meeting and the Green Summit hosted by the Snoqualmie Tribe.

For a full listing of accomplishments, please contact Forum staff.

VI. Public comment

Sue Holbink introduced herself as a member of the Raging River Conservation Group (RRCG). The group is a neighborhood based non-profit organization that is the first such organization to focus solely on the Raging River watershed. The group is currently fighting an expansion of a long-dormant hard rock quarry along Preston-Fall City Road that has not only reopened but hopes to expand its operations by 25 acres. The site is surrounded by single family rural residential areas and borders the Raging River. The application to expand is currently in the hands of King County's Department of Permitting and Environmental Review. In the future the group hopes to work with the Forum and other partners on stewardship and protection within the Raging River area.

Janne Kaje shared an e-mail message from Cynthia Krass, Executive Director of the Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District, inviting interested parties to attend an informational meeting regarding a proposed water bank in the Snoqualmie Valley to serve the interests of farmers who lack sufficient irrigation water.

The SVWID, an irrigation district organized one year ago, is in the process of starting a water bank in the Snoqualmie Valley, with funding from the Dept of Ecology. The funding enabled us to purchase the Tokul Creek water right from Weyerhaeuser, where it currently sits in the state's trust water rights program. It will be transferred downstream, for irrigation use, and used to seed the water bank.

A water bank, in its simplest form, is a mechanism for bringing willing buyers and sellers of water rights together to facilitate transfers of existing water rights, most likely leases of long and short term, and in some cases, as mitigation for new, interruptible water rights.

We are just beginning the process of water bank design, and we're wrestling with issues around price, eligibility, terms, etc. We are working with consultants, including Amanda Cronin, whom some of you may know from WA Water Trust. We'd like to invite other watershed stakeholders to get an update and ask questions, raise concerns, etc. We are hosting a meeting on Dec 7 in Carnation. Please let me know if you'd like to join. Send me an email to cynthia@svwid.com.

Cindy Spiry invited all who are interested to join the Tribe at a tree planting work party at Tolt-McDonald Park on Saturday, November 19, 10:00am-2:00pm.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be January 18, 2017 at Carnation City Hall from 7:00pm to 9:00pm.