

Meeting Notes
Envision Skagit Citizen Committee
January 21, 2011 – 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Skagit County Administration Bldg

Attendees:

Kerri Cook
Cory Ertel
Peggy Flynn
Jim Meyer
Kim Mower
Grace Popoff

Gustavo Ramos, Jr.
Tim Rosenhan
Nate Youngquist
Doris Robbins
Ryan Sakuma
John Cheney

Staff:

Kirk Johnson, Skagit Co. PM
Lisa Dally Wilson, Facilitator

Meeting Handouts:

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Summary Meeting Minutes from Jan 6 CC Meeting (emailed)
3. Citizen Committee revised 2010-2011 Meeting Schedule
4. Public Outreach Meeting Schedule
5. Public Outreach Workshops, Questions and Process Design
6. Executive Summary of the ECONorthwest Report: "Economic Indicators of Agriculture in Skagit County" (full report emailed and made available on ftp site).
7. Draft – Agriculture Scenario Policy Drivers (updated Jan 20, 2011)
8. Draft – Forestry Scenario – Key Policy Drivers (revised January 20, 2011)
9. Skagit County Forest Advisory Board Handout on "principle issues"
10. Draft – Key Drivers, Ecosystem Scenario (dated Dec 22, 2010)
11. Key Policy Distinctions (Drivers) Amongst Initial Envision Scenarios [NOTE: 60 pg. Scenario Description for all scenarios posted on ftp site]

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began shortly after 8:30 am.

Committee Business

- **January 6th meeting notes:** Approved after typographical errors are corrected
- **Citizen Committee Meeting calendar revisions:** A proposed new calendar was sent out in advance of the meeting. The Committee will be rescheduling the 2 day retreat. The retreat was moved to 5/13 and 5/14. However, some of our farmers may be unable to attend depending on weather and planting schedules. The proposed new calendar extended into July, and again, this may preclude attendance by some committee members. Kirk and Lisa will attempt one more draft of a calendar that concentrates CC workshops in March and April with the May retreat, and finish the process in June. A revised calendar will be emailed to the CC with proposed dates to ensure that everyone can attend.

9:00 – 10:30 Envision Skagit – Agricultural Issues

Overview of the Agriculture Scenario (*Kirk Johnson*)

Kirk provided an overview of major policy emphases in the Agriculture Scenario as modeled in Envision as well as key indicators for agriculture as set up in the model. His presentation referred to handouts #7 and #11 as listed above.

Agriculture, Conservation and Development (*Allen Rozema, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland; Mike Shelby, Western Wa Agriculture Assoc.*)

Allen discussed what he felt were necessary elements for ensuring Agriculture's long-term well-being; these included retaining a critical mass of ag lands in the valley – or “no net loss”. He suggested that RR zoning could be rezoned to Ag NRL to retain critical mass and that UGA expansion should be prohibited into AgNRL or RR lands. He also discussed use of TDR program to achieve goals (TDR- Transfer of Development Rights). When asked about opportunities for cooperation and mutual gain, Allen discussed programs for conservation and restoration on AgNRL including partnerships with WDFW, TNC, fee simple acquisition and other voluntary programs. He did not specifically address unavoidable tradeoffs.

Mike provided a larger scale view with a focus on the need for food production for population growth. He discussed the resilience of the ag economy in the Skagit, but also the need for land mass to maintain that resiliency. He said that “no net loss” is a “perfect world” statement and should be viewed as a goal. In the future he stressed a need to share resources through partnerships as discussed above. We currently have a low cost food source (as compared to other countries); how will we maintain that? We want to maintain food and fiber production. Skagit County's 1 for 40 zoning is very protective of agricultural land and one of the most protective in the country. Maximizing community benefits by working with multiple partners is recommended.

Discussion with the Citizen Committee (*all*)

General discussion points include:

- What are mechanisms that eat away at farmland: DFW, wetlands, conservation, replacement lands, infrastructure, wetland mitigation banks. Small projects add up to significant acreage
- Climate change. How will sea level changes affect flushing of dike systems, salt water concerns, loss of land? Farmers tend to adapt and will be able to maintain. May need to look at estuary restoration (TFI acreage) in some of these cases. May change type of products produced.
- Concern about red dots.
- Ecotourism, ecosystem services, American Farmland trust is looking at economic models. This might be a good solution for the future. Whatcom County has a Natural Resource Marketplace
- TNC – functional ecosystem marketplace, movement towards this, but needs a lot of work and development (this is addressed in Appendix A of the ECONorthwest Ag study (handout #6 above).

- Question about Ag Econ Study (handout #6 above) that does not advise that critical mass is key issue to retain ag. This report is more concerned with market factors. Will young farmers want to keep farming? Allen said they were commissioning their own study. They disagree. Peggy asked for help in reconciling all the demands on Ag land.

10:45 – 12:15 Envision Skagit – Forestry Issues

Overview of the Forestry Scenario (*Kirk Johnson*)

Kirk provided an overview of major forestry policy emphases in the Agriculture/Forestry Scenario as modeled in Envision as well as key indicators for forestry as set up in the model. His presentation referred to handouts #8 and #11 as listed above.

Forestry, Conservation and Development (*Paul Kriegel, Goodyear Nelson; Steve Tift, Longview Timber; Kendra Smith, Forestry Advisory Board*)

Speakers discussed zoning issues, proposed density credit program in secondary forests, general forestry issues in the county. Concerns are changing regulations, protecting resource jobs, level of production being altered by regulations.

Discussion with the Citizen Committee (*all*)

General discussion points include:

- Card (4-1acre units clustered on 40 acres on RRcNRL) – some people view this as a “give away”.
- On SF-NRL: 1 per 20, no density bonus
- Kirk will provide CC a list of relevant zoning codes and what is allowed.
- Proposed density credit program in secondary forest.
- Plan trend. RR lands will not change. If they are filled up the rest of the growth will go into cities in Skagit County.
- How do you avoid chipping away at RR?
- Local control
- Don’t implement critical areas on top of forest practice act regulations
- Prohibit sub-division by easement or density bonus.

1:00 – 3:00 Envision Skagit – Ecosystem/Conservation Issues

Overview of the Ecosystem Scenario (*Kirk Johnson, John Lombard*)

Kirk and John provided an overview of major ecosystem policy emphases in the Ecosystem Scenario as modeled in Envision as well as key indicators for Ecosystem health as set up in the model. The presentation referred to handouts #10 and #11 as listed above. Also mentioned was Sara Breslow’s PhD dissertation which mentioned stories of loss in the Skagit from an Agricultural, Forest, Tribal and Ecological perspective and that it is this concept of LOSS that makes it very difficult for people of different interests to understand the losses of other parties, if they don’t think the other parties have an understanding of their own loss.

Ecosystem Conservation, Natural Resource Industries and Development (*Bob Warriner, Wa Department of Fish and Wildlife; Martha Bray, Skagit Land Trust; Roger Fuller, The Nature Conservancy*)

All panelists gave thoughtful presentations that addressed necessary elements for long-term ecological well-being and opportunities for cooperation and mutual gain. Some key elements of the presentations included:

- May want to look at historic conditions, it might help the CC
- Maintain landscape connectivity for all species, including ourselves.
- Maintain forest cover
- Protect aquatic systems – flood, fish, birds, clean water
- Save the pieces
- Need to plan for risk (30% increase in 100yr flood flows over 50 years)
- Restore estuaries
- Strategic restoration
- Protect farm and forest, enhance ecosystem benefits and functions
- Consider multiple benefit opportunities that address human needs, agriculture and the ecosystem
- No net loss of habitat is WDFW goal
- Unavoidable tradeoff – land conversion
- Multiple benefits – floodplain restoration for habitat and flood protection
- Consider values of quality of life, recreation (natural resource based), ecotourism, economic (harvestable salmon), rural lifestyle (unquantifiable benefit)
- Unavoidable tradeoffs:
 - Density
 - Live in cities
 - Recognize and accept evolving management strategies for resource lands
 - buffers

Discussion with the Citizen Committee (all)

- What can you do to make agriculture more productive, to make it survive? Ecotourism, Agritourism.
- What is value added as growth comes? Need to add (not necessarily acres) to make agriculture more productive – consider agritourism, ecotourism, other creative changes.
- Water is an unavoidable tradeoff
- Good choices may mean tradeoffs but the result is number of benefits.
- There will be conversion issues, conversion with multiple community benefits and community values and economic development can be positive.
- What is the role of education and how can it move people to a less polarized view, and to work cooperatively?
- Need to develop examples and educate the public about multiple benefits projects. Teach kids, bring it to the schools, tie it to a sense of place. Quality of life is tied to how people use place.
- How much restoration is enough? Chinook Recovery Plan says 2500-3500 acres. Depends on where projects are located and how they are built.
- Need to look into Ecosystem markets for Agriculture. Ecosystem services markets are in their infancy (eg., carbon market for forestry). Markets will be built. See ECONorthwest Ag Report – Appendix A (handout #6), WDFW leases.
- CC needs to help facilitate a cultural shift. CC job may be to help define the culture, and provide cultural understanding and educate for a longer term vision.
- Transportation

Citizen Committee Internal Discussion

The Citizen Committee again brainstormed on the biggest issues on the table and the types of recommendations that will be making. They were asked if tradeoffs were starting to be clearer.

On the table:

- GMA – percent rural, percent urban and can this be changed
- Tradeoffs – Ecosystem – no new development in floodplain/Lahar zone: how many development rights would need to be purchased or transferred? Ask McMahan about how something like this could be funded.
- Mt Vernon/Burlington – revenue sharing. Or larger scale revenue sharing
- Multiple interest considerations
- Ongoing regional planning entity that isn't broken
- Where will future industrial and light manufacturing be located?
- Incentives to drive the most appropriate use of land
- Finding ways to work with cities to get more dense
- Restructure industrial and commercial tax proceeds to incentivize higher density
- How do we deal with undeveloped lots that have development rights?
- 100/0 Urban/rural?
- CC goals: develop and figure out how to keep in perpetuity
- Loss – do we want to focus on the past, or ways to move forward
- How do you get the “public” to think this new way (not about tradeoffs, but about opportunities)
- Recognizing “other stakeholders” in understanding impacts of our decisions (broad consideration)
- Educate in 7 school districts. NEED A REGIONAL education system
- Maintain diversity to retain resilience
- Explore potential for export/global markets: Ag, Forest, other products
- 4 year college
- A **voluntary, compensated** program that enables land use change to accomplish ecosystem, agricultural, forestry and other goals.
- Transportation Recommendations

3:45 Public Outreach

Citizen Committee was updated on the status on the community meetings, an updated schedule of outreach meetings was distributed and Kirk Johnson provided an update on the Outreach Toolbox being developed for the meetings. A handout providing a description of the questions to be posed to the public and process framework for the community outreach meetings was distributed and the Citizen Committee walked through a sample outreach meeting, including viewing the power point slides for use in the introduction to the project. A final outreach schedule will be developed and provided to the Citizen Committee and other venues for distribution. Posters are also being developed and will be provided to Citizen Committee members with specific outreach meeting detail.

4:45 Adjourn

Parking Lot:

1. Inundation levels in Envision – this need to be explained to the CC. Levels, correlation with climate change study, etc.
2. Kim would like to see us plug in numbers to forestry indicator for production – will this be done in Envision? Current, future?