

**Skagit Watershed Alternative Futures Project
Steering Committee Meeting Summary Notes
Wednesday, January 7, 2009
Skagit Valley College Library**

Attendance:

Mike Shelby	Paul Kriegel	Shirley Solomon
Allen Rozema	Margaret Studer	Carolyn Kelly
Kendra Smith	Kevin Morse	Rebecca Ponzio
Rebecca Bradley Lowell	Jan Ellingson	Rone Brewer
Alternate for Jana Hanson		
Gary Tollefson		

Other Participants:

Kirk Johnson	John Lombard	Sara Breslow
Josh Greenberg	Michael Rylko	Derek Poon
Ryan Walters	Gary Christensen	Linda Christensen
Tim Holloran		

The fourth meeting of the Alternative Futures Steering Committee began at 9:10 a.m. with a welcome from project manager Kirk Johnson. Kirk mentioned EPA grant requirements regarding travel and labor costs relating to Steering Committee activity. Linda Christensen will start sending out a monthly e-mail requesting this information.

II. Agenda Review

Kirk said he would be able to focus additional time and energy on the Alternative Futures project in 2009. Despite County budget cuts, Ryan Walters and Linda Christensen will continue assisting with the project. Technical coordinator John Lombard said that the technical work should begin to move along more quickly now, too. The County's contract with the University of Washington for technical assistance to the project should be formally signed this month, and new staff have already been brought on to work on the project.

III. Meeting Notes

Linda circulated the draft December 3 meeting notes. Kirk asked the Steering Committee to review them on their own time and submit any proposed edits via e-mail. The Steering Committee will be asked to approve the December 3 notes and the January 7 notes at the February 4th meeting.

IV. Key Steering Committee Tasks and Milestones

Kirk discussed a handout titled "Key Steering Committee Tasks." In response to a question, he said the Ecosystem, Growth Management and Agriculture vision statements are intended to define the desired future condition of the Skagit watershed. This is the condition that the Preferred Future to be selected by the Stakeholder Committee will seek to achieve. The vision statements will also inform the evaluation criteria for the initial alternative futures. There was a

question about where decision-making power rests between the Management Committee, the Steering Committee, and the Technical Committees. Kirk said the Steering Committee provides overall guidance and advice to the Management Committee and Technical Committees as they engage in the time-consuming processes of developing, modeling and evaluating the alternative futures. Especially where the Steering Committee itself has achieved consensus, the Management Committee is unlikely to differ from the Steering Committee on key decisions. As one participant said, “we’re all in this together.” However, the Management Committee has ultimate fiduciary responsibility under the contract with the EPA.

There was a request that the names of technical committee members be provided, for transparency purposes. A committee member emphasized the importance of being innovative and creative in helping to plan for a successful Stakeholder Committee process. Several members said it would be important to use incentives to bring about the preferred future, as regulations by themselves will not work. The preferred future must also be plausible, reflecting a reasonable level of effort to achieve.

Kirk then described the major Steering Committee milestones for 2009. There was agreement that additional time beyond monthly 2-hour meetings might be needed to accomplish these goals.

V. Finalize and Adopt Ground Rules

The committee discussed the revised ground rules and expressed satisfaction with revised rule number 9, titled “Invite Public Input and Participation.” Committee members suggested minor changes to rule 8 regarding meeting notes, and rule 12, about revisiting the ground rules “as needed.” It was suggested that documents under consideration by the Steering Committee be labeled as “internal” or “final”; only “final” documents would be made generally available to the public. The committee then approved the ground rules by consensus.

VI. Initial Discussion of Alternative Futures Development (“factors” handout)

Based on a review of other Alternative Futures projects, John Lombard discussed a handout to illustrate the types of assumptions (or factors) that *might* be used in developing the Plan Trend, Development, Conservation, and Agriculture futures. John said the listed factors were just a starting point, subject to further Steering Committee review and development. As examples, John said issues the Steering Committee will help address include: the range and most likely amount of future population; whether different population assumptions would be used for different futures; and high and low levels of projected climate change that should be used in a sensitivity analysis for the evaluation of different futures.

The Steering Committee discussed how the Alternative Futures process could overcome the human and social, as well as technical, challenges of achieving a commonly shared future for the watershed. Following are some of the suggestions:

- Provide broad community/watershed education to the Stakeholder Committee.
- Recognize the significant values in the watershed (from a regional and even national perspective) worth protecting;

- Include indicators of community and human well-being, and an examination of what “level of effort” would be needed to bring about various alternative futures.
- Incorporate “social learning” to aid project implementation.
- Find a way to recognize social and cultural elements that cannot be easily mapped.
- Engage Skagit Valley College – both science students and the “Learning into Action” program – to bring the project to the broader community.
- Do some research on the Kent and Puyallup valleys to ask what local leaders there might have done differently to avoid their current development patterns.
- One member then stated that “we need to get the models working” before we can think about how to implement a preferred future.
- There was also a question about what assumptions would be made for management on federal lands within the watershed.

VII. Brief Updates

John Lombard said the contract with Washington State University was close to approval which would allow the agricultural economics study to move forward. Kirk said he would share a draft of the Growth Management Vision statements with the Skagit Council of Governments planners group on January 9th and would begin working with that group on developing land use assumptions for the various futures. Kirk also said a large number of well-qualified submittals were received from facilitators, and that interviews of selected firms would occur in late January, with a decision to be made and firm under contract hopefully by the end of February.

The meeting concluded at 11:00 a.m.