

**Skagit Alternative Futures Project  
Steering Committee Meeting Summary  
Wednesday, May 6, 2009  
Skagit Valley College Multi-Purpose Room**

**Attendance**

**Members**

Rebecca Bradley-Lowell, City of Mount Vernon	John Doyle, Town of La Conner	Jan Ellingson, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Exec.
Carolyn Kelly, Skagit Conservation District	Paul Kriegel, Private Forester	Ryan Larsen, City of Anacortes
Patsy Martin, Port of Skagit County	Kevin Morse, The Nature Conservancy	Rebecca Ponzio, Puget Sound Partnership
Mike Shelby, Western Washington Agriculture Association	Shirley Solomon, Skagit Watershed Council	Margaret Studer, Futurewise
Gary Tollefson, Skagit Valley College	Larry Wasserman, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	

**Other Participants:**

Gary Christensen, Skagit County	Kirk Johnson, Skagit County	Kendra Smith, Skagit County
Linda Christensen, Skagit County	Lisa Dally Wilson, Dally Environmental	Mark Personius, Growth Management Consultant
John Lombard, University of Washington	Sara Breslow, University of Washington	Mike Rundlett, Western Washington Agriculture Association
Karma Anderson, Environmental Protection Agency	Derek Poon, Environmental Protection Agency	Michael Rylko, Environmental Protection Agency

**Handouts:**

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| 1. February 4, 2009 Meeting Summary Draft | 5. Population Projection Issue Statement |
| 2. March 4, 2009 Meeting Summary Draft    | 6. Population Scenario Table/Graph       |
| 3. Steering Committee Ground Rules Draft  | 7. Vision Statement Draft                |
| 4. Forestry Issue Statement               | 8. Guideline for Project Dollars         |

The seventh meeting of the Alternative Futures Steering Committee began at 9:10 a.m.

**Welcome, Agenda Review, Document Approval**

Kirk proposed that Skagit County Planning and Development Services director Gary Christensen join the Steering Committee as a formal County representative. There was consensus agreement.

The Steering Committee approved the February 4, 2009 and March 4, 2009 meeting summaries with one change noted for the March 4<sup>th</sup> summary – Jan Ellingson’s business name change.

The Steering Committee approved Ground Rules amendment addressing the decision-making process when consensus cannot be achieved.

## **Steering Committee Recommendation on Forestry**

Following a discussion, and based on handout no. 4 noted above, titled **Forestry Issue Statement**, the Steering Committee agreed that a Forestry Technical Committee should be formed to help define the Forestry Future (as part of an Agriculture-Forestry future) and identify forestry indicators. It was mentioned that resources would need to be found to assist the Forestry Technical Committee with its work, and that the committee should include large and small foresters representing a spectrum of opinion.

## **Steering Committee Recommendation on Population Projections**

Kirk summarized the recommendation from the Growth Management Technical Committee to use the following 2060 population projections for purposes of modeling the initial alternative futures:

High range: OFM Medium – 258,212

Most likely: Hypothetical SCOG target – 217,578

Low range: OFM Low – 192,412

A spirited discussion ensued. Some committee members argued for using generally lower numbers because of the unique resources of regional, national and international significance found in the Skagit watershed that would be damaged by excessive population growth. They said the process should not be held to current GMA requirements.

Others responded that selection of population projections at this point is only for the purpose of modeling the initial futures to evaluate the effects of different population levels. For modeling purposes, numbers should be selected that are credible – not artificially high or low. The ability to perform sensitivity analysis on a range of three different population numbers across each of the futures will yield important information about the effects of population growth on unique and vulnerable resources.

The comment was made that water available should be considered as a constraint to how much growth happens and where it can occur. Another committee member said it was important to identify where commerce can take place so that residents and those who grow up here can afford to live here.

After much discussion, the group came to general consensus around using the numbers proposed above for scenario modeling purposes. Doing so would not preclude the Stakeholder Committee from making a recommendation that only a certain population could be accommodated in the Skagit without damaging unique and sensitive resources.

All three population numbers will be run across all futures scenarios. The assumption is that if necessary or desired, we are able to drop the population numbers and re-run the model to predict impacts associated with lower populations for Puget Sound regional discussion.

## **Combined Project Vision Statement**

The committee was asked for comments on a proposed combined project vision statement that pulls together the vision statements that had been or were being developed by various technical committees. The discussion was conceptual rather than word-smithing. Committee members

made the following comments and several agreed to follow up with project staff to discuss more specific language:

- Like it overall, but needs to address commerce and industry
- The ecosystem discussion should be less human-centric
- It needs to express aspiration and hope; be more sappy and sentimental, mention snow geese, raptors, elk, etc.
- Mention the fishing industry, shellfish industry, and ecotourism industry
- Should speak to ability of Indian/tribal communities to sustain traditional practices
- More focus on jobs in rural communities
- Should acknowledge infrastructure – roads, bridges, drainage
- Transportation options should be part of “vibrant, diverse and well planned” communities

### **Desired project outcomes**

Lisa Dally Wilson asked the committee to broaden the discussion to desired outcomes of the project. Comments included:

- For forestry, greater certainty, no new regulations, greater recognition of various benefits forestry provides
- A product to take to city councils and mayors to help them plan their communities; how to accommodate growth
- A common reference point, or areas of agreement, for land use planning. To help in GMA and shoreline planning processes.
- A finished product, agreement on a preferred future.
- Agreement on a preferred future that links to regional restoration of Puget Sound – fish, wildlife, and healthy human communities.
- Recognize society’s needs for sustainable and dependable food supply and wood supply; if not here, where?
- A product where the human population is fully integrated with natural systems. Enables sustenance and stewardship of the natural system. A complete system that supplies fundamental needs, water, jobs, mutually supportive.
- A credible document can look at and say, when we’re 90, “we hit it!”
- Credible enough that it can be articulated to the broader population and all chose to embrace because they/we love where we live.
- Integration of the whole system – all aspects thriving.

Lisa then asked: What would help you as a Steering Committee? Are our efforts so far to define futures and indicators, working for you? What do you want to see?

- Feel I’m getting a grasp of the project, it’s so huge.
- It might be helpful to have a decision tree. It’s very abstract. That would bring more structure.
- Keep a running list of the tools that are needed to get to the desired future. What are the gaps between goals and reality, what are the tools or measures to bridge the gaps?
- The Stakeholder Committee may want to think about things differently than what is delivered to them from the Steering Committee. What is the mechanism to change what is delivered to the Stakeholder Committee.
- Greater clarity on the distinction and handoff between the Steering Committee and Stakeholder Committee.

## **Project Updates**

Kirk and John discussed brief project updates. The committee agreed there would be no Steering Committee meeting in June, to allow greater staff focus on moving the plan trend forward.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.