

## 6.2.10 – Alternative Futures Steering Committee Meeting

### In Attendance:

Lisa Dally Wilson	Margaret Studer	Emma Whitfield
Kirk Johnson	John Doyle	Larry Wasserman
John Lombard	Paul Kriegel	Shirley Solomon
John Bolte	Carolyn Kelley	Jan Ellingson
Kendra	Allen Rozema	Sarah Young
Mark Personius	Josh Greenberg	Tim Holloran
Ryan Larsen	Chad Armstrong	

### Handouts:

- Scenario Highlights – Ag/Forestry, Plan Trend, Ecosystem and Economic Development
- Detailed Scenario Assumptions – Ag, Forestry, Plan Trend and Ecosystem
- Master List of Indicators
- Citizen Committee Selection Process – Letter to the Steering Committee and Attachment

### Goal of today's meeting:

- Look at major assumptions for each scenario and discuss what the group is comfortable/uncomfortable with in each one

### I. Plan Trend Scenario – committee discussion

#### *Restoration / Conservation:*

1. Buying development rights and conservation
2. \$1.5m worth of land/yr over 50 years. Helps accommodate for varying cost of land. Came to this \$1.5 number through discussion among staff from Skagit Land Trust, Skagit Watershed Council, Skagit River System Cooperative, Skagit County.
  - a. Concern that we are not considering funding from other sources.
  - b. Trying to pick a number that represents current experience
  - c. Consider City Light (\$/yr through license agreement), PSE, Land Trust, Forest Service (about to tap different funding source with change in administration), WSR, other.
3. Farmland Legacy Program – 640 acres from Sedro-Woolley to Delta area that would be acquired per year thereby losing development potential.
4. Tidegate and Fish Initiative was set to restore 2,700 acres in 25 years
  - a. The Plan Trend model will correct this and plan for restoring 2,700 acres within 25 years instead of 50. Other assumptions will stay the same (check TFI language).
5. Want a final document that lays out the rationale for AF assumptions
6. Front-loading assumptions - how will this affect the other programs?
  - a. Plan trend looking at existing policies and projecting growth over 50 years. We're not assuming the population is going to appear in either first 25 years or the last 25 year, separately, but rather over 50 years.
7. Shirley – Additional thoughts on estimating \$/yr for conservation under the Plan Trend. Should look into additional funding programs and determine if the number should be changed.
  - a. John Lombard stated that the rationale for these assumptions will all be tracked and written up.
8. Reword/define “pre-settlement conditions” under first bullet of Restoration – what does this mean? – Historic landcover. Will change language in written material.

#### *John Bolte – Model Presentation*

9. Want to capture assumptions; not project the future

10. Utility of the modeling is to understand the sideboards of possibilities. Keep in mind that limits are being pushed in each scenario. What may seem extreme today may also not seem extreme in the future.
11. Q: Is it legitimate to take the Plan Trend and see if it accurately predicts what we know from the past?
  - a. A: Can do that for some factors, but not all. In cases where we would expect to see no change in the trend, that would work, but not all.
  - b. A: What has happened in the past and what will happen based on what is in the comprehensive plan are two separate issues.
12. Q: Has the model been validated through some other means?
  - a. A: Models have been validated in other projects. The model is a good predictor to the degree that the rules laid out in each scenario are valid, and the input data is sound.
  - b. A: There will be some visual validation as to asking whether any of these assumptions seem appropriate – a.k.a. does a mall on the top of Sauk Mountain seem appropriate? If not, go back and correct it.
13. Larry Wasserman: Will not want to buy-off on the scenarios without greater documentation and detail. Bulleted information is not enough to portray a fully-educated scenario. Does not want the process to halt, but will not say that he or the tribe will buy-off without more resource-backed information. Also, they do not have the staff or time to review the details at this time for this project.
14. Shirley S. also stated that the SWC cannot give its seal of approval, as they are not clear on what some of the assumptions mean.

## II. Ag-Forestry Scenario:

1. DNR land management:
  - a. Q: Where do DNR lands fit in?
    - i. DNR managing about 65% of their lands/what they're growing/yr. Private industry is around 70-75%.
  - b. Q: As we look across other scenarios, do we want to change how DNR lands are being managed?
    - i. More or less managed like private lands. Josh Greenberg working on this.
    - ii. DNR lands are a bit more restrictive in management
    - iii. Kirk mentioned the slider bar approach for forestry (range, including no building on secondary and rural resource lands)
    - iv. Discussion of clear-cut size and rotation age – differences between DNR and private
    - v. Forestry group needs to work a bit more on assumptions for forest management in Forestry Scenario
2. Q: Explain the no net-loss definition. What policies are being implied?
  - a. In a 500-acre restoration project that converts the land to estuary, the model would look for 500 acres of land in the county that are in rural resource or rural reserve with little development and designate them for Ag-NRL. The model would try to maintain natural resource production acreage.
  - b. Add an acre for every one that is lost when a residence is placed on Ag or Forest land? Will address in decision rules.
3. Look at Density Bonus program – what would happen if incentives were provided to cluster development together and therefore protect forestry in other areas?
4. Statement that Ag Scenario seems somewhat benign. The scenario makes it look like we are just trying to hold our own. The “No-Net Loss Future” – isn't that what we're already trying to accomplish?
  - a. Agreement – Wouldn't think that it would be controversial, but it is. Assuming that we're trying to maintain approximately 100,000 acres. No-net loss comes in in the sense that if conversion occurs, where are we going to make up for it elsewhere?

### *No Net Loss Re-Cap*

1. Ag – Determine whether no-net-loss includes one acre residential on Ag lands.
  - a. Define and include in rationale for all scenarios if applicable
2. Already at optimal acreage limit, no to any other conversion, no net loss, goal is retaining current acreage.

### III. Ecosystem Scenario

1. Presumption that it would be all by incentive comes from discussions through committee. Currently not clear how well that can be represented. Compensation v. regulation has not received a lot of discussion from committee.
2. Q: What does “All new urban development is “low impact” for hydrologic indicators” mean?
  - a. A: Much less impervious surface (associated with stormwater) than in the plan trend – won’t be zero, but will be less.
3. Q: Are we going to look at the economic costs of conservation services? (Ag no-net loss and private owners, buffers (forest or Ag production), low-impact development, dikes, retrofitting, etc.)
  - a. Buffers are going to be difficult as they are site-specific.
  - b. Low Impact development, retrofit? Costs are not currently being considered in the model.
  - c. Costs for transfer of development rights, etc.
4. Q: What will be the costs associated with NOT providing buffers (e.g. ecological cost)?
  - a. Consider Opportunity Costs
5. Q: How do we build in anticipated changes in regulatory policy (eg – low impact development) when analyzing costs / lost revenue?
6. Q: Chinook Recovery Plan – No net loss of habitat – buffers are different than Ecosystem Future scenario assumptions. What are the metrics that will be used to project the consequences?
7. John Lombard will look into buffers in Chinook Recovery Plan and no net loss of habitat assumptions and compare to current Ecosystem assumptions.
  - a. Revisit by email. Closure before July 1; modeled by July 14.
8. John Bolte: Cognizant that buffers take up land. Are working on timber-value models. Hope is that a Salmon-protection (Chinook and Coho) model will be incorporated that will project the number of Chinook and Coho that exist based on different scenario choices.
9. Concern: Only having one-side of the equation will not represent the cost-benefit situation.
  - a. Q: Should cost be assessed separately, later?
  - b. Valuation of Ecosystem Services (not currently in scope).
10. Q: Can we look at past, purchased riparian areas and use that information to incorporate it into an equation?
11. Concern from Jan: How can the UGA fit everyone without building *up*? Public won’t accept this. Indicators will reflect negative aspects.
12. Concern from Allen: Ecosystem Scenario seems to be very salmon-oriented. What about other ecosystem concerns? Indicators need to look at more aspects.
13. Last four bullets of Ecosystem Future Highlights – request comment by email or phone Kirk or John.
14. Larry is concerned that if Salmon Indicators show extinction risk instead of numbers of salmon, it will not be worthwhile.
15. Puget Sound Action Agenda – check the plan in relation to Ecosystem Future assumptions about low-impact development and in general.
16. For bullet #1 under Rural and Resource lands and for bullet #8 on Environmental Assumptions, consider National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion and FEMA model floodplain ordinance setbacks instead.
  - a. John L. to review, make recommendations by email – decisions by July 1, to members for July 14 meeting.
  - b. Need to rewrite first bullet under Rural and Resource Lands**
  - c. Need to add FEMA model ordinance to have a more extreme opinion, need to go beyond the floodplain.
17. For the record – Shirley cannot give SWC approval on Ecosystem Scenario assumptions. Not clear on what it all means.
18. For the record – Larry cannot “buyoff” on Ecosystem Scenario assumptions, doesn’t have time or staff to look into detailed assumptions and also doesn’t feel he’s been given adequate rationale on assumptions.

#### **IV. Economic Development Scenario**

1. Affordable housing is mislabeled – affordable is what people can afford. If people are leaving the County to find homes they can afford, housing is not affordable. No consensus on what affordable housing really is – this question is also a national debate. For this project, ensure that affordable housing is defined in each context.
2. Quality of life was of high importance to the Economic Development discussion group.
3. Discussion that building up (eg., high density in UGAs) may not be suitable for the County and may actually have some negative effects on the environment. Will indicators measure this?

#### **V. Citizen's Committee Discussion**

1. Q: What does "interest group" mean?
  - a. A: e.g. Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland...
2. Concern: Low-income groups are not often represented.
3. Possible Voices of the Valley articles for inserting in the paper (no committee members expressed interest in writing).
4. Steering Committee would like to have a document that describes what the AF process is. Distribute FAQ document and outreach materials to the committee.
  - a. Lisa developing a FAQ document.
  - b. Meeting times will be decided upon based off who is chosen for the committee.

#### **VI. Comments**

1. Shirley: considering speaker series looking at the future of Skagit Valley. Focus needs to be optimistic. Perhaps bring in people who have done similar things and have achieved in their efforts. Nature Conservancy may be able to assist. Very possible to be overtaken by the future – nobody knows what will happen but it's helpful to hear from others about what has happened in their efforts to do similar procedures.
2. Paul: Janicki's and Red Emerson (Sierra Pacific) could talk about why they invested in Skagit County and their take on the future.
3. Possibly revisit the "Honey I shrunk the Lots" presentation

#### **VII. Action Items**

1. Kirk to send April Meeting minutes to SC
2. Kirk to talk to Larry regarding the Swinomish UGA treatment
3. Kirk to confirm UGA expansion assumptions with Mount Vernon and Concrete
4. Consider additional conservation programs for \$/yr justification for conservation/restoration in plan trend.
5. "pre-settlement conditions" → reword in assumptions
6. John L. to review Chinook Recovery Plan "no-net loss" of habitat assumptions and compare to current assumptions for Ecosystem future. Coordinate any changes with committees. New assumptions no later than **July 1**.
7. Costs? How are they evaluated? Warrants further discussion.
8. John L. to review NMFS BO, FEMA Model ordinance for setbacks, buffer assumptions in Ecosystem Future.
9. John L. to review PS Action Agenda – check the plan in relation to Ecosystem future assumptions about low-impact development and in general.
10. Kirk to finalize Citizen's Committee material to make available to the Steering Committee.
11. **Next meeting July 14**