

Envision Skagit 2060 Steering and Technical Committee Meeting Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Skagit Valley College Multi-Purpose Room

July 14, 2010, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendance

Members

Rebecca Bradley-Lowell, City of Mount Vernon	Allen Rozema, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland	Jan Ellingson, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Exec.
Margaret Fleek, City of Burlington	Shirley Solomon, Skagit Watershed Council	Ryan Larsen, City of Anacortes
Patsy Martin, Port of Skagit County	Carolyn Kelly, Skagit Conservation District	Rebecca Ponzio, Puget Sound Partnership
Margaret Studer, Futurewise	Gary Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services	Dr. Gary Tollefson, Skagit Valley College

Other Participants:

Kirk Johnson, Skagit County	Kendra Smith, Skagit County	Josh Greenberg, Skagit County
Emma Whitfield, Skagit County	Betsy Stevenson, Skagit County	John Lombard, Lombard Consulting
Lisa Dally Wilson, Dally Environmental	Bob Kuntz, National Park Service	Jon Riedel, National Park Service
Ken Osborn, Forest Advisory Board	Bob Warinner, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife	Gary Slater, Ecostudies Institute
John Bolte, Oregon State University	Karma Anderson, Environmental Protection Agency	Martha Bray, Skagit Land Trust
Roger Fuller, The Nature Conservancy		

Meeting purpose:

- Understand the use of Envision in this project and how the model will distribute population based on the underlying assumptions for each future
- Gain an understanding of the primary decision rules that most influence the modeled scenarios
- Finalize the underlying assumptions inherent in each alternative future scenario
- Provide an update on the Citizen Committee Application process
- Brief discussion of the future role of the Steering Committee and Technical Committees

9:15 – Introductions (Kirk)

- Steering Committee meeting notes from April 7 and June 2nd, 2010 were approved. It Technical Committee meeting notes from June 3, 2010 were approved. No objections voiced.
- Aiming to have model almost complete by September. At that time there will be review, very small tweaks, then final.
- Josh Greenberg working on GIS slides
- Hoping to have Citizen Committee (CC) formed by September
- Received 30 applicants for CC

9:30 – Status of the Model (John Bolte)

Scenario Development

- Trying to model policies to a level of detail that is needed for the project. 75% complete.
- Currently included in the model: Chinook Recovery Plan projects, where growth is expected to occur, jobs and employment, projected UGA expansion.
- Plan trend furthest along, approximately 90% complete, Ag-Forestry and Ecosystem = 80% complete, Economic Development needs most work, approximately 70% complete.
- Still missing data sets for DNR lands, critical areas and soils.

Scenario Evaluation

- Scenario evaluation piece – how to represent results. Basic metrics are in place (eg., acreage in conservation, acreage in working forests, percent of growth in UGA). Other metrics are not as well developed (eg., hydrology indicator, wildlife, growth). We hope to have these developed more fully by mid-August. Need to determine the appropriate metrics of each scenario. May need to get Steering Committee together in August to discuss metrics and scenario evaluation more fully. John Bolte to help determine what the most important outputs would be to review.
- Kirk and Josh will get final numbers from Cities regarding UGAs, critical areas, etc. in the next 2 weeks and provide to John Bolte.
- John Bolte recommended that a Scenario summary be prepared that lays out the different scenario descriptors (eg., restoration areas based on TFI, UGA/non-UGA population ratios, etc.) and how it is treated in each scenario and a short summary of the differences. Kirk J. agreed with this approach and will prepare a table in the next few weeks. He will also prepare a summary of key drivers..
- Question regarding whether Steering Committee or Technical Committee members can make changes in indicators after they see initial results, before the model is complete.
- Skagit County is a very constrained place so the model doesn't necessarily show large differences among the different scenarios. See differences in the metrics, but overall there are many similarities across the four scenarios. At the same time, other aspects, like UGA growth, are quite different.
- SC member: Not surprising that Ag/Ecosystems are similar. Could reflect ag-buffer situation because both competing for the same environment.
- 2 Weeks (July 28) – Finalize numbers from cities, finalize critical area layers, final data for scenario descriptors. Need further development of metrics/evaluation tools: hydrology, wildlife, growth.

10:00 – GIS layers/Data Sets (Josh Greenberg)

Map #1

- Expansion areas are like maximum envelopes. Land can be taken out of those envelopes if they meet certain criteria. Represent industrial, residential, and commercial areas as well.
- Looks like parcels were used to draw boundaries. Question regarding why geology wasn't accounted for instead.
 - A: Model is dependent on parcels – trying to use the same decision units as the model; trying to get some general ideas out on the table. Bolte: have to determine where to draw the lines – physical constraints limit where boundaries are drawn. The model will be redefining these boundaries.
- Why was the Swinomish tribal area not included?
 - A: A Swinomish UGA does exist, just didn't make it on the map.
 - Swinomish not looking to accommodate growth, but rather ensuring tribal membership has shelter and a home and maintaining way of life.

Map #2 – Region Map

- Shows regional areas of Skagit County including the deltas that we are trying to familiarize with the model.

Map #3

- Showing several layers together.
 - Light blue = current floodplain data.
 - Dark blue = regulatory floodway.
 - Pink area = Channel migration zones that John Bolte's group has been working on. Will most likely be used in the Ecosystem scenario. (Basically representing the Lahar zone)

Map #4 – Chinook Recovery Plan Representation

- Purple = proposed restoration areas – these areas are not extremely accurate but are working models for the purpose of this exercise.
- There are many conflicting rules that are put into the model. Some of this will be worked out in the models.

Map #5 – Wildlife data

- Fish and Wildlife data that will be used to create areas that we want to protect
- “Elk-Conflict area” – buy property with stipulation that you would not complain about consequences that may occur with elk populations

10:30 Ecosystem Scenario Discussion (Kirk)

- Reconvened the Ecosystem group (where many local members were present) and now have a refined Ecosystem Scenario. Focuses on where development can occur. Some thought that the revised scenario is a little bold.

10:35 Ecosystem Scenario Decision Rules (Attachment with greater detail)

1. 95/5 distribution (95 in urban, 5 in rural)
2. Floodplain Development removed from future settlement
3. No UGA expansions into the floodplain or channel migration zone
4. No new residential and commercial development in properties that are within 300m of a salmonid stream.
 - Question – why are we changing measurements? (Acres, meters, ft). Decision to use acres and feet in this project, consistently.
5. No new residential or commercial development or conversion of forest land cover to ag use on parcels located entirely within 3000' of wetlands (this is based on work with amphibians and may be tailored).
6. Preclude or reduce development potential in WDFW-identified “elk conflict zones”
 - SC member: Question regarding whether we can re-word “elk conflict” – perhaps “elk-preservation?” Also a concern that there is not indicator that addresses shorebirds or migratory species.
7. TC members support including other specific/currently mapped habitat types, if data can be supplied
8. Minimize loss of forest cover occurring through rural development
9. Model LID for all new development in ecosystem scenario. Development with less impervious implications.
10. Increase average-zoned capacities within UGAs by 50%. Rules regarding urban areas are dense enough before growing outwards into other areas.
 - Need to discuss this with city planners.

- 11. UGA expansions triggered when residential or commercial development reaches 90% of build-out capacity.
- 12. Expansion sized for 20yr land supply
- 13. Should certain parcels allow future re-development?
- 14. Expanding on Ecosystem expansion areas.
- 15, 16, and 17 removed
- 18. Implement all restoration projects in Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan for the delta and nearshore.
- 19. Upriver: 150 acres/year within floodplain, prioritized by flood stage, returning altered land cover to historic conditions.

Map #6 – Ecosystem Future

- White = potential areas for development (outside the cities)

Salmon Indicator

- Using the SLAM model, will look at Adult migration and spawning, incubation, fresh water residence, estuary residence, and marine residence to produce a salmon projection
 - Request to have a copy of the Salmon Indicator handout.

11:25 – Scenario Updates and Decision Rule Drivers (Kirk)

Plan Trend

- New model inputs: UGA sizing, development impacts assumptions
- For residential densities, went with the middle number
- We're at an 80% out-commuting number.
- Does this plan consider mobility?
- A SC member expressed a hope that the Citizen Committee could also consider another aspect of Ecosystem future which is not in the model. This is the view of the Skagit as a natural resource and serving a natural resource function in the larger Pacific NW region. This view may consider aspects of ecotourism, and could be addressed via decreasing population densities.
- Development/Impact assessment – have come up with percentages relating to parcel size. What changes, what's left, and how does this change things?
 - Jan: 35% of 5-10 acres is converted?
 - A: If whole parcel is forests, 35% of forest is removed and that's where the structure goes. It is assumed that parcels that are 10 acres or greater in size have a constant value of 3.5 acres of forest removed rather than a percentage of the land mass.

Forestry Scenario (Attachment)

- This future has had the most revision.
- The forestry group is concerned about land being taken out of production and put into conservation/preservation.
- Purchase/Transfer of development rights program that would voluntarily remove residential development rights from Forest Resource Land and place a permanent forest management easement on those lands.
- Model a density credit program
- Have worked on a definition of “working forest” – not quite agreed on percentage numbers but are getting close
- Q: Thought model wasn't going to be able to model management. What would the model then show?

- A: A moderate increase in timber products. Ecosystem indicators may not be fine enough to say whether there are environmental benefits.
- SC member:: Scenario seems to be saying “pay us to be timber managers”. In Ag elements, there appears to be more protection/conservation and less suggestion for incentives and compensation.
 - Kendra: Forests are regulated much more tightly than Agriculture. 35% of timber harvest is off the table due to the Forest Practice Act. TDRs and PDRs are probably not going to work, especially covered with the understanding that there most likely isn’t enough money to assist.
 - Large dichotomy
 - Would like to see how this plays out in the model
- Ag versus Forestry:
 - Ag: Focus on preserving land – a no-net-loss approach
 - Forestry: Not focusing on loss – instead, compensate us for things we are already doing

12:00 Status of Indicators (Kirk)

- 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 32, 34, 35, 39, 43, 44 = shaded on the handout. These may not be included in the model.
- Should perhaps have a list of all indicators that were included from the start and then explain why certain ones were left out.
- Q from Jan: As we’re developing in Alger, what will happen to VMTs?
 - Trip generation will go down as density goes up.
 - Also looking at a slightly more sophisticated model that may give us something a little more detailed, but may not get there
- Q from a SC member regarding infrastructure – developers are paying costs so it is important to have something in here regarding infrastructure.
- Q: How do different scenarios contribute to the overall local economy – economic outcomes? Impact on Eco-tourism v. production on airplanes. Is this part of the plan to address this?
 - A: Looking at employment projects but will have to go along with the Ecosystem Plan, not the Plan Trend.
 - Housing ratio will not address how many people are leaving or going to work in other town, etc.
 - Will need to address this in the narrative as well.
- **Q regarding indicator 33 – need to clarify/refine this definition.**
- Number of development rights – how many are left and how many have been used – this may be included in the model at the end which could be very helpful. This will have to be done by assumption but could still be helpful.
- Kirk will develop a cumulative list of indicators and track why they may have come off the list (tracking for purposes of future public inquiry).

12:25 – Citizen Committee Selection Update (Kirk)

- Gary, Dan Berentson, and Kirk are going to read through letters and develop a top group that will be brought back to this committee. Steering committee would then review and produce a list for the Commissioners to choose and appoint from. Goal is to have a group appointed by August with first meeting to occur in September. Steering Committee may have a one hour meeting to discuss membership of Citizen Committee in late July or early August.
- 9-12 people will be appointed. No more than 12.
- Need to make sure that the Commissioners apply some guidelines in order to make distinctions between whether people are representing themselves or their occupations.

12:35 - Future Role of the Steering Committee and Technical Committees

- Possible September 8 meeting – place TBD, may need to reschedule later in September based on room availability.
- Q by a SC member: Can information be disseminated before the meeting for those who won't be able to make the meeting. Can we then provide email responses for feedback on individuals who have applied?
 - Any emails are considered public information.
 - People may not voice true opinions of applicants in front of others.
 - Need to come up with a solution for how to address these concerns.
- Draft being developed that summarizes everything that has been achieved over the last year and a half. Would like to draw on individuals members of the Steering Committee (and the Technical Committee on an as-need-basis) for the development of the CC, if possible. Would also still like to meet with the Steering Committee over the course of all of this.
 - SC member: If CC is holding open meetings, this may be a way to stay informed and up-to-date.

12:45 - Comments

Edit for forestry group – 7b

- Never made this recommendation
- Rural resource NRL land – not aware of what is currently allowed.
- Important to differentiate between what is proposed and what is existing.
 - 1/40 = zoning
 - 4/40 if you cluster
 - Not the proposal, but rather what exists
- Plan trend = what currently exists
- **7b needs to be addressed/reworded**
- **Forestry TC may meet one more time to go over final changes to scenario assumptions.**