

**Skagit Watershed Alternative Futures Project  
Steering Committee Meeting Summary  
Thursday, November 6, 2008  
Skagit Valley College Library**

**Attendance:**

Jana Hanson	Mike Shelby	Rebecca Ponzio
Patsy Martin	Allen Rozema	Gary Tollefson
Kendra Smith	Shirley Solomon	John Schuh
Margaret Studer	Kevin Morse	alternate for Carolyn Kelly
Margaret Fleek	Rone Brewer	Michael Rylko

**Other Participants:**

Gary Rowe	Gary Christensen	Linda Christensen
John Lombard	Josh Greenberg	Scott Schuyler
Sara Breslow	Ryan Walters	
Derek Poon	Kirk Johnson	

Kirk Johnson began the meeting at 9:10 a.m. with introductions and a review of the agenda.

**Committee Ground Rules:**

Sara Breslow provided an overview of the proposed draft committee ground rules. The committee then discussed the proposed rules and “other issues needing to be addressed.” Project staff have incorporated the committee’s comments into a revised set of ground rules, while identifying issues that still require resolution at the December meeting. Following is a brief summary of major points of discussion (as elaborated upon in the revised ground rules):

**Consensus (rule 7)** – The committee believes it is important to strive to achieve consensus on decisions. If consensus cannot be reached on an issue, members will at that time identify an alternative plan for decision-making.

**Representation (rule 1)** – Many committee members represent specific communities or constituencies, others participate as individuals, and all have links to multiple interests or groups.

**Alternates (rule 8b)** – Committee members will designate alternates only for the rare cases of a necessary absence.

**Public attendance and comment (rule 9)** – Meetings will generally be open to the public. Members of the public may be invited to comment at designated times at select meetings and/or events if agreed upon by the committee. Further committee discussion of this issue is warranted.

**Minutes (rule 8f)** – Project staff will draft minutes delineating major topics, points of agreement and disagreement, action items and decisions. Issues of public availability of minutes and attribution of comments warrant further discussion.

**Meeting facilitation (rule 8d)** – Meetings will be coordinated by the project manager, Kirk Johnson. Discussion on individual topics will be facilitated by others as needed.

## **Agriculture Goal Statement**

Kirk Johnson provided an overview of the agriculture goal statement as proposed by the Agriculture Technical Committee. The Steering Committee suggested several issues for further consideration:

- should the word “thriving” be replaced with an alternative (possible “healthy,” “viable” or “profitable”) that is more compatible with “sustainable” and more consistent with Growth Management Act requirements?;
- should the statement begin with a different verb than “encourage,” as the project seeks to create conditions to meet the goal statement rather than promote it directly?;
- should the beginning verb be dropped entirely, creating more of a vision than a goal statement?;
- should forestry issues be included within the definition of agriculture or be addressed separately through the project, given the large presence of forest lands in the watershed?

Project staff will discuss those proposed changes with the Agriculture Technical Committee and return with a revised draft ready for final Steering Committee consideration.

## **Agriculture Study**

John Lombard presented a research proposal for a study titled “Skagit Agriculture: History, Indicators, and Thresholds,” to be developed by Hector Saez of the local WSU research station under guidance of the Agriculture Technical Committee. As the name implies, the study will focus on three areas of research, although there are insufficient funds available right now (\$50,000) to do all three. Project staff is seeking additional funding sources. A committee member said a “critical mass” study has been a top priority of the local agriculture industry; John Lombard said this study will take a nuanced look at various “critical thresholds” for agriculture. Another committee member suggested that funds might be conserved by targeting the historical portion of the study to what will best serve the other components of the study. He also noted that the indicators study should naturally lead to considering which indicators are the most “critical” for local agriculture.

## **Population Projections**

Kirk Johnson provided an overview of long-term population projections for the Skagit watershed. Population scenarios through 2060 will be used in developing the four initial futures and in selecting the “preferred future.” The state Office of Financial Management does not do 50-year population growth forecasts for counties, in part because such forecasts become increasingly unreliable the farther out they go. A consultant study done for Skagit County for water resource planning contains population scenarios through 2055; this will be one piece of information used to develop scenarios specifically for the alternative futures project through 2060. Project staff will work with city planners and others on a growth management/development technical committee.

## **Land Cover**

Josh Greenberg provided an overview of the land cover map and how its use will be helpful for this project.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.