

Snoqualmie Watershed Forum
MEETING SUMMARY
March 15, 2017
7:00-9:00 pm
Snoqualmie Tribal Office, Snoqualmie, WA

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lee Grumman	City of Carnation Councilmember, Chair
Henry Sladek	Town of Skykomish Councilmember, Vice-Chair
Jason Walker	City of Duvall Councilmember
Trevor Kostanich	City of North Bend Councilmember
Cindy Spiry	Snoqualmie Tribe (Alternate)
Josh Meidav	Tulalip Tribes (Alternate)
Eileen Carrel	Citizen Representative
Chris LaPointe	Stewardship Partners, Non-governmental Organization
Kathy Lambert	King County Councilmember
Bryan Holloway	City of Snoqualmie Councilmember
Jim Haack	King Conservation District Supervisor
Matt Gray	SVGA Citizen Representative
Becky Chaney	Citizen Representative
Charles Peterson	City of Snoqualmie Councilmember (Alternate)

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

I. Introductions

Lee Grumman, Forum Chair, welcomed everyone to the March Forum meeting and led off introductions for the meeting.

ACTION: The Forum approved the minutes as submitted from the January 18th meeting.

II. Updates and Announcements

Update on state budget – Perry Falcone (Acting Snoqualmie Salmon Recovery Manager) called the group’s attention to the Forum’s February letter to state legislators encouraging their support for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) and Floodplains by Design programs to fund salmon recovery work in our watershed and across the state. He noted that the state budget should come out very soon and that, with the emphasis on the need for public education funding, it may be a challenging biennium for salmon recovery programs. If members are down in Olympia, please use the letter when talking to your state representatives.

Update on salmon numbers – Beth leDoux (Snoqualmie Watershed Forum Technical Coordinator) discussed preliminary information on salmon numbers in the watershed. For Snoqualmie Chinook salmon, numbers for the 2015 drought season mirrored what we saw in 2014. The juvenile outmigration in January 2016 was the lowest ever recorded. We also experienced four floods over several weeks so the Chinook moved out of the system very small. We won’t know more until 2018 or 2019 when they return to the watershed to spawn. The fall 2016 returns looked better than the 2015 returns and more typical of

recent returns. The 2017 juvenile outmigration numbers are better than we saw in 2016 and screw trap operators are still seeing fish come through the trap.

The coho picture is trickier. In 2014, coho adult returns were 46,000; in 2015, they were the lowest on record, at 13,000. The coho escapement in 2016 was around 45,000, lower than we would like but better than 2015. Coho spend a year rearing; we expect the adult return numbers to show a slight uptick as with Chinook.

Update on Cooperative Watershed Management (CWM) grant proposals Beth also filled us in on the status of our CWM grant proposals. We have 21 applications submitted, totaling \$1.6M in requests, and we have \$872,000 to award. The Project Review Committee will have their work cut out for them to help rank the proposals. We have one education grant proposal, three monitoring, one planning and the rest are capital projects.

Recognition of departing Forum members Perry recognized Matt Gray, who has been the citizen representative to the Forum from the Snoqualmie Valley Governments Association for four years. Thanks to him for his service and also to Josh Meidav, who has been representing the Tulalip Tribes on the SWF for about a year. Josh will be moving to Seattle Public Utilities, and left us with the question: “What does the new federal climate mean for salmon and how do we move forward at the confluence of salmon recovery, treaty rights and climate change?” Staff presented Matt and Josh with SWF mugs and cards.

III. Presentation on the King County Surface Water Management (SWM) Fee Rate increase

John Taylor (King County Water and Land Resource Division, Assistant Director) presented on the recent passage by the King County Council of an increased SWM fee. King County Council approved a 40% increase to the SWM fee. John outlined the need for the increase and explained how the fee is used, including for salmon restoration projects.

Discussion

Q: Cindy Spiry asked if people can get credit for pervious area on their property.

A: John responded that commercial owners can reduce their rate by certain actions such as reducing percentages of pervious surface on their property but that is not done for individual residents – usually amount of land is too small to make it workable.

Q: John Velimesis (citizen) asked whether the goal of the program was to provide enough detention to equal pre-development conditions.

A: John responded that we would have to wait 100 years for the stormwater system to get us to that level. Currently we are trying to prioritize basins, and find out how we can incentivize this for landowners. We need to bring a lot of tools to bear to accomplish it.

Q: Chris LaPointe asked “What about beavers?”

A: John explained that there’s \$300,000 in this rate increase to bring on a beaver scientist and they will try to develop programmatic solutions so King County is not operating on a case by case basis. In some cases we will be able to use a pond leveler to keep dams from getting too high, in some cases we will relocate the beaver, and in some cases we will have to euthanize the beaver.

Perry noted that one Tulalip Tribes project on the CWM grant list would help move nuisance beavers from agricultural land to National Forest lands. John added that trapping beavers does not always have a good outcome for the beaver. Josh Meidav responded that nuisance beavers sometimes create off-channel habitat and could be helpful for salmon recovery due to their benefits to salmon habitat. John added that there are different solutions for different locations (i.e., flat vs. steep topography).

Q: King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert noted that 40% was a big increase. The needs are huge, and there are the court rulings on culverts, too. She does not think the rates can continue to climb.

A: John explained that rates go up episodically but the rate actually tracks with inflation (He showed a chart of the periodic fee increases matching pace with a rising line of inflation over years.) He added that we lose our rate base as annexations occur and that will likely continue.

Q: Eileen Carrel asked, as a rural landowner, what are concrete examples of the fees benefits.

A: Each private property doesn't always see a direct benefit. Landowners see some benefit through salmon restoration, for example. The County is trying to fix pre-existing problems.

Eileen responded that as a five acre property owner, with some salmon restoration on her land, vs. a massive development, small landowners feel like they are paying more than their share. John Velimesis added that big new developments are required to mitigate back to pre-development conditions. John Taylor responded that new developments have to meet Department of Ecology requirements. People say development upstream, changes all conditions downstream and that is partly reality and partly perception.

Q: Trevor Kostanich asked how King County prioritizes maintenance dollars?

A: This is based on National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for maintenance. Retrofitting will be based on science, where can we do the most for the least money.

Brian Bodenbach added that it's not really possible to go back to pre-development conditions. The ground only has so much capacity. Conifers used to do a lot of the job—they put 50% of the water back up into the atmosphere.

IV. Snoqualmie Forum Outreach

Polly Freeman (Snoqualmie Forum Communication Specialist) presented an overview of Snoqualmie Watershed Forum outreach efforts over the last couple of years, including the photo contest and resulting poster, factsheets on restoration projects (including a recent one on the Stillwater project), Interlocal Agreement materials, e-newsletters several times a year, an updated Living with Salmon brochure, and the Ten Year Status Report published in summer 2016.

John V. mentioned that Floodplains by Design staff have restoration graphics. He also noted that he is part of a sediment issues group that has put together a bibliography of studies on sediment. We need more education on the processes that put gravel in rivers.

Josh threw out the idea of combining public outreach and monitoring by doing drone flights of the watershed and stitching together the reaches. If done annually, they could show the large wood in the river. We have a new generation to educate – the millennials – and this could appeal to them as we “tell the story.”

Polly commented that this sounded similar to the idea of a “story map” about restoration in the watershed, which is something staff is considering.

Eileen commented that she knows a Google engineer who “does this stuff for fun” if you want his name.

Charles Peterson mentioned there are new gravel bars above the Falls that never used to be there. Whenever you talk about moving sediment, the environmentalists take objection, but you have to clean up the river basins to address the floods.

Kathy Lambert added that when you talk to the people who’ve lived in the watershed for a long time, they tell you how big the fish used to be. Now we can’t dredge and we don’t have fish. I believe in cleaning out the river and projects happen where there’s money.

Josh responded that it’s important to distinguish correlation from causation. Lots of other factors are changing in the watershed at the same time.

V. Snohomish Basin Climate Change Issue Paper

Beth leDoux presented the Climate Change Impacts on Salmon white paper. Beth described how patterns of flooding, precipitation, and the overall hydrology of the watershed will shift over time. This will create numerous impacts to salmon including high flows damaging salmon redds, low flows limiting juvenile salmon production and high summer temperatures creating potentially lethal conditions for fish. In the nearshore and estuary areas, a “coastal squeeze” will occur due to increased flooding and sea level rise further reducing the quantity and quality of salmon habitat available to salmon. Adaptation to climate change will be critical and this will involve continuing our restoration efforts but potentially doing more than we had anticipated and designing projects to deal with changing conditions. Beth added that protecting and restoring tributary streams, which have cooler water temperatures than the mainstem rivers, will be even more important in the future due to climate change.

Jason Walker stated that transportation is so relevant to everyone who lives in the Valley. We should get used to more flooding but we should look at cross-valley connections – we need to look at improving or elevating some of these routes but we also have the no net rise standard. Could Federal Emergency Management Agency accept another model so we could consider elevating a road?

Josh responded while planning in the Valley we should think about possible end points and different scenarios. Consider the “yellow causeway” in California that heads to Sacramento. It’s a big bypass, good for fish and flood conveyance. Raised causeways allow fish passage and decrease flood risk. They could accommodate the predicted climate change scenarios. Current roads in the Valley are levees.

John V. added that if we took out a levee and put roads on piers, we would create more room. How do you fund the causeway? They are a lot more expensive but there may be multiple sources. Perry noted that you can cobble big projects together with multiple funding sources.

VI. Forum Business

Forum Snoqualmie Valley Governments Association (SVGA) citizen representative seat selection:

Perry Falcone told the Forum that the SVGA appoints a citizen to the SWF to represent SVGA and citizens in incorporated cities in the Valley. Brian Bodenbach submitted his application by the deadline.

The final decision will be made by the SVGA at their March 22 meeting. Beth leDoux will attend that meeting to help tell SVGA about the Forum. Jason Walker is on SVGA and will help with the process.

Brian introduced himself to the Forum. He is impressed with the knowledge and passion shown by Forum members. He has worked on these issues for a long time and learned with Thornton Creek that it's better to save habitat before it's gone. You can't get it back and it's a lot less expensive to protect creeks rather than restore them. This is his home watershed now and it's special. He has seen climate changes in the last ten years. He has hope for the future as he sees young people getting involved.

Jason will present the Brian application to the SVGA meeting and let the Forum know the result.

Client Survey results

Perry presented highlights of the client survey. Public outreach is highly valued by Forum members but we need to think about a funding strategy. There was some input that we need to improve land use practices, but that is also the jurisdiction of the individual cities and the county. The Forum will need to discuss which emerging issues to tackle in the future.

VII. Public comment

Dan Calvert from Puget Sound Partnership noted that the proposed federal funding cuts are alarming to salmon advocates. They would reduce Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program from \$28M to \$2M and the federal Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund grants are proposed for elimination. This impacts our work and many multi-benefit actions occur through these programs. Reach out to your elected officials. It's not just the ecosystem, it impacts infrastructure, agriculture viability. Puget Sound Day on the Hill is slated for Washington D.C. on May 1-3. U.S. Representatives Heck and Kilmer are organizing the event. If you are interested, please participate or contact Dan Calvert for more information at 360.789.3165 or dan.calvert@psp.wa.gov

Cindy added that the loss of salmon recovery money to tribes means the loss of a lot of jobs.

Josh added that BIA funding is zeroed out for this year, which has a huge impact on tribes and region. We can pay now or pay later with more interest.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be May 17, 2017 at Preston Community Center from **6:30pm* to 9:00pm.**

*Please note the earlier start time