

Snohomish-Stillaguamish LIO Executive Committee Meeting Summary

*Thursday, September 1, 2016
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.*

Snohomish County Campus, Drewel Building, 6A04

LIO EC Members

Allan Giffen, City of Everett
Bill Blake, City of Arlington
Christie True, King County
Jason Walker, City of Duvall/ Snoqualmie Watershed
Pat Stevenson, Stillaguamish Tribe (Alt)
Tom Stiger, Port of Everett
Will Hall, Snohomish County

Participants and Guests

Sheida Sahandy, Executive Director, Puget
Sound Partnership (PSP)
Peter Murchie, Manager, NEP Programs, US
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Dan Calvert, PSP
Perry Falcone, King County

LIO Support Staff and Anchor QEA

Ann Bylin, Snohomish County
Beth Liddell, Snohomish County
Gregg Farris, Snohomish County
Kit Crump, Snohomish County
Mary Hurner, Snohomish County
Lynn Turner, Anchor QEA
Tracy Drury, Anchor QEA

Welcome, Introductions, Public Comments

Co-Chair Christie True opened the meeting and welcomed our special guests, Sheida Sahandy of the Puget Sound Partnership and Peter Murchie of the EPA. Introductions followed. There were no public comments.

On-going Business

Mary Hurner asked EC members if they would like any changes to the 6/30 meeting notes. No changes were requested and the meeting notes were approved.

Mary announced that the county hired a new LIO Coordinator, Jessica Hamill. Jessica is coming from the Department of Ecology, where she worked on the Floodplains by Design initiative. Her first day is September 12th.

Draft Snohomish Stillaguamish LIO Ecosystem Recovery Plan

Lynn Turner, Anchor QEA, began her presentation with an overview of the accomplishments of the Implementation Committee (IC) since the June 30th Executive Committee (EC) meeting. She stated that approximately 35 individuals (committee members and subject matter experts) participated in 5 Web Ex meetings on specific topics and also participated in the IC meeting on last week on August 25th. The feedback from participants during the WebEx meetings was incorporated in the Draft LIO Ecosystem Recovery Plan, along

with feedback received at previous meetings. The Draft Plan was reviewed by the IC, and comments were discussed on the 25th. The changes the IC requested were incorporated into a revised Draft Plan, now presented for EC review.

EC Plan Review: Lynn reviewed the sections of the plan, identifying which portions included new information. Comments from the Executive Committee were noted as follows:

- Table of Contents
 - Will Hall noted that it would be helpful if all tables and figures were numbered and listed here.
- Executive Summary, and Section 1.0 Overview
 - No changes requested.
 - Lynn noted that some refinement is continuing to the geographic and cultural context to respond to comments from committee members.
- Section 2.0 Priority Vital Signs, Components and Goals
 - Perry Falcone noted that some of the pending goals that were not included in the draft plan (such as an Estuaries goal for the Snohomish watershed) will come from the Chinook salmon recovery plans, which are being updated now. The EC agreed that it made sense to add the current Chinook recovery plan goal, and a footnote referring to the pending update.
 - Terry Williams commented that it would be helpful to know what level of funding will be available before setting goals. He stated that improving the alignment of federal, state and local goals would save money in the permit processes; allowing more funding to be directed toward projects which would allow us to progress toward recovery more efficiently.
- Section 3.0, Key Pressures, and Section 4.0, Current Context in the LIO:
 - No changes were requested. EC members were reminded that they have opportunity to re-review this on their own and comment next week.
 - Terry commented that he believes government rule-making can be a pressure itself. He noted the similarity between the LIO's ecosystem recovery planning on the local scale and President Obama's *Priority Agenda for Enhancing the Climate Resilience of America's Natural Resources* on the national scale, which prompted NOAA and other federal agencies to designate the Snohomish River Estuary as one of seven Resilient Lands and Waters Partnerships across the country. He hopes that both efforts will result in gains in conservation and restoration for key resource lands and waters to make them more resilient to a changing climate.
- Section 5.0, Strategies and Actions:
 - Lynn stated that all the local Sno-Stilly LIO members' 2016 NTAs fit under the ten strategies. She is working on cross-referencing the strategies with the 2016 Action Agenda sub-strategies, and will also add in any regional NTAs that are requested by committee members.
 - Lynn noted that in addition to the 2016 NTAs and currently ongoing work, several strategies highlight the need for regional assistance. Strategy SSLIO 03.1 has no local NTAs because it is dependent entirely on regional assistance. Peter asked what we meant by calling for regional assistance. Lynn used the example of Strategy SSLIO 08.1 to show that although the strategy includes numerous actions at the local level, planning for an increasing population while protecting natural resources includes actions ranked by the LIO as lower for local implementation feasibility but higher for impact due to the need for this regional assistance. Many of the changes that will be required at the local level to ensure ecosystem recovery are controlled by federal and state laws. Without a state or federal mandate, it is difficult for local policies and regulations to achieve adequate levels of protection. Specific actions, such as a cultural shift to allow planning decisions to

be made through a Puget Sound recovery lens, are beyond the scope of the LIO. Peter remarked that this information will help inform the EPA regarding local needs.

- Section 6.0, Gaps Barriers and Needs
 - Will requested an addition relating to regulatory inefficiency as a barrier to recovery. Erik Stockdale submitted language that outlines this issue and will be inserted in this section. There are no NTAs associated with action(s) needed to make improvements in this area, as we will need regional assistance for that. Peter raised the question of how we hold the right conversations with permit issuers early in the process for greater success. Sheida said that there is a process at the state to align grants, timing and permitting, but it would be good to have specific examples of where things could be improved.
- Section 7.0, Adaptive Management
 - Dan Calvert commented that he is expecting to get guidance from the Partnership about what's next for the Plan; in terms of required updates, etc.
 - Christie noted that, in regard to adaptive management, this LIO can also determine what's next for the plan. Peter noted that the LIO could do an annual status report on the gaps and barriers, after sorting them into two categories – those you can control and those you cannot control.

Process to Finalize Draft Plan: Lynn stated that she'd like to receive as many comments as possible at this meeting. Those with additional comments may send them via email to Lynn and Mary by September 9th for inclusion in the Final Draft. Lynn will incorporate the Executive Committee's feedback by September 14th and submit the document and an updated Miradi file to Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator Dan Calvert. Dan will use the Miradi file and the LIO's draft text to reproduce the Plan in PSP's template. A Final Draft Snohomish Stillaguamish LIO Ecosystem Recovery Plan will be sent to all LIO Committee members afterward.

Will said that he was confident that the Draft Plan, with the requested changes incorporated, will be ready to submit to Puget Sound Partnership. Christie agreed, and both asked if anyone was uncomfortable with this approach. Hearing no opposition, the Draft Plan with edits (both noted today and potential submittals next week) was approved.

Christie requested that the project team pass along the Executive Committee's appreciation to the Implementation Committee for all the work they accomplished on this project.

Completion of the Supplemental Grant Contract and Sub-contract with Anchor QEA

Mary notified the committee that the county's contract with Anchor QEA was coming to a close on September 30th. This contract is a sub-contract of the county's Supplemental Funding contract with PSP for ecosystem planning, Snohomish County's contract with PSP for the administration of the LIO and the separate Supplemental Grant contract are also both ending on that date.

Mary expressed the project team's appreciation for the good work Anchor QEA staff have accomplished on the ecosystem recovery plan; specifically noting project lead Lynn Turner, facilitator/Miradi specialist Abby Hook and principal Tracy Drury.

Discussion/Key Messages for PSP and EPA

Prior to the meeting, Executive Committee members worked together to develop a list of three key discussion topics that included questions and perspectives from our LIO. (See attachment.) A record of this discussion, aligned with those three topics, follows.

Future Funding Model: Peter Murchie stated that he wants to acknowledge the significant effort the LIOs have made and the tension between that effort and what's not enough money. He understands that \$28 million/year is not enough to support recovery, and wants to learn how we can work together to do a better job of getting the funding the region needs. He also wants to acknowledge the value of protection policies and program alignment in supporting recovery. Peter verified that the EPA is committed to building in a multi-year process, awarding \$100,000/year to the LIOs. Will asked if Peter had some recommendations regarding what the LIOs can do to improve the process. Peter replied that the focus of the LIO's planning efforts should not just be around NEP funds but around the local priorities, for better consistency and alignment of funding. Peter noted that the SIATs (Strategic Initiative Advisory Teams) have started working and we should think about inviting them to an LIO meeting for discussion.

In regard to the allocation, Peter stated that the EPA made it equal among Strategic Initiatives this year, but will make new decisions in future years. Will asked when it will be timely to provide input into funding the 3 strategic initiatives. Peter stated that the region is likely to get \$28 million next year, and it would be best to wait to see what the funding decisions are. Sheida Sahandy added that PSP and the EPA want to understand the principles (that will drive recovery) before they address the numbers.

Streamline Processes: Christie conveyed the perspective of the membership, stating that this effort has involved a significant planning and process, yet there's considerable uncertainty about what's next and the impact of these ecosystem recovery plans. She stated that the investment of staff time needs to be commensurate with the gain, and although the EPA does not determine the amount of funding Congress awards, it does control the requirements for competing for that funding, which is currently not in sync.

Sheida stated that PSP is thinking of proposing a discrete statutory change from a 2-year cycle to update the Puget Sound Action Agenda to a 4-year cycle. She agreed that we need to move in the direction of simplifying requirements to provide more time and money toward implementation. However, PSP is currently challenged by a smaller budget and has to focus on modifying their operation to adjust.

Currently, PSP is undergoing a state audit to evaluate their progress in achieving their mission. The results of this audit will be available in January, after which PSP may implement new cost-saving approaches and propose other statutory changes.

In regard to monitoring and adaptive management, and the current processes that are already in place in the watersheds, Sheida agreed that continued monitoring is critical to success, and we need to look at how can we do a better job. She noted that she would like to see more robust monitoring and adaptive management, better integration with the Action Agenda and more emphasis on implementation.

Ecosystem Recovery Plan: The vision behind the ecosystem recovery planning effort was to obtain a parallel framework that communicated the ecosystem needs within the local watersheds and provided the basis for acquiring as much funding as possible directed toward the Puget Sound area. This level of detail has emerged through the planning process, and now we want to focus the federal government on the needs of our whole system.

Sheida stated that she is looking for feedback on the planning effort. She explained that PSP did not intend for this regional work to seem random or unconnected, but rather yield results to bring value – as the basis for

implementation strategies and successful projects. PSP does not intend to make the LIO's update the ecosystem recovery plans. They would like to see the LIOs use these plans as the basis for greater success in receiving grant awards for projects.

Christie and Will thanked Sheida and Peter for their visit to our LIO. Sheida and Peter expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to learn what our LIO has accomplished and engage in discussion with committee members. Both stated that they would like to return for future discussions.

The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

Attached: Topics for the LIO Executive Committee's Discussion with PSP and EPA

DRAFT