

**SUMMARY NOTES**  
**SNOHOMISH SUSTAINABLE LANDS STRATEGY**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING 3.7.5**

(Snohomish focus)

10:00 – 12:25 Wednesday May 10, 2017

**Tulalip Tribes Training Room 162**  
**6406 Marine Drive, Tulalip, WA 98271**

**PARTICIPANTS**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Colin Wahl, Tulalip Tribes Fish Biologist for Terry Williams, SLS Co-Chair (Fish) | Tristan Klesick, Stillaguamish farmer, SLS Co-Chair (Ag)      |
| Kristin Kelly, Pilchuck Audubon Society   | Monte Marti, Sno Conservation Dist. Manager, EC Ag rep        |
| David Remlinger, Lord Hill Farms, SLS EC Ag rep.                                  | C.K. Eidem, Ducks Unlimited, SLS EC Fish rep                  |
| Dan Calvert, Puget Sound Partnership Liaison                                      | Dan Bartelheimer, Snohomish County Farm Bureau                |
| Janet Curran, NOAA Fisheries  | Lindsey Desmul, WDFW  |
| Jay Krienitz, WDFW, ESRP Program Manager  | Aaron Kopp, Snohomish County SWM River Engineer               |
| Paul Cereghino, NOAA Restoration Center   | Erik Stockdale, Snohomish County SWM Special Projects Manager |
| Dan Evans, SLS Facilitator  | Valerie Normand, Snohomish County SWM Communications          |
| Heather Cole, The Nature Conservancy  | Linda Neunzig, SnoCo Ag Coordinator                           |
| Alexa Ramos, Snohomish County SWM   | Deborah Knight, Stanwood Consultant                           |
| Meg Bommarito, WA Dept. of Ecology  | Nick Bratton, Forterra  |
| Brett Shattuck, Tulalip Tribes, Restoration Ecologist                             | Lauren Tracy, Snohomish County SWM Funding Coordinator        |
| Robin Fey, PCC Farmland Trust   | Cindy Dittbrenner, Sno Conservation Dist.                     |
| Leif Fixen, American Farmland Trust   | Loren Brokaw, WDFW Project Manager                            |
| Bob Everitt, WDFW, NW Regional Director   |   |

**PURPOSE:** The May meeting of the SLS Executive Committee was focused on the Snohomish Basin with an assessment of a part of the Lower Skykomish (RM 10-13) and options to address bank erosion and other issues and opportunities. In addition, WDFW will outlined their habitat land needs and proposals; Tulalip / Snohomish Forum rep provided a fish status report; and there were a number of farm-fish-flood updates.

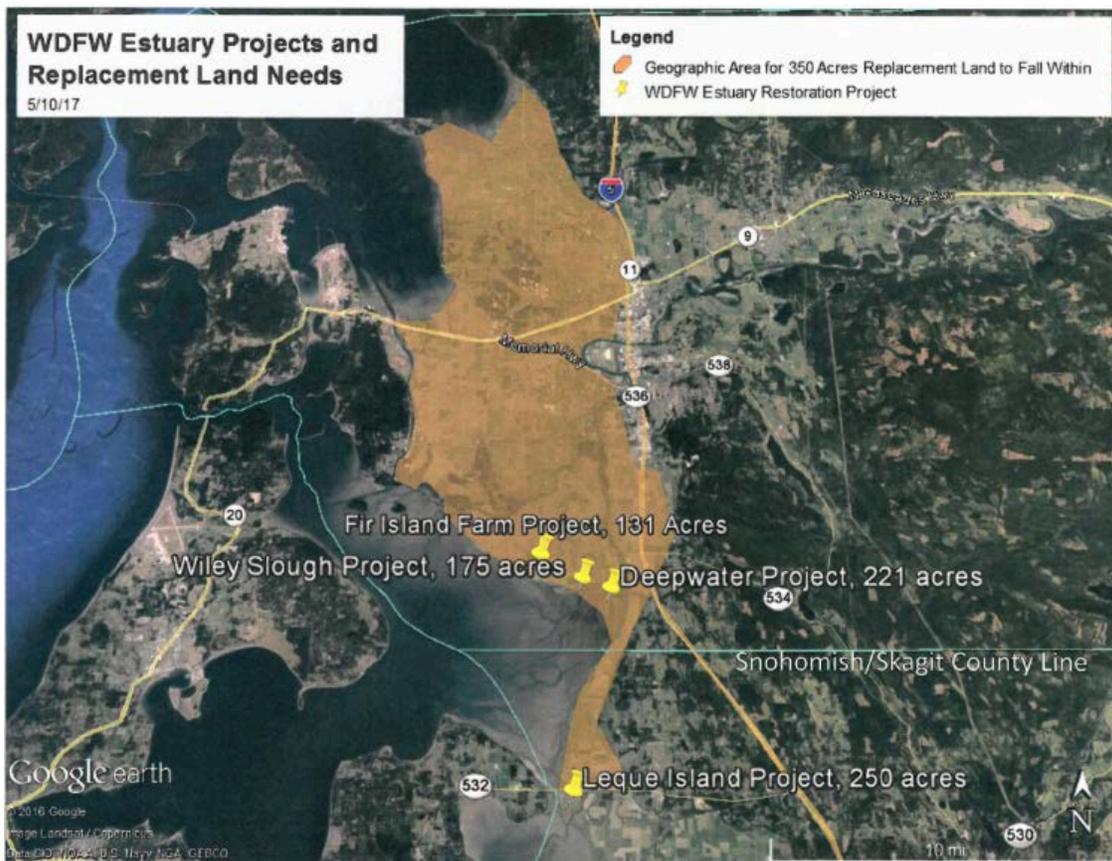
## 1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS (10:00-10:10)

- a. **Review purpose, agenda:** The Executive Committee was called to order. Dan Evans reviewed the agenda and purpose for today's meeting, and thanked Tulalip Tribes for hosting the SLS meeting at their Admin Center. To accommodate presenter schedules, the WDFW Land Management Strategies was moved into first position.
- b. **Introductions:** Tulalip natural resources staffers, Colin Wahl and Brett Shattuck, were introduced as presenter and alternates for co-chair Terry Williams, who was out of town at a fisheries meeting. Other participants introduced themselves.

## 2. WDFW LAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (10:10-11:10)

### a. WDFW land holdings, commitments overview

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Loren Brokaw and WDFW NW regional director, Bob Everitt, gave an overview of WDFW's land management strategies for North Puget Sound, with a focus on the need for replacement habitat for the Leque Island project that is now emphasizing salt marsh salmon for salmon instead of migratory waterfowl, for which acquisition grants were made years ago (See map below).



The main drivers for the original acquisition program were preserving waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities. WDFW's statutory land management directive is to perpetuate, preserve and manage wildlife habitat and recreational uses. Recently, more priority is being given to estuary habitats for restoration projects due to the salmon ESA listings.

USFWS North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants restrict changes in land use from waterfowl habitat to salmon estuary restoration projects. Any such conversion requires replacement of the lost land for the other use to maintain good standing.

**b. Focus on Lower Stillaguamish, Leque & replacement habitat:**

WDFW's summary of North Puget Sound NAWCA acquisitions and estuary restoration objectives that became paramount with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) salmon listings beginning in 1998 provides additional detail, especially with respect to Leque Island and the need to provide replacement habitat for the Leque project:

"Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) owns lands in the North Puget Sound region that have historically functioned as a stronghold for Pacific flyway waterfowl management and high quality waterfowl hunting. Some of these lands, including the Fir Island Farms Snow Goose Reserve and **Leque Island** Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area, were acquired or used as match for United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) funds. These lands were acquired for the purpose of farming waterfowl forage crops and protecting freshwater wetland habitat, and WDFW is contractually obligated to NAWCA to continue to provide these functions in the North Puget Sound region. Other properties, including the Island Units (Deepwater and Milltown), Headquarters (Wiley Slough), Samish Units, and Padilla Bay Unit were acquired with Pittman Robertson Act and other funding sources. This land was acquired for the purposes of farming and freshwater wetland protection for waterfowl management and WDFW has programmatic obligations to continue to provide these functions.

Puget Sound Chinook salmon were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1998. As a co-author of the 2005 Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan, WDFW has an obligation to lead recovery actions in the Skagit River Watershed. Additionally, due to Skagit House Bill 1418, salmon recovery efforts have been strongly directed at publically owned lands first. As signatory to the Tidegate Fish Initiative (TFI), WDFW also has an obligation to the farming community to lead estuary restoration efforts for Chinook recovery. The 2005 Skagit Chinook recovery plan identifies restoration of estuary habitat as the highest priority for Chinook recovery. The recovery plan established a goal of 1.35 million new smolts, which is associated with a need to restore approximately 2,700 acres of estuary habitat. Lowland parcels, particularly those adjacent to marine dikes in areas with high densities of juvenile

Chinook salmon, have the highest potential for re-establishing estuary habitat and subsequently Chinook recovery. Although much of this land is privately held, WDFW owns several hundred acres that have become of significant interest for estuary restoration.

WDFW is actively engaged in salmon habitat restoration and restoration planning projects on WDFW-owned lands. To date, WDFW has collaborated to restore estuarine habitat at the Headquarters Unit (Wiley Slough), the Island Unit (Deepwater Slough Phase 1 and Milltown Phase 1) and the Fir Island Farm Snow Goose Reserve and is planning an estuary restoration project at Leque Island scheduled for 2018. WDFW is also considering restoration of additional habitat at Deepwater Slough Phase 2 and Milltown Phase 2. Because of the TFI and other collaborative agreements, the agricultural community has supported these ongoing restoration efforts.

While in the feasibility phases of the Fir Island Farm and Leque Island Estuary Restoration Projects, WDFW identified that portions of the properties were used as match for a United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant that described that the properties would be managed for farmed snow goose forage and freshwater wetland protection into perpetuity. The USFWS NAWCA program has communicated that WDFW is responsible for mitigating losses of habitat types on an acre-for-acre basis if the Fir Island Farm and Leque Island Units are restored to estuary habitat, in order to transfer the NAWCA strings tied to the properties.

Although WDFW is supportive of moving forward with ecosystem restoration projects, WDFW also recognizes that it must comply with NAWCA contractual obligations and proposes to balance salmon recovery and estuary restoration efforts with waterfowl management and upland waterfowl hunting program objectives. To accomplish this, WDFW completed outreach to agricultural representatives and other stakeholders, and identified properties with willing sellers that would meet NAWCA's requirement and fit with WDFW waterfowl hunting program objectives."

Tristan noted that the crops harvested at the Johnson Farm do not lend themselves to cover cropping for waterfowl forage use. Tristan asked Bob and Loren to send the SLS committee their high points on the issue of land use conversion related to grant funds so the committee can see where they can engage.

Dan will facilitate putting together a letter to RCO.

**c. Ebey Island update, issues (tidegate), opportunities**

Dan Bartelheimer explained that in Diking District 1 (DD1), WDFW is a non-voting party since they're not a private landowner, but they're the largest

landowner. A broken tidegate is causing flooding and making the land unfarmable. He suggested WDFW needs to be more aggressive at the table and meet with the DD1 commissioners. It is not ideal habitat for hunting anymore either. There are a lot of issues, but a lot could be gained here.

Tristan commented that producers need to be the ones demanding proper drainage infrastructure since they're the ones most affected by this failing tidegate. He suggested they put pressure on the whole diking district. Can the farm bureau tackle this? Their backing would help.

Dan Bartelheimer will facilitate the scheduling of a meeting on the matter.

### **3. LOWER SKYKOMISH ASSESSMENT & ALTERNATIVES REPORT (11:10-11:40)**

#### **a. Overview of RM 10-13 Report**

Aaron Kopp, SnoCo SWM river engineer, summarized a recently completed assessment and alternatives analysis for a portion of the Lower Skykomish River Reach – River Mile 10 – 13 – where bank erosion has resulted in the loss of farmland and threatened farm structures. Landowners came to the County for assistance, resulting in the search for solutions and the Report. The Report is intended to outline solutions that are long-term, reach-scale, and fundable. Aaron described the reach's geomorphology, key issues, assessment, and next steps.

The Lower Sky (RM 10-13) Assessment and Alternatives Report identifies a number of tools and strategies for potential use to control erosion, reduce flood damage, and create habitat. Bank Stabilization Measures include flood fencing, engineered log jams and flow deflectors, revetments and groins using anchored large wood or rock, back channels, and revegetation of riparian areas.

The Report outlines a number of alternatives but Aaron estimated that implementation of a comprehensive plan for the subreach would likely cost \$2 million or more, and that this very dynamic part of the river, where there is much sediment deposition and channel migration, would continue to deposit, erode, and cut new channels.

(see map of RM 10-13 area below).



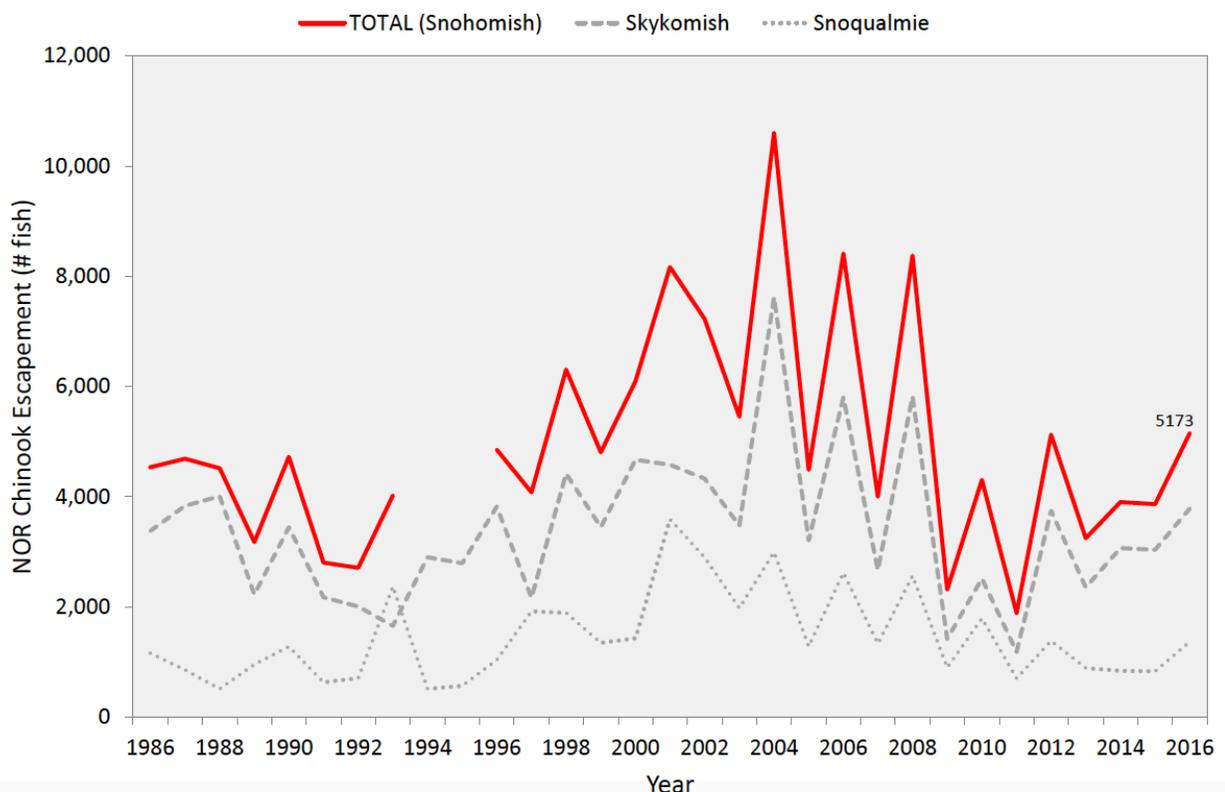
Monte mentioned that there are conversations with legislators underway and they may want to engage on this subject.

#### 4. FISH, FARM, FLOOD CONTROL UPDATES (11:40-12:25)

##### a. Salmon and shellfish status; Forum update

Colin Wahl (Tulalip Natural Resources) gave a presentation on fish status from the 2016 population analysis. Most of salmon populations are experiencing overall declines, however, ocean conditions have improved recently as part of a favorable swing in the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), and fish managers are controlling exploitation rates more effectively than in the past. See Chinook Escapement chart below. For additional detail, Colin's presentation is available on the SLS website. <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/2194/Sustainable-Lands-Strategy>

## Snohomish Chinook Escapement



b. **Ag Caucus report, priorities:** Tristan requested the Ag Caucus report be tabled until the June Executive Committee meeting (June 13<sup>th</sup>).

c. **Flood management updates:** Dan Bartelheimer has been discussing flood elevation levels with SWM staff, with a possible report back in June.

**d. Legislative report, updates**

Tristan and Monte spoke with Rep. Norma Smith, a member of the House Capital Budget Committee. She is wary of using bonded funds for design projects. Sen. Jim Honeyford, Chair of the Senate committee is holding the Capital Budget to address the Hirst decision regarding exempt wells and analysis of groundwater pumping.

**e. Other reports**

Heather Cole announced the FbD Workshop will be held on June 2<sup>nd</sup> from 9 AM – 3:30 PM at the Mountaineers. There will be a storytelling challenge.

Robin announced that the Ag prioritization project/maps are still in progress.

Linda Neunzig reported on the Arlington SD case. They're putting in a letter of support of the Ag land prices from farm land services from the PCC.

Nick Bratton reported that there had been a meeting regarding the Ag land bank idea that came about at a Stillaguamish meeting. There were good ideas for partnership to buy land, administer, and recruit farmers.

**5. WRAP UP, ADJOURN (11:55-12:30)**

The next SLS EC meeting is scheduled for 10:30 – 12:25 June 13<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) in Room 6A04 of Snohomish County's east admin. Building.