

**SUMMARY NOTES**  
**SNOHOMISH SUSTAINABLE LANDS STRATEGY**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 3.7.10**

**Tuesday October 10, 2017 10:00 – 12:30**

Snohomish County Admin East 6th floor Conference Room 6A04  
 3000 Rockefeller Ave. Everett, WA 98201

**PARTICIPANTS**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Brian Bookey, National Food, SLS EC Ag rep                        | Tristan Klesick, Stillaguamish farmer, SLS Co-Chair (Ag) by phone |
| Monte Marti, Sno Conservation Dist. Manager, EC Ag rep            | C.K. Eidem, Ducks Unlimited, SLS EC Fish rep                      |
| Leif Fixen, American Farmland Trust                               | Lisa Bertelson, American Farmland Trust                           |
| Dave Remlinger, Lord Hill Farms, SLS EC Ag rep                    | Dan Bartelheimer, Snohomish County Farm Bureau                    |
| Dan Evans, SLS Facilitator  | Terri Strandberg, SnoCo PDS                                       |
| Erik Stockdale, Snohomish County SWM Special Projects Coordinator | Ikuno Masterson, SnoCo PDS  |
| Bob Aldrich, River training specialist                            | Heather Cole, The Nature Conservancy                              |
| Robin Fay, PCC Farmland Trust                                     | Nick Bratton, Forterra  |
| Kirk Lakey, WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife                           | Alexa Ramos, SnoCo SWM Planner                                    |
| Lindsey Desmul, WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife                       | Linda Neunzig, SnoCo Ag Coordinator                               |
| Paul Cereghino, NOAA Restoration Center, Coordinated Investment   | Lauren Tracy, SnoCo SWM   |
| Gregg Farris, SnoCo SWM   | Diane Hennessey, Ecology, NW regional office                      |

**PURPOSE:** The October SLS Executive Committee (EC) meeting had a Countywide / Ag focus and included further review and discussion of foundational SLS principles, goals, and role before building a communications strategy on it. The EC reviewed and discussed SLS meeting schedule for 2018, including EC, Task Groups, and Coordination Group; received updates on SLS strategic priorities with discussion of key issues, opportunities, and needs for each Task; and reports from partners. Participants were invited to bring a brown bag lunch and continue conversations after the meeting.

**1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTION (10:00-10:10)**

a. Review purpose, agenda

b. Introductions

Dan Evans introduced Ikuno Masterson with Snohomish County PDS (long range planning). Her background includes working on environmental land use issues in both the private and public sector. She also worked with Dan Evans on the initial Tri-County salmon conservation initiative when

Chinook and steelhead were first listed 1999, so she has considerable background in the fish, farm, flood arena.

Bob Aldrich, for Public Works and SWM river design specialist, was in attendance and introduced himself. Bob has come out of retirement and is working as a volunteer with landowner Dave Remlinger, Tulalip Tribal staff, and Ducks Unlimited on the Confluence Project.

## **2. Task Group Updates, Discussion (10:10 - 11:20)**

### **a. Restatement of SLS “basics” – foundational principles, goals, role**

Dan provided a brief overview of the SLS mission, goals, objectives, and approach, noting it’s important for SLS participants to understand how the SLS functions, its role and value proposition, and how the SLS approaches coordinated, net gain resource management. He and Erik Stockdale will be calling on the Exec. Comm. members and other key SLS participants to get their take on these issues by asking three key questions – 1) what are the defining goals of the SLS? 2) What’s the role of the SLS in achieving tangible gains? And 3) what is the SLS communications strategy? This exercise looks at who are we, what do we do, and why do we do it. It serves as a check-in to see what value we seek to add and if we’re fulfilling that. The exercise will provide input for EC and partner review of the SLS “basics.”

### **b. Regulatory Efficiency: culverts, drainage, Responsible Stewardship**

Paul Cereghino reported on the progress of the Regulatory Efficiency Task Group.

Culverts – Paul and Task Group partners are working with the County to identify culvert sites. They are gearing up for a November workshop to look at a sample of different culverts and examine what regulatory issues might come up and require more engagement with regulators to work through. The group will be making a wish-list of priority culverts and culvert types.

Drainage – Task Group participants are trying to understand the implications of BMPs. The group is working with Coordinated Diking Council director Neil Wheeler, who is finishing up a drainage inventory for the French Slough Flood Control District (FSFCD). The two main issues are: 1) potential impacts caused by ditch cleaning, and 2) addressing the potential impacts through BMPs, self-mitigating measures, and habitat improvements. Beaver are a related challenge when land managers re-vegetate ditches and streams to address the ditch cleaning impacts. Agencies and land managers need to consider who bears the risk of this. Whatcom Co. Conservation District pioneered a model approach that utilized 15-foot hedge rows with CREP, but then the funding source changed the minimum buffer requirements and the program, which provided significant benefits without serious harm to farming, died.

Tristan commented that he would like to see incentive programs on the table for incorporation and a demonstration of net gain cooperation.

Dan and WDFW's Kirk Lakey discussed the overlap between FSFCD's original 5-year HPA, which established a water course classification system similar to the Skagit TFI and menu of corresponding BMPs, and the Whatcom model presented here, noting the Whatcom model appears to be gaining agency acceptance.

Tristan mentioned that he's concerned about who will have to carry the burden of completing those drainage system plans since many of the people here are volunteers. Kirk and Paul are confident that the Whatcom model is a good template that wouldn't require much additional work to fit the needs of districts within the County.

Brian Bookey asked about how beaver are managed when they're problematic. Paul described the standard practices for management and how that becomes costly. Brian asked about WDFW's role in this. Kirk described the authority of the HPA and the recent changes in rules for dealing with beavers. Brian asked about US Fish and Wildlife federally – Kirk said they were probably relocating the beavers onto federal lands, before the recent rule changes prevented that.

CK mentioned that people he works with use beaver and their dams to hold water in the winter, however, there are questions as to whether this is permitted.

Dan asked about self-mitigating measures and WDFW and other agency mitigation requirements. Kirk commented on WDFW not having jurisdiction on any man-made ditches and that mitigation requirements are based on the water course type and fish and wildlife presence, among other things.

c. Reach Plans: Sky, Stilly, Sno-Estuary

Erik Stockdale reported on progress regarding the reach scale plans. Erik and SnoCo Task Group members have made a fair amount of progress in drafting reach plan chapters in the Stillaguamish Reach. They are currently working on Chapters 1 – 4 through the end of the month. Erik passed out Stilly reach plan maps. The web map is not publicly available yet, but should be shortly. Recent changes include extending the reach four miles upriver to include more farmland, based on staff considerations and recommendations. They also removed the Pilchuck Creek area. There are three different maps: reach planning area, 2016 farmland survey, and future land use planning designation. The south slough is mapped as a side channel with its own river mile markings. Mapping conventions make it challenging to talk about locations in the narrative, but the team is working through it.

The reach planning team is working to engage land owners about what they think of the plan, the challenges they'd like to see addressed in the plan, potential restoration opportunities we don't know about, and to get the word out about the plan. Tristan suggested getting on one of the Flood Control District meeting agendas since they meet monthly.

Lauren asked if the reach plan includes information on land use conversion *from* Ag land and *to* Ag land in a format that can be overlaid

and used to make calculations regarding conversion rates. Erik said that the team does not at this time have such information, but if there's data out there they'd like to include it. There is some murkiness around the issue of what property owners do in terms of subdivision and development in the footprint of their existing farms. There was discussion about "soft conversion" of farmland, meaning large lot buildout. Brian commented that subdividing and turning lots is a real land preservation challenge we face and should be included in the plan. There was discussion about down zoning (e.g., Ag20 or Ag40) and the role TDRs might play.

Terri Strandberg of PDS commented that this has been talked about since the GMA was put into practice in 1990 and there has been consistent and significant push back. Something needs to change to address this incremental loss of farmland. And it would need to be broadly supported to be successful and sustainable.

Erik mentioned he wants to change language in the Lower Sky plan to reflect the input from PDS. They're meeting next week to discuss their feedback on the plan.

Heather commented that Puyallup is struggling with farmland conversion too and has come up with metrics to evaluate the tradeoffs over time. Erik is also interested in the prioritization mapping work that PCC Farmland Trust has done.

d. Resource Lands Protection: TDR, PCC prioritization,\* AFT, SVPI

Heather announced the Snohomish Regional Lands Resource working group and SVPI working group will be having a combined meeting. They're looking to increase efficiency and best utilize the groups' participants time since the two groups include many of the same people.

PCC Farmland Trust is meeting with Dale Reiner regarding an easement on his lands tomorrow. So things are moving forward in the Lower Sky area as well.

TNC and Susan Meyers are putting together a workshop on acquisition clarity between the various agencies to look at how state and federal acquisition processes can work better together.

Robin Fey gave an overview of the PCC Farmland Prioritization land map for Ag land protection. He noted it's a roadmap not a blueprint. The SLS has been anticipating the completion of the initial prioritization map, which will be a useful tool for identifying the high priority farmland in the County, and strategies, policies, and campaigns to protect it. The map is currently based on a parcel level, which can reveal individual property owners – which farmland is priority or not – and is therefore not ready for public release. PCC FT is working on a publicly accessible web map version that would blur individual parcel lines. It should be available shortly and will be posted on the [SLS website](#).

Brian raised the appraisal process for Betcher Farm. Monte Marti said SCD is developing a riparian easement and using an appraiser to do evaluations for that. Brian asked if they could connect and coordinate.

Lisa Bertelson of the NW American Farmland Trust said their new director, John Piotti, met with several members of the EC to get a sense of what the SLS does. He said he had some thoughts, but they haven't had a chance to debrief yet so stay tuned.

Forterra's Nick Bratton provided an update regarding TDRs, which is building critical momentum to help protect resource lands. Nick is wrapping up the TDR bank research project that the County retained Forterra to undertake. He is going to push back the presentation to Council until December due to the budget process schedule. The County is moving forward with the multi-family re-zone, which could be a kick-starter for the TDR program. It would be helpful for SLS to send a letter of support. Forterra is also working with a developer who is interested in buying all of the County's 49 TDR credits, which would help build the TDR bank. The TDR team is working with City of Seattle to open up the South Lake Union receiving area marketplace there for credits that would create an additional source of demand for Snohomish County credits.

Last month, Forterra reconvened its Snohomish County luncheon to rekindle their regional events. There were 130 guests. Executive Somers spoke to the group. The Snohomish Forterra organization also gave out an award for collaboration. Terry Williams was one of the co-recipients. The other joint recipient was not there then, but was at the EC meeting, and Nick presented Brian Bookey with his award.

- e. Ag Resilience Plan: plan development, ag engagement, climate impacts  
Ag Resilience Plan lead, Cindy Dittbrenner, was at another meeting, so Monte asked the EC to please read Cindy's report, which was handed out. See Attachment 1 below.
- f. Confluence Projects: 180 ac restoration, Meadow Wood, sub-reach plan  
Dan (for Task Group lead, Morgan Ruff) provided background on the project and handed out the Task Group report. See Attachment 2 below. Landowner Dave Remlinger, Tulalip Tribal staff, and Ducks Unlimited (CK Eidem) are the key parties. Dave is a major landowner in the lower Snohomish; several miles of the river front and a 180-acre island. As noted above, Bob Aldrich is supporting river analysis and design voluntarily. The project would have the 180-acres put into a conservation easement. Working with Tulalip on a net gain. Dave showed a video of the property. Dave announced he will be stepping off the SLS Executive Committee in order to avoid conflict of interest and allow him sufficient time to complete this project.

Bob provided more details. There's a lot of flooding in Riley Slough and gravel dropping out in this stretch of the river. City of Monroe is willing to work with us on this project. "RM 0.5" has been a project in the queue for years. The river wants to anabranch and does not want to be confined to one channel. Dendritic channels run through Dave's property; could use the gravel to save project costs. Aiming to train the river and take pressure off the armored bank side. The sandy loam is very good for Ag, and we don't want to lose it. Using a reach-scale approach, Monte commented that the Reiner property should be a part of the equation too.

The committee thanked Dave for his service on SLS in light of his resignation announcement.

- g. Communications: essential items, strategy based on Basics & capacity

### **3. SLS 2018 Meeting Schedule (11:20 – 11:30)**

- a. Review draft 2018 Executive Committee Meeting Schedule

### **4. Partner and Farm-Fish-Flood Updates (11:30 – 12:00)**

- a. Ag: Ag Board, SCD reports; Focus on Farming Nov. 1; SCFB

Linda reported that Derek Sandison, Director of the Washington Department of Agriculture, will be at Focus on Farming with Dave Somers presenting the awards. Linda requested that SLS Executive Committee members be there in the morning for that event. Dir. Sandison is providing the keynote address so conveners should be there to hear what he has to say. Dir. Sandison also wants to talk to the landowners, especially those dealing with river issues, such as flooding and erosion. As for TDR, the County Executive and Council are onboard with doing something and considering deferring the cost until the end or doing away with the fee. We don't know where it will land but we will get something. It'll be going through with the budget negotiations. It will require a code change. Budget decisions are usually known in November right before Thanksgiving so stay tuned.

Brian asked about the school board meeting. Linda said they have not met yet.

- b. SWM Business Plan

Gregg gave a presentation describing the background behind the SWM Business Plan. His purpose at SLS is to get input from stakeholders to see what SWM services they think are most important. The overview described the main categories of SWM services: drainage, water quality, aquatic habitat, and floodplains.

Tristan asked about the CWDAB and service area consolidation. Gregg said the CWDAB is continuing through the end of the year.

Brian commented that the Business Plan should look at benefits and burdens as related to fees and the work that SWM performs.

Lauren commented that the County has the largest ability to generate revenue; locally, dedicated, voter supported revenue is the only thing that will begin to address the funding needs for restoration work here. Getting more involved in programs like Conservation Futures was one suggestion.

Dan commented on the development pressure we face as the second fastest growing County in the nation. We need to figure out how to accommodate, in a smart way, the development that will be coming. Serving as counsel to SLS on the policy avenues that we might use for furthering our interests.

Tristan commented that incentives to landowners and agreeing on BMPs is important. He doesn't think finding more money or expanding the government is the answer. He mentioned we should be finding more

efficiencies. An incentive mechanism would be a good answer to the restoration funding needs.

Nick commented that SWM and PDS and Parks have significant stewardship responsibilities through easements. Is there a way to think of a streamlined way to involve all the departments involved in stewardship and more effectively use public resources?

CK commented that the SLS support we provide is important.

Paul commented on whether the scope is appropriate. May need to look at the bigger picture outside of SWM rather than in piecemeal “services”.

Tristan mentioned overlaying all of the stakeholder wish lists/plans would be helpful, but it will take leadership.

Gregg asked the committee to get any additional comments to him within the week.

c. Value of Environmental Services Nov. 7 (Earth Economics)

Lauren passed out the event flyer and info sheets. Results indicate it would take 300 years to protect/restore the 60 acres. Excise tax last year could have generated \$41 M. That would be the type of local, dedicated funding source that could have a big impact on our work. Would like to add this to the RSP as an addendum. The event will be recorded and available for webcast viewing if you're unable to attend in person.

d. Climate Impacts

e. Grants & Funding: NOAA grants Leque, estuary values; Cap Bdgt / FbD

f. PCC Farmland Trust prioritization report, initial map (carry over to lunch)\*

Leif said on October 16<sup>th</sup> the AFT, TNC, and Dairy Federation will be having a talk on environmental markets.

Working with KCD and King Co. on an analysis of net loss from Ag. Results indicate \$5M in King Co. and \$5.6M in Snohomish Co. which doesn't really add up. But \$3.8M comes from “other” category: \$1M from agro tourism and rec., \$664K from custom farm work, \$1M in rent. Average: \$4,000/farm

Tristan commented that size and production needs to be taken into account. There's a difference between business farmers and hobby farmers.

**5. WRAP UP AND ADJOURN (12:00);**

**6. Brown Bag Lunch, PCC Map Demo, Informal Discussion (12:00 – 12:30)**

Robin handed out copies of the map. The PCC mapping project criteria included soils, slope, and other physical factors as well as proximity to a UGA, projected growth rates and population increases. Incompatible uses were screened out. Anything already in public ownership or conserved was screened out too. Then the remaining parcels were ranked. Category breaks are fairly arbitrary. Top 2 categories add up to about 14,000 acres. Heather asked how population is incorporated. Robin said we wanted to look at threats to land conversion via

population growth and there is a good idea of where the population density is going to rise.

Dan B. asked why a certain parcel in the marshland was ranked lower priority than all the surrounding ones. Robin said it can be looked at more closely and followed-up on.

Brian commented on the parcels in the cities and how parcels are being judged by today's status looking at what is farmable rather than what is being farmed. Development pressure in the upland is higher and the farmland is better so not sure what the weighting on the criteria was there. Paul noted this was a computer generated synthesis so now we need to look at it with human local knowledge to determine if it makes sense.

Ag Board Update: there were meaningful conversations at the last meeting with the Executive on Conservation Futures and Ag's role. There's a lot of politics to be dealt with. The cities are big players on the board. There's a little bit of a distorted view of "success" from our perspective. There's a lot of developer pressure on TDR and single family zoning. Seemed to be good receptiveness from the newer members. Sam Low seemed supportive and Nat Nehring seems to want to be a student of these issues. Seems like he wants to help.

Adjourned at 12:45pm.

# ATTACHMENT 1: AG RESILIENCE PLAN

Monthly SLS Steering Committee Report  
October 2017

## AGRICULTURE RESILIENCE PLAN TASK GROUP PROGRESS REPORT

| Priority Objective                     | Description   | Tasks  | Work Group   |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Ag Resilience Plan                  | (a) Ag Resilience Plan: ii. Develop plan of priority ag resilience projects   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage stakeholders</li> <li>• Complete flood, groundwater, and crop impacts modeling</li> <li>• Scope and design priority ag resilience projects</li> <li>• Implement priority objectives</li> </ul> | (a) Ag Resilience: <b>Cindy Dittbrenner, SCD</b>   |
| (a) Ag Resilience Report               | iii. Secure funding for project implementation  |  |  |
| (b) Farmland protection prioritization | (b) Land Prioritization: County-wide analysis of farmland protection opportunities to inform Resource Land Protection Strategy and Ag Resilience Plan |  | (b) PCC Prioritization: <b>Hilary Aten, PCC FT</b> |

The Agriculture Resilience Plan will help farmers plan for future changes and risk, and scope and prioritize landscape-scale agriculture projects that can be incorporated into a multi-benefit approach to floodplain management in Snohomish County. This plan will help build a resilient agricultural community into the future through a combination of information gathering and sharing, creation of online planning tools, project scoping and design, project implementation, and farmland protection. This planning effort is driven by a Steering Committee of farmers and will also be vetted by the larger agricultural community. For more information see [www.snohomishcd.org/ag-resilience](http://www.snohomishcd.org/ag-resilience).

### PROGRESS

**Flood modeling** – Started September (to be completed by March 2018). UW and SSBN are under contract to complete the flood modeling for the Stillaguamish and Snohomish Rivers.

**Groundwater modeling** – Working with partners to gather all existing groundwater level monitoring data (continuous) in the Snohomish and Stillaguamish estuaries. Will then determine if additional wells are needed. Planning a technical modeling committee meeting in mid-October to plan next steps and ensure collaboration with other partners. This group will be expanded to include Tulalip Tribes (SLAMM modeling), Stillaguamish Tribe, Snohomish County Emergency Management, American Farmland Trust, and NOAA.

**Additional modeling** – Working with partners, consultants and ESRP to re-scope the grant proposal currently on hold due to the state budget process. This new proposal may include ag land subsidence modeling, saltwater intrusion (groundwater), and water storage modeling in the upper watersheds. This new scope of work will need to be re-reviewed.

**Farmland protection prioritization** – Ongoing. The first phase of the prioritization mapping was completed. The map will be refined to incorporate results of flood and groundwater modeling.

**Crop impacts modeling and online tool** – Tool to be completed December, 2017 (no funding secured for crop impacts modeling).

**OBSTACLES and OPPORTUNITIES:** Have not been able to secure funding to scope and design projects or complete the crop impacts modeling work. Advocate for funding to keep this moving forward.