Meeting Summary
Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Technical Committee
Web Conference
9am – 12pm, May 5, 2020

In attendance:

1. Colin Wahl, Tulalip Tribes
2. Emily Davis, Snoqualmie Forum
3. Cory Zyla, Snoqualmie Forum
4. Gretchen Glaub, Snohomish County
5. Josh Kubo, King County
6. Elissa Ostergaard, Snoqualmie Forum
7. Susan Oneil, ESA
8. Brett Shattuck, Tulalip Tribes
9. Kurt Nelson, Tulalip Tribes
10. Matt Baerwalde, Snoqualmie Tribe
11. Denise Krownbell, Seattle City Light
12. Denise DiSanto, King County
13. Mike Crewson, Tulalip Tribes
14. Kollin Higgins, King County
15. Keith Binkley, SnoPUD
16. Carson Moscoso, SCD
17. Kyle Koch, AASF
18. Kirk Lakey, WDFW
19. Jim Shannon, Port of Everett rep
20. Heather Khan, Dept. of Ecology
21. Beth leDoux, King County

Meeting Summary:

Introductions
Colin opened the meeting, reviewed the agenda, and introductions.

Updates
Emily reminded the group about the Tech Comm webpage on Snohomish County's website. You can find meeting summaries, presentations, documents, etc. posted a week or two after the meetings for reference. Unable to post the Zoom recordings on there so far, but those are available. This meeting is being recorded and will be shared by email afterwards.

Snohomish Acquisition Strategy
Colin reminded the committee that it has had several presentations from Brett on the tool so already familiar with it. The goal today is to discuss how to move forward with adopting and implementing it in the basin. Colin presented discussion questions to consider.

Brett reiterated that the primary interest is to use this as a prioritization tool for funding and opportunistic acquisitions for salmon recovery. This would facilitate proactive proposals using the tool to justify basis for acquiring specific lands. It allows flexibility and provides lead time with funding to be

able to then seize opportunities when properties come on the market before it gets sold to someone else. The tool provides relative scores within a geographic area where everything is important. Good discussion starter.

Colin commented that it seems like more of a decision support tool rather than a "strategy" per se. So the question is how do we integrate this into the larger scope of the whole basin when it doesn't currently apply to the Snoqualmie and other tributaries?

Brett explained that the team always viewed this as Phase 1 with the plan to expand it to the Snoqualmie etc. in the future. They just did not do so initially because it seemed like comparing apples to oranges – the metrics used for scoring the floodplain units (FPU) in the Skykomish and Pilchuck are weighted heavily on the relative elevation to the river. Whereas the Snoqualmie mainstem has natural levees and low elevations on the river and high elevations adjacent to the river. The same goes for the estuary. A direct comparison would therefore skew the scores because the rivers and habitats behave so differently. That's why they have proposed that the metrics used in the estuary and French Creek could be applied differently as appropriate than in the Snoqualmie, Skykomish, and Pilchuck. The only potential impact is that it doesn't offer the proactive securing of funds in areas not included in the geographic extent, but it shouldn't prevent specific, important parcel acquisitions in those areas. This tool enables proactive pursuit of funding when we don't have specific parcels identified quite yet.

Elissa asked if restoration need on the parcel is included in the tool's scoring scheme (e.g. levee removal/bank armoring)? Does this tie in or is it duplicative of the Sustainable Land Strategy identification of parcels for restoration or acquisition? How much of a priority are those parcels that have a restoration need? Brett clarified that the tool gives a restoration potential score, conservation potential score, and base score with relative level of degradation informing those scores. Everyone's idea of what's most important to focus on is slightly different as do the funding entities. The tool gives you a suite of metrics and properties relative to one another. This can be viewed through different lenses depending on what you're looking for. It doesn't make decisions for you.

Kurt added that the strategy was not used to develop the basin's current SLS Fbd project package. But the team hopes it will be able to inform the fish side of things down the road. It doesn't account for flood or agriculture concerns though.

Gretchen proposed changing the tool's name in order to differentiate it as a decision tool rather than an acquisition strategy. The "acquisition strategy" would be: protecting the highest and best use lands with the most potential for restoration. Then this decision support tool and scores are the way to assess and help identify lands to target for investment. That could be helpful for managing the understanding behind the semantics.

The Tech Comm is being asked to support the use of this tool in pursuit of that strategy for the applicable geographic extent incorporated in the tool at this time. The group considered if we adopt this tool, what does that mean for those parcels not included in its present geographic scope? Do we just evaluate those on a case-by-case basis? Do we adopt this tool overall or just for the SRFB projects he has proposed this round?

Some members shared their opinion that the tool makes a lot of sense for the geographical extent. As long as we acknowledge we haven't had a discussion about whether it prioritizes the areas in its present scope over those that it doesn't, then we can move it forward. It poses an interesting question about

what the strategy is and should be. Maybe that's a discussion the tool sets up for us. The actual development of the strategy is a bigger task. Others added that it could be used to inform Tech Comm recommendation for submitting letters of support for the Fbd proposal being discussed today.

Kurt noted that this tool is based on the Stillaguamish one. Their tool, in its first Phase, was used for the North Fork and a little on the South Fork, but didn't preclude acquisitions in the Lower Stillaguamish which the tool was not applicable to at that time. Now they're just finishing the Phase that applies to the Lower Stilly.

Denise added that the Skagit has an acquisition strategy separate from its decision support tool and it has been very beneficial. This dynamic removes the weighting issue. She suggested making a pros and cons assessment of the Skagit and the Stilly processes to bring forward the best of both and make the strongest strategy and tool for the Snohomish basin.

Brett commented that there is no timeline for extending the geography yet. Tulalip Tribes doesn't have funding for this work at this time. The team wanted to get buy-in before diving in deeper. If we want to move into the next Phase of extending the geographical extent then they will likely need to secure grant funds.

Susan clarified the semantics, restating it seems like there are actually three pieces: the GIS tool, the accompanying strategy document for that geographic extent presently covered, and the global acquisition strategy statement that Gretchen characterized earlier (like those we talk about in the plan update). She suggested using a different term to differentiate between the two "strategies".

Colin noted it would be good to have a subcommittee of the Tech Comm, at least until we have a global strategy developed and maybe beyond, to evaluate and implement the tool. Members were directed to reach out to Emily and/or Colin to participate. After taking a vote, there was general support for moving forward with adopting the tool.

Emily reviewed the next steps: form a subcommittee and draft a letter of recommendation to submit to the Forum?

Juvenile Salmon in the Snoqualmie Study—Presented by Josh Kubo, King County Science Section
The Snoqualmie supports the freshwater life stages of various salmonids including Chinook. Understanding how their habitat use patterns and needs has been an ongoing priority. Reviewed life history stages of salmonids in the Snoqualmie watershed. Reviewed scope, methods, and results of the study. Guiding research questions and findings:

A. What is their distribution? Snoqualmie River supports year-round use. Chinook are found throughout the river.
B. Which habitats do they use? A diversity of habitats support juvenile Chinook with minimal growth during late-fall and winter. Mainstem, floodplain, and tributaries areas are critical for juvenile Chinook.
C. What are potential explanatory variables and habitat attributes? Classification/regression analysis is ongoing, but suggests month, habitat type, depth, and substrate could all be potential factors. Further examination via potential break-out by month or reach could provide more insight into the variable associations as well.

D. Does distribution and habitat use change across months? Yes, there appears to be habitat use shifts across seasons. Conditions across seasons are important. Monitoring is needed across habitats and seasons for a full understanding of habitat needs.

See presentation for more details.

Members asked if there was concern about variable interaction in the analysis (e.g. tree analysis and LWD). Josh responded that it's something we're considering as we evaluate attributes moving forward.

Matt commented that maybe they're not seeing salmonids because of lack of wood; wood supports Chinook habitat.

Elissa asked about their lack of sampling in August and September – there are a lot of recreational floaters in the Fall City reach during those months. What do you think about the potential impacts of that? Is it important to investigate given the presence observed there? Josh noted that they can't electrofish during those months due to the water temperature levels being too high. So that's why they didn't sample then. But the fish are likely present since they were found above and below that reach.

Kurt asked about whether fish recovered late in the year appeared to be going through smoltification and leaving at the end of the year? Josh said most had very strong parr marks and a low appearance of smoltification. It didn't appear that they would be going through smoltification in the near term.

Kurt asked if temperatures coming out of the tributaries have attracted the fish to those locations. Josh said that although they measured temperatures he doesn't think they were seeking out the tributaries, but just ended up there. Since they sampled right after the flood there were similar temperatures throughout the area.

Kollin mentoned that the Tulalips were evaluating otoliths and asked if they were looking at mineral signatures to pick out particular locations on tributaries. This could help figure out where the fish are coming from. Colin noted they are doing so. Mike Crewson added that they haven't looked at temperatures or isotopes of the otoliths, but have looked at thermal marks of watersheds. He also noted the declines in yearling factions were concerning. Since the yearlings have to live in the freshwater for 1.5 years the temperatures may be having impacts on them over time.

SRFB 2020 Recommendations

Gretchen informed the group that there is no ranked list yet. After the state technical reviewers went over the projects there were 2 cleared, 9 NMI (needs more information), and 1 POC (project of concern). Local reviewers also feel they need more information before finishing their scoring. She will keep the committee posted as things progress.

Floodplains by Design

The lead entity needs committee recommendation to provide a letter of support for the four projects from the Snohomish Basin submitting applications. The committee had presentations from three out of the four projects. The last one is from Snohomish County who will be presenting next month. It's pretty clear that the projects we have heard from so far have a clear salmon nexus (Cherry Valley Initiative, Snoqualmie Levee Setback, and Hafner-Barfuse (aka Fall City Reach Restoration)).

The committee approved submitting letters of support for these projects.

Roundtable Updates—Focus on "How is COVID affecting your group?"
Colin shared that Tulalip has a number of staff on furlough. Hopefully, they will be returning next month after the "Stay home, stay safe" order is lifted. A lot of data collection work is not being done at the moment like the estuary monitoring with Mike Rustay. Trapping isn't happening either.

Brett shared that the dam removal for the Pilchuck Dam project is still planned for this summer. See website for more information: Pilchuckriverdam.com

Mike Rustay shared that Snohomish County has canceled most estuary sampling work. They are still planning to do some Smith Island and Mid-Spencer site-specific monitoring without the boat. State of our Waters ambient habitat water monitoring is still planning to continue. Lots of projects are slowly moving forward. Thomas Eddy/Bob Heirman Park hasn't been able to move forward with outreach, but still doing some design work.

Josh shared that King County project monitoring is restricted to that which can be done using social distancing practices (no boat work) so mostly just snorkel monitoring in WRIA 8.

Keith shared that many PUD staff are under mandatory teleworking orders. A small set of field staff are working to manage requirements under the FERC license. They're still collecting data on the smolt trap. Staff took Spada Lake profiles with social distancing measures recently.

Mike C shared Tulalip had initiated intensive before/after release sampling for early/late timed release to improve hatchery fish size, but that is on hold. They are still tagging fish though. The boat operators are from Canada so it's almost certain it won't be happening this year. They received one grant extension to do the work next year instead.

Carson shared that SCD has not furloughed any staff, but some riparian planting work is on hold. Fish passage projects are moving ahead.

Kyle shared that all AASF employees had been laid off, but layoffs have been ended as of today. They are trying to get a small business loan to cover costs, but remain unsure about where things will be for summer field work.

Doug shared that the WFC office closed, but he's not sure about field work status.

Kirk shared that WDFW is still issuing HPAs.

Jim shared that Blue Heron Slough construction is starting back up.

Target Setting—Presentation by Elissa Ostergaard
Part of the plan update includes looking at our 20-year targets from the 2005 plan and updating them as needed. Elissa gave everyone a refresher on what is in the 2005 plan, how were they developed, how they fit in with the plan update, and the proposed approach for updating targets through 2030.

The plan for the update was to collect and synthesize new information and develop a framework. This is still in progress. Timeline includes a draft in June 2021 with adoption later that year.

The 2005 plan was a 50-year plan with goals for 2055 based on habitat needs to meet co-manager targets for salmon. It also had 10-year milestones for habitat improvements. It took a 6-year long process to complete the plan which was based on the tri-county framework.

The Snohomish basin was the NOAA and region's test case. All the EASC work was done in conjunction with the technical review team (TRT) of scientific experts. There were eight steps in the EASC to synthesize and prioritize information. The Forum had a strong role with the TRT and Tech Comm to take the technical analysis and make political considerations about what alternatives to include in the plan. The EASC purpose was to compile all the previous work and provide guidance on what actions to take where to improve fish populations as well as develop and evaluate the different conservation scenarios. The technical basis included studies from the late 90s and early 00s: EDT modeling, limiting factors analysis, watershed process model, potential capacity model, Snohomish habitat conditions. The EASC is available online if interested in more details.

In the Snoqualmie they set interim targets for 2025 and an updated their 10-year project list. Targets were organized by subbasin strategy group and habitat type. In some cases, the first 10-year targets were doubled or made to be 40% of total goal.

The plan update is for setting 25-year targets; 2030 will be halfway to our 50-year goals. In the update we will see if we need to revise the 50-year goals, remove targets that are not useful, and add new ones as appropriate. We will also consider common indicators from PSP for regional targets and where more or less effort is needed.

Susan asked the core team to describe process they're thinking aboutLayout our thinking around who and when this work will get done and when it will come back to the committee? Get volunteers from the committee?

The core team is considering dividing by habitat type as folllows -

- Estuary white paper group well-established.
- Nearshore group – planning to coordinate with Kathleen's return, MRC, and LIO engaged as well as marine survival report coming out.
- Freshwater as a standalone body of work.
- Riparian work group.

Kurt asked about how the lifecycle NTA fits into this. Gretchen said the timelines unfortunately don't mesh. But they will be paying attention to it. Mike Rustay doesn't expect the lifecycle modeling to provide findings too far out of alignment with what we will propose in the update. Mike Crewson said Tulalip is looking at the offshore marine area and have several studies and plan to continue to do so. They're specifically monitoring this due to the poor survival. It's an important factor to consider along with nearshore and estuary.
Kurt noted that Josh Chamberlain is writing an estuary white paper. He suggested someone write a nearshore/offshore marine areas white paper as well. Gretchen said we haven't talked about a white paper for offshore marine, but have talked about the marine survival project data incorporation.

Kurt added that the original plan focused on Chinook and touched on other species. He asked if it is the goal of the group is to continue to focus on Chinook and not include other species that are also in decline as well. Gretchen said the core team has talked about whether or not to identify specific targets

for steelhead and Coho. Susan commented that Colin's conceptual model does include multiple species. But there's still uncertainty about how far to go with the others. The idea is to consider and include them, but not have this be a comprehensive recovery plan for steelhead or Coho.

Matt asked why we wouldn't also include chum and pink salmon then if we were to add steelhead and Coho. Looking at broader trends, chum abundance has been really concerning.
Colin suggested chum could be discussed in the sections on backwater habitats in the lower mainstem and other tributaries. And Coho could be for small tributaries and beaver dams.

Mike C agreed that offshore marine sampling being part of a monitoring update would make sense rather than the target update.

Kirk added that the salmon plan we're updating is tied to specific legislature and numeric recovery goals for Chinook populations. We won't have that for these other species being considered for inclusion. It's been recognized that restoration projects aimed at Chinook will offer benefits to other species as well.

Adjourned at 12:03pm.