

SLS Steering Committee Meeting Notes

February 11, 2021 | 10:00AM – 12:00PM



Present: David Roberts, Linda Lyshall, Erik Stockdale, Daryl Williams, C.K. Eidem, Linda Neunzig, Andy Werkhoven, and Robin Fay

Not present: Brian Bookey

1. Meet and greet

- Rodney is moving to Arizona to retire. David Roberts suggested Kirk Lakey as a potential Steering Committee (SC) member.

2. Team building and sharing:

- We need to adapt and work harder to build relationships over Zoom and can still move forward until face-to-face meetings are possible again.
- Some felt optimism with the new administration.
- Local food production and demand has skyrocketed, and some farmers moved from wholesale to local sales.
- Need to see more understanding by all the long-term effects of the pandemic on agriculture. Sharing about the economic lives of farmers would be a good thing for others to better understand. There is a feeling that we are not all in this together as some may think.
- Gratitude was expressed for those who are working from home, but concern about the impact of loneliness on staff and the long-term effects on the workforce. Also, how to train or welcome a new employee adequately in a remote work situation.
- Some are missing the in-person relationship building in meetings and the value of shared experiences that connects us especially on virtual calls.
- Special topic sessions have been a nice place to “meet” outside of our usual meetings with the accompanying networking value.
- The sooner we can get back to science-informed decisions, the better for our economy and emotional health.
- **Linda Neunzig and Andy Werkhoven agreed to work together to create a presentation about farm economics and local impacts.**

3. Topics

Decide policy issues to address in 2021

Goal: Review the list of potential policy issues and decide which to prioritize for SC effort this year.

- We reviewed a document titled POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR THE SC IN 2021 (see end of document) which was broken down into categories of development work, feedback, and support. He proposed that we begin with focus on what collaboration looks like for SLS with a tie-in to developing a working mission statement and goals.
- David pointed out that there are no apparent goals for SLS. This led to a good discussion of the history of SLS. Linda Neunzig pointed to some early documents which she shared with David. She also has old documents from Monte which she will share. Erik will provide David with a box of documents of Legislative work SLS did that was abandoned. Currently, we only have the bylaws to guide the process. They are oriented exclusively toward addressing SLS leadership, not

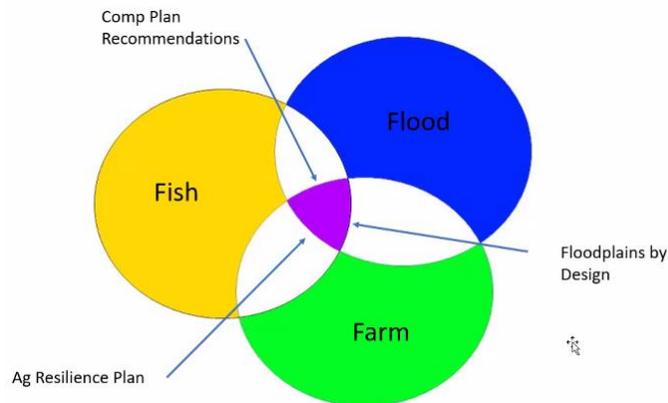
outcomes. Linda recalled the bylaws were developed as a result of a lawsuit and came along after SLS was created which was 2011.

- We noted that trust has been built since those early days. We have better relationships.
- David pointed out the Structure and Roles document has clarified many things but seeing these documents will provide much-needed context.
- **We discussed working on a vision, goals, and clarification of the mission statement in small groups. Linda Lyshall, Daryl Williams, and C.K. Eidem volunteered to help David design the conversation format.** CK offered to share the Ducks Unlimited mission and vision statement and will bring examples of good missions and vision statements from other organizations to the discussion. He felt we could shorten the SLS mission so it's more memorable and craft a vision statement no longer than a single sentence. David noted that backbone organizations outline goals and desired outcomes for each interest.
- Advocacy will require more preparation ahead of the Legislative session.
- **David asked Daryl to check with Terry to see if he has anything to share. David will compile key takeaways from these old documents. He plans to ask the Partners to review it to see how they inform the process now.**

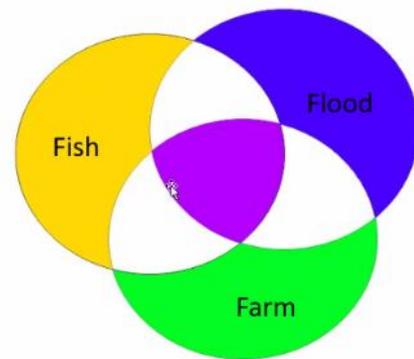
SLS Projects and Collaboration

Goals: Consider how we identify SLS projects and tie that to SLS collaboration

- David pointed out that SLS may want to be supporting more projects in the future. At this time, the focus is mostly on Floodplains by Design. He shares some examples of other projects and policy efforts that could be considered SLS outcomes. He pointed out that funders will be able to see where SLS efforts are making a difference.
- David shared the graphic below which got us thinking about how to expand the area of collaboration shown in purple through better communication and sharing:



DEFINING SLS PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION



HOW DO WE EXPAND COLLABORATION WHILE RESPECTING INTEREST AUTONOMY?

- We need to consider how we respect what people need to do to advance their work outside of the collaborative space without negatively impacting the purple collaborative space.
- How do we bring more projects into the collaborative (purple) space? How many projects are currently being undertaken outside the SLS collaborative space that could advance the SLS

mission? If SLS were to endorse these projects as mutually beneficial, then would it advance awareness about the good happening in the watershed?

- This is an opportunity to define and rally around a larger collaborative space that honors autonomy and expands areas of collaboration.
- Without SLS engaged in this way, the little stories get lost or get attributed to the efforts of others. What if SLS could embrace a larger universe of projects? For instance, could SLS have written a letter of support for the Food and Farm Center facility funding? We could use our influence; if we're truly partners, then we should be willing to support projects that don't affect us. What if we had a stack of letters for project proposals to endorse several times a year? SLS would also know more about what others are doing and how it helps advance our mission.
- We generally support this idea as long as there is net gain, and the projects pass the "do no harm" litmus test.
- With greater clarity, we can cultivate SLS membership by bringing meaningful action and building interest among current and new members.

Engaging the SLS Partners

Goals: Review roles and identify ways to effectively inform, engage, and utilize SLS Partners talents

- We discussed ways to engage and interact with Partners and how decisions will be made. We acknowledged we don't have authority to tell any Partner what they can and can't do. Erik likened it to a "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon" process.
- We envision that as projects are being developed (no matter the funding source), they would come across the SLS table seeking a letter of support or endorsement based on mutual benefit in line with the SLS mission. We envisioned Partners seeking these letters of support or endorsements (from the Steering Committee).
- Policy development or review might be approached differently than project review.
- When engaging Partners, we felt transparency was important, i.e., explain what we're doing, get input and feedback, and encourage back-and-forth collaboration. We discussed asking the Partners what initiatives they want to bring to the Steering Committee. We can do a lot with Partners while maintaining efficiency. He sees our (Steering Committee) ability to hash out issues as a big part of our strength and potential.
- Andy Werkhoven mentioned a cooperative model with The NW Farm Credit Services which meets quarterly and works hard to better understand and advance conversations by learning more about each other. Better relationships and understanding contribute to better ideas and more agreement.
- Robin Fay highlighted the need to bring the Partners along with us. When the Partners say a decision needs to be made and it takes a lot of background work, we could do that as a smaller group to help move the process. He feels that some decisions as a Steering Committee require the Partners to help. He wants to see more of this back-and-forth flow of information, feedback, and decision sharing. He emphasized the need for our decisions to stay in sync with the group, otherwise we lose credibility.
- We all felt that the monthly newsletter is improving our communication and keeping Partners informed.

- **To address Andy's comment about building more understanding, David suggested that a Steering Committee member report out what they have been working on at each Partner meeting.**
- We discussed the drop-off in attendance at SLS meetings about two years ago. We reflected that perhaps the meetings were seen as ineffective, that some people opted-out through self-selection, or disengaged when things aren't going their way. We need to make these meetings important by asking what keeps people coming. Daryl noted that people came because of conflict. Perhaps, people weren't seeing progress or outcomes weren't highlighted. People need to see progress or meeting fatigue takes over.
- David pointed out it is important to show what everyone is getting out of the process with the time and energy spent.
- Linda Neunzig shared that people ask her what SLS has done or is doing. She explains that SLS is not a project-based organization, so it's hard to express what we are doing.
- Setting expectations of this group is a problem. CK said that differing expectations have contributed to mission drift. A big part of the goal conversation will be to identify what we want to do, set expectations, and communicate it to the world.
- Andy shared he feels like a gatekeeper for agricultural interests. He said it would be nice to not have to re-explain when projects impact ag. He wants Partners to better understand this, so he doesn't have to explain it over and over.
- David pointed out that the value in everyone learning together. We are all reasonably enlightened about the issues and sensitivities, but we could communicate better with the rest of the community. How do we take this approach to the rest of the community and impart more understanding?

4. Dates for future meetings

- The SC will be meeting every other month starting again in February 2021.
 - Next meeting is April 8 – Daryl, CK, and Linda will cue up materials for the discussion of mission, goals and vision.
 - Future SC meetings: June 10, August 12, October 14, and December 9

5. Agenda for March 11 Partner meeting

- Share an update on the policy issues we plan to address and that we will be engaging with Partners in the development of tools, processes, policies.
- Solicit information from the group about upcoming grants.
- Discuss the next steps in the County Comp Plan review process so we aren't scrambling.
- Asking the Partners about other project timelines.

David will work with Daryl and Linda Lyshall to develop the final agenda.

Adjourn: 11:43 AM