

SLS Steering Committee Meeting Notes

April 8, 2021 | 10:00AM – 12:00PM

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

Facilitator: David Roberts



1. Roundtable discussion

- We discussed timing for the Ag Caucus meeting to review the Land Acquisition Strategy. Spencer Easton would like to hold it before May 1. David asked about meeting with the Fish Caucus, but Linda felt there was adequate participation of fish interests in the development of the tool.
- Linda is planning for monitoring for May with fish and farm groups. She will work with David regarding scheduling. Metrics are being pulled out of the reach scale and other plans. There is no shortage of metrics for us to use in defining goals. The Fish and Farm caucuses will each prioritize their goals, then bring them together to come to consensus.
- CK asked if there would be utility in having another group for waterfowl in the monitoring plan. Having some bird monitoring or other wildlife goals might add value and open up possibilities for additional funding. Linda indicated they could add category for add wildlife goals, but that it was not necessary to add another group. Waterfowl need farmland and estuaries. If areas were managed in a way to include birds, it would be a win-win for the others too. Ducks Unlimited supports estuary restoration too. Scale and species matter with estuary restoration. You are changing the metrics for birds, but it gets convoluted with access issues.

2. Topics

- SLS Vision, Mission and Goals (David)

Goal: Review historical context of SLS and discuss the development of goals for discussion with SLS Partners.

For the last couple of months, we have been uncovering and reviewing historical documents from SLS. These are providing important insights into the effort's early intentions. David circulated the Snohomish County Sustainable Lands Strategy Phase 1 Framework Report (March 14, 2011). He prepared a summary of the document which we reviewed. Some of the concepts show up in the mission statement found in the bi-laws including the focus on net-gain. (David's summary is in the appendix to these notes.)

David also summarized the Sustainable Lands Strategy, Phase 2 Agricultural Net Gain Plan Process (July 7, 2011). The purpose of this document was to bring agricultural plans into parity with well-developed watershed and salmon recovery processes. We reviewed this plan and found that some of the planned actions had been completed while others were not. In addition, some key questions and considerations may still be lingering.

Andy shared concerns related to viability of the agricultural industry, particularly the loss of farmland. CK said we can't solve all the challenges, but we can articulate the message internally and outside our committee. Having an equivalent plan for ag similar to salmon and water plans is key to balance these interests.

Daryl shared another draft document which he discovered with file named “Dec 2011 Net Gain Goals”. It contained specific ideas pertaining to net gain for all three Fs targeted to both the Snohomish and Stillaguamish watersheds on pages 2 and 3. David pointed out that these documents are very important and need to be stored where people can be easily located.

These original targets set in December 2011 will be great for the monitoring process review! The monitoring program will set more specific actions and goals. The monitoring program will be reaching out to everyone in the SLS group, so they can inform this discussion. We could “tune” these up and adjust acreages.

David then shared a 2017 document titled SLS Priority Objectives Worksheet. A number of the efforts identified have been moving forward including:

- Regulatory efficiency
- Reach-scale plans (3)
- Resource land protection (specific parcels)
- Ag Resilience Plan – report and Farmland Protection Prioritization
- Confluence project (Lower Sky RM 0-9)
- Communications and engagement

Our review indicated that progress has been made in Reach-Scale plans, the Ag Resilience Plan, the Confluence project and the Communications and Engagement. We discussed the PCC Prioritization and a number of land acquisitions that are completed or underway. We thought it would be good to have access to a map showing what lands are being protected in the county. We did not know the status of the Regulatory efficiency project. Robin emphasized the need to bring ag plans into parity with fish plans.

We also need better representation of farmers in SLS. It is very difficult for farmers who show up on their own time. Andy shared how it’s taking every living hour to survive. Others are paid to participate. We need to consider the importance of this to the overall SLS effort. We wondered if there are industry reps or trade organizations who could participate and represent agricultural interests.

David pointed out that Whatcom County pays Fred Likkel from Whatcom Family Farmers on a part-time basis to represent ag on the Steering Committee of the Floodplains Integrated Planning (FLIP) process. They use FbD funds. Farmers are engaged in reach level charrettes to plan specific strategies, but only between October and April. In the Skagit Farm, Fish and Flood Initiative, agricultural interests were represented by Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland and Western Washing Agriculture Association. Is there someone in Snohomish that could fill this role? Andy said he would give that idea some thought. Daryl said he could help. Linda shared that stipends are available to participate to compensate. Perhaps we could find someone who is retired or who is a part of a trade organization who could bring ag interests forward. Jessica may have FbD funds for this type of support.

We discussed the potential conflicts that could arise if a farmer who owns land under discussion is part of SLS (Partner or SC). It might be too delicate to balance.

David shared a draft member list for both Ag and Fish caucuses. Some of the ag folks have been invited to work on the monitoring program. We need to activate the caucuses because we are currently working on the following initiatives:

- SLS vision and goals
- Comp Plan policy review
- Multi-Benefit Monitoring program
- FbD Land Acquisition Strategy
- Communications plan

Regarding the Land Acquisition Strategy, David suggested that all of the folks in the Ag Caucus be invited. The group agreed. It's an opportunity to queue up the broader need for ag representation on these four key areas.

Next, we began brainstorming a new vision and mission building on the work done before. We came up with this draft Vision for starters:

- ✓ Healthy and productive farmlands
- ✓ Productive fish and wildlife populations
- ✓ And a high quality of life for people

We also started drafting a revision to the Mission found in the SLS Bi-Laws. An incomplete text is below:

“The mission of the Sustainable Lands Strategy is to generate net gains in the productivity and sustained health of fish and farm viability and quality of life for our communities. The SLS initiative is intended to forge a link between fish/wildlife and farm enhancement plans and to create a method of reconciling the land and water resource needs of each.”

To do accomplish our mission, SLS implementation plans will incorporate and build upon the significant bodies of work already accomplished by watershed and salmon recovery groups, agriculture industry groups, tribal governments, local jurisdictions, and public agencies.

As part of our brainstorm, we looked at the mission and vision from Ducks Unlimited:

Our Mission: Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

Our Vision: The vision of Ducks Unlimited is wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.

We also reviewed the mission from Whatcom Family Farmers:

Preserving the legacy and future of family farming in Whatcom County by unifying the farming community and building public support.

Finally, we began first steps at drafting ideas for SLS goals:

An effective sustainable land strategy which simultaneously and substantially improves:

- agricultural economic vitality and potential productivity;
- ecological health restoration of Fish and Wildlife populations to harvestable levels;

- quality of life including tribal culture rooted in fish, wildlife, and native plants.

while reducing flood risk to infrastructure and communities (adapt to create a landscape that is more resilient to flooding)

All ideas for vision, mission and goals are a preliminary step forward.

Our path forward is to create a small workgroup to 1) review the historical documents, and 2) brainstorm the vision, mission, and goals to be shared with the SLS Partners. If we have something by the May 13 Partners meeting, then we should be able to queue up a great discussion. David will invite Partners to a 2-hour work session. Linda, Daryl and CK will participate.

Finally, we had a brief discussion of how to deal with climate change and particularly sea level rise. We considered how it may impact existing farming operations and what might be done about it. The question of having enough suitable farmland was mentioned. We acknowledged the opportunity to influence County policies to protect farmland in the Comp Plan update.

SC Membership

We acknowledged Andy's contribution and how busy he is. We asked if he wanted to ask his son-in-law John Van Nieuwenhuyzen to fill some of his SLS roles. We also talked about Andy's other son-in-law - Steven Losleben. We agreed either of these two can be with us on the SC if Andy can't make a meeting. Bret DeVries was mentioned as another possible participant.

Everyone agreed to support the nomination of Kirk Lakey to the Steering Committee. Daryl noted that Kirk has been involved in the Fish, Farm, and Flood process in King County, so that will be useful for SLS.

Our current membership looks like this:

- ✓ Fish – Terry Williams, Daryl Williams, CK Eidem, Kirk Lakey, Erik Stockdale
- ✓ Farming – Linda Lyshall, Robin Fay, Andy Werkhoven, Linda Neunzig
- ✓ Flood – Eric Stockdale

We hope to attract another farm person in the near future.

Terry has had difficulty participating the last few months. We asked to talk with him, express our well-wishes, and find out his intentions. Daryl suggested keeping an advisory role for him such as an emeritas status and keep him in the pipeline. We want to keep the door open.

Future SC Meeting Dates

June 10, August 12, October 14, December 9

All meetings will be 10:00-12:00 unless otherwise notified.

Adjourn: 11:58 AM