

Notes

SLS Steering Committee

June 10, 2021 10:00AM – 11:45AM

Zoom meeting (see link below)



1. Meet and greet and team building

2. Topics

SLS Purpose, Vision, Mission and Goals

We discussed language for Purpose, Vision and Mission that was re-drafted by the Visioning subgroup comprised of Morgan Ruff, Bennet Lafond, Lindsey Desmul, Paul Cereghino, Jay Krientz, Linda Lyshall, and CK Eidem on June 4th. The final proposed language for each as modified by the Steering Committee (SC) is listed below along with a brief summary of the conversation:

Purpose:

Weaving local cultures together and finding ways to sustain and benefit them in a changing future.

Comment: We liked what the Visioning group drafted and only added “and benefit”.

Vision:

Healthy and vibrant cultures and ecosystems in our watersheds with economically viable agriculture and fisheries.

Conversation:

As we lose ag land and production into habitat and restoration and/or development, how do we achieve a balance and enough land for farming to be viable. We can't/shouldn't measure acre to acre impacts. How do we find a benefit someplace else, preserving upland ag, or water rights improvements? It could be farming on the plateaus and benches in the foothills of our watersheds. Do we know when we hit a tipping point where we don't have a vibrant ag economy? Can we measure that?

We are still increasing the number of farmers we have. People want to come here. Larger farms are being broken up. Larger commodity farm loss causes us to lose the infrastructure that supports all farmers (vets, tractors, farm supplies). Farmers have to travel farther to obtain the things and services we need.

In the future there may be more greenhouses allowing us to grow vegetables in more seasons. Upland land for agriculture is less expensive but paying for greenhouse infrastructure is expensive. David added that the vision supports the efforts by the Comp Plan workgroup to emphasize the protection of rural resource lands.

Mission:

Setting the table to develop understanding, relationships, and strategies to create and achieve a shared vision and beneficial outcomes for our watersheds.

Conversation:

Relationships brought SLS to where it is today. They will continue to be important in the future. They need to be nurtured. Relationships can fall apart if we don't maintain them.

SLS isn't done – it is a continuous process. We need to understand each other's limitations/opportunities and speak openly about each interest's barriers and the goals.

Food is the centerpiece of what we do and builds common experience and cohesiveness.

Overarching Goals:

An effective sustainable land strategy involves collaboration with partnering organizations, and simultaneously and substantially improves:

- culture rooted in the land, fish, wildlife, and native plants; and
- economic vitality and productivity; and
- healthy and harvestable fish and wildlife; and
- food production and security; and
- resilience to damaging floods and climate change; and
- protection of resource lands.

Conversation:

The goals discussion started with a list originally proposed by CK with additional input from Bennett. We edited that list to this current form.

These are overarching goals. We may have more explicit goals coming from the monitoring and tracking program. Overarching goals make sense and point us in a way to create a future that we envision. We can use the mission to help us achieve the goals. We will need more tightly defined and measurable goals. Those will take more time to develop. The Snohomish Basin Forum is still updating their goals this summer including farmer input. The monitoring program should be able to feed specific metrics to address these goals. We might want to revisit these goals after we finish the monitoring project. The monitoring project should seek to have metrics that address each of the overarching goals.

We should ask the ITs for input regarding these goals.

Steering Committee Membership

David shared that there are currently 3 ag, 4 fish, 1 flood representative on the Steering Committee (SC) noting that Erik Stockdale serves as both a fish and flood representative. We are short one ag person. We discussed several potential candidates however all were either busy or relatively new to the area.

We need to find a different way to engage farmers that are trying to make a living farming and don't have time to go to meetings. How do we engage them meaningfully without impeding their seasonal schedules? We need the producer background represented.

We discussed having a dedicated agriculture representative – perhaps paid. David will provide information regarding the approach used in the Nooksack watershed to have a paid representative who fills that role.

We also contemplated the idea of holding our Steering Committee meetings at night to make it easier for ag members to attend. We agreed that early evening meetings would be worth exploring.

IT Communications/Engagement

Some SLS folks are sharing there is not enough communication between with the ITs and the SC. We need more formal communication pathways and to establish that relationship. The work the ITs are doing is exactly the direction we want to go, and we agree with their processes. We also want to maintain the SLS structure we've outlined. Kristin Marshall recommended to Linda Lyshall that some of us go to the IT meetings (Linda L, Daryl, David). We could also invite IT reps to participate in the SC meetings.

Linda Neunzig noted that when the ITs first started they weren't part of SLS. SLS wasn't very involved. SLS wanted to help the farmers to stay whole. Combining the efforts fit in with the FbD grant process. SLS already had a relationship with the farmers and knew the issues. The ITs started to take on the multi-benefit role for SLS.

Perception is the issue. David has heard that the ITs want to make sure that the Steering Committee backs them up politically, especially if they have to make hard decisions. They may also be looking for some support as a mediator to help sort out the issues.

One of the strengths of the SC is we intentionally balance our membership and reach consensus. We would like to hear more about representation on the ITs and how they make decisions. The conversations around the Twin City Foods proposal with SLS highlight the challenges related to gaining ag community support. The SC could not support the inclusion of the Twin City Foods project in the FbD grant application because the Ag Caucus could not see the benefit for them. How are the ITs achieving the multi-benefit balance that the SC provides?

Linda Lyshall suggested we send folks from the Steering Committee to the IT meetings first. David will contact Kristin Marshall (Stilly IT lead) and Morgan Ruff (Snohomish IT lead) to arrange an opportunity for Linda, Daryl and David to meet with the ITs.

After that first meeting, David will add a segment to the first part of our regular SC agendas for the ITs to participate. They can share updates and we will welcome opportunities to discuss issues and challenges they are facing. David will also ask each lead for a list of who is on each IT.

Multi-Benefit Monitoring Program

Linda Lyshall provided an overview on the multi-benefit monitoring program overarching goals. In doing this work, intent is to pull together and synthesize the existing plans that are happening with a "roll-up". The process will be helpful in ranking future projects as well as measuring success of SLS's efforts.

A couple of challenges include developing a weighting system for metrics and compiling existing data sources and plans. There have been conversations with monitoring staff from various entities

to ensure the process works within their existing structure. They are trying to determine what makes sense to include in the metrics.

Once this initial work is completed, the weighted decision matrix will be vetted with the stakeholder groups. Weighting provides a good way to make decisions on complex issues. Assigning a weight brings out the value. The weighting decisions may be complicated discussions. The plan is to meet with ag, flood, and fish representatives to agree on the matrix. Meetings are going to be scheduled in August and September. Linda would love the SC's involvement in the small groups if you have the time and in the larger stakeholder group as well.

The focus is not on specific projects for measuring success. However, a potential project will be included in the matrix to give it a score. When proposals are being developed for funding, we'll have a clear path for ranking. The Twin Cities Foods project would have benefited from a cohesive way to evaluate/prioritize that potential project.

David pointed out that this process is ultimately is about showing value to SLS participants – What's in it for them. The project ranking tells us what to do next. The monitoring and tracking shows us progress and outcomes. He shared that the Skagit Farm Fish and Flood Initiative developed the Hydrodynamic Modeling and Alternatives Analysis. They built a project ranking process that involved weighted matrices. Each interest was allocated 1/3 of the points for weighting projects. Each interest could decide what was most meaningful to them and weight those factors as it they saw fit. This resulted in less conflict between the interests, improved understanding, and resulted in more robust project ranking process. (Note: It also of what is important for each interest.)

Linda anticipates there will be an annual meeting to discuss progress as indicated by the metrics and a review of progress toward goals. Ultimately, we want to show we're gaining ground for all interests – a measurable way to show efforts to create the balance. David is going to be facilitating parts of that process.

4. Agendas for July Partner meeting and August Steering Committee meeting

As we were running out of time, David asked everyone to send their thoughts for the upcoming Partner meeting on July 8. He suggested we could focus on IT conversations and how progress is going with Mission/Vision/Goals. He also would like to know if we want to meet on August 12th.

5. Evaluate the meeting

All felt good about the discussion. David applauded the pleasure of working with them.

David will circulate Mission/Vision/Goals. He hopes to keep this moving forward as it will support our SLS handbook, Comp Plan, monitoring and communications efforts.

6. Adjourn: 11:50 am

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

August 12, October 14, December 9