

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Final Meeting Notes

April 2, 2020

Skype Call

Attendees

WAAC Members

- Wayne Chapin – Citizen, hunting and fishing
- Mary Dodsworth, City of Lakewood
- Herb Gerhardt – Citizen, Mason County
- Mendy Harlow – Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group
- Daniel Hull – Nisqually Reach Nature Center
- Doug Lambe – Department of Corrections
- Glynnis Nakai – USFWS Nisqually Billy Frank Jr National Wildlife Refuge
- John Riegsecker – Citizen, bird watcher

Absent: Alan Billingsley – Neighbor, Lakewood; Kurt Snyder, Washington Waterfowl Association; Elizabeth Rodrick – Black Hills Audubon; Dana Rosenbach – North Mason School District

WDFW

- Brian Calkins, Wildlife Regional Program Manager
- Joel Sisolak, Planning, Recreation, and Outreach Section Manager
- Darric Lowery, Wildlife Area Manager - Scatter Creek, South Sound and Olympic wildlife areas
- Lauri Vigue, Project Manager

Welcome & Introductions – Lauri

Lauri welcomed everyone to this second advisory committee meeting. WDFW staff appreciates everyone's time during the Covid-19 challenge. Our preference is to have an in-person meeting, but under the circumstances, the best option is Skype. We also recognize there were challenges with this meeting. Hopefully the next meeting will be in person in a few months.

The South Puget Sound Planning process was placed on hold for a few months so that we could focus on developing the draft Scatter Creek Wildlife Area management plan. The plan has now been drafted and is expected to go through SEPA 30-day public review in April.

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Update – Darric

- WDFW lands and access sites have been closed due to the Covid-10.
- The Nisqually Nature Center lease was renewed.
- Several projects have been completed on the South Puget Sound Unit by the Clover Park Rotary. We recognize and greatly appreciate their efforts. Substantial changes have been made on the unit because of their volunteer efforts.
- The boating facility at the Luhrs Landing (Nisqually Unit) is expected to start construction this summer.
- Western pond turtle releases have continued and are considered a success at the South Puget Sound Unit.
- The land transfer on the Union River Unit (Theiler wetlands) is proceeding.
- Restoration activities including shoreline clean up continues on McNeil Island.
- Large scale restoration is expected on the Skokomish Unit.
- The pre-commercial thin is on hold on the Big Beef Unit and will continue once the WDFW lands are open.
- WDFW staff are working on an access agreement for the Lake Koeneman Unit.

Goals and Objectives Comments - Lauri

Goal 2 Improve ecological integrity of forests while maintaining and/or improving habitat for wildlife.

Doug Lambe – when will WDFW be conducting tree thinning on McNeil Island and what is the status of weed management?

Darric Lowery: We are currently working with the federal government on what would be allowed treatments under the current deed. Potential funding sources needs to be determined. **Objective 2A should be revised – McNeil Island forest thinning should be its own objective.

Darric send Doug a copy of the current draft forest management plan

Goal 3 Achieve species diversity at levels consistent with healthy ecosystems

Doug Lambe – McNeil Island has its own bee program located on prairie land next to the apple orchards. Corrections is interested in our feedback on the introduction of nectar food sources for the bees.

Objective 3H – Brian Calkins – creating extra ponds for western pond turtle - this is a large-scale change on the wildlife area within the next 10 years. This is WDFW's preferred alternative,

recognizing other site challenges. We are still looking for off site locations. The expansion is located on the opposite side of Hatchery Road. We would add exclosures around the site. There would be a loss of walking space.

Fencing would keep the turtles in a confined area and keep predators out. Perimeter fencing is being sought out.

Goal 4 Waterfowl and migratory bird management

Darric Lowery: There is already a broad level of waterfowl surveys across the Puget Sound.

Goal 5 Maintain and enhance big game habitat

Doug Lambe – McNeil Island deer population is dwindling, due to increasing coyotes on the island, generally predators are increasing,

*Add objective – controlling predators on the McNeil Island Unit. The objective would be to create a better balance between species.

Goal 7 Support and maintain appropriate recreation opportunities.

Darric Lowery – the objectives listed under the recreation section are based on comments from the public, WAAC and internal scoping meetings.

Objective 7H - Mendy Harlow – Complete four projects to Improve recreational access on the WLA within the life of the plan. Regarding 4 projects – is that for each unit or broader across the wildlife area?

Response: it is broader across the wildlife area, four projects within 10 years.

Daniel Hull – interested in creating more access opportunities for local communities.

Goal 8 Offer multiple and varied opportunities for stakeholder participation and engagement –

Mary Dodsworth – outreach – consider WDFW staff attending the local community annual meetings and advisory boards – to provide updated wildlife area information – (e.g. Washington Recreation and Parks Association annual meetings).

Darric Lowery – We have WDFW outreach staff engaged in potential projects on Nisqually and South Puget Sound. We are building on current capacity.

How can we better partner and serve the community?

Glynnis Nakai – Nisqually NWR has a well-developed outreach program currently working with Nisqually River Education Program and Nisqually Reach Nature Center.

“Eyes on Nature” -

Daniel Hull – increase the outreach and education program – Coordinate surveys in order to compliment data collection. Supports the eelgrass surveys and the focal species list.

Brian Calkins – At least one tribe has expressed interest in shellfish harvest in tidelands of McNeil Island.

Doug Lambe - Current rules require no access 100 ft off the shoreline in the current agreement.

Dept of Corrections continues building removal and have eliminated seven structures within the past year.

Disallowing dog use – an issue on the South Puget Sound Unit – the WDFW recreation strategy will also address. Increase monitoring and enforcement of off-leash rules on the South Sound Unit.

Wayne Chapin – the enforcement issue is the biggest stumbling block – Eyes in the Woods type of monitoring is needed. Kitsap County has a six feet leash requirement. Laws for back country trails limit dog use to service dogs only. More of the focus should be on actual enforcement.

Next Steps:

- Comments on the draft goals and objectives are due April 16th
- Lauri will send out the draft notes for review and comment.

Schedule

- The South Puget Sound draft plan will be complete by May/June. We expect to have another WAAC meeting to discuss comments on the draft plan later this spring.
- SEPA 30-day public review will occur early summer. A public meeting will be held to collect public comments.