

ISLAND UNIT ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting Summary

Monday March 16th, 2020 • 1:00 to 2:30 pm
Via Conference Call and Online Meeting

Participants

Advisory Group Members

Rick Billieu
Richard Brocksmith
Bob Cooper
Roger Goodan
Jed Holmes
James Ono
Jeff Osmundson
Amber Parmenter
Brandon Roozen
John Stein

WDFW Staff

Jenny Baker
Seth Ballhorn
Loren Brokaw
Belinda Rotton
Bob Warinner

Ex Officio Members

Janet Curran, NOAA
Rick Hartson, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
Greg Hood, Skagit River System Cooperative
Karina Siliverstova, Skagit County Public Works
Jenna Friebel, Skagit Drainage and Irrigation Districts Consortium

Facilitators

Elizabeth McManus
Andy Chinn

Members Not in Attendance

Advisory Group Members

Reb Broker
Darrell Tawes

Ex Officio Members

Laura Boerner, Army Corps of Engineers
Rich Carlson, USFWS
Dana Dysart, Army Corps of Engineers

Erin Murray, P.S. Partnership
Mike See, Skagit County
Scott Schuyler, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe

Introduction

Seth talked about how COVID-19 is requiring that we change how we meet. It may also change the process and timeline as we move forward. As of now, we are tentatively planning to have another advisory group meeting in July, and a public open house in September.

Input on Criteria

Jenny reviewed the proposed criteria by which WDFW will analyze the management alternatives for the Island Unit. WDFW plans to evaluate the alternatives relative to each of the criteria categories. See the [presentation for more detailed content](#).

Advisory Group Discussion

Advisory Group members discussed the criteria, using the following questions as a starting point:

- Are there any categories missing?
- Are there details within categories that are missing?
- Is there anything else WDFW should consider related to criteria?

Advisory Group members raised several key points during the discussion:

- Tribal interests are not specifically called out in the criteria, including tribal treaty obligations. Tribes are also not listed in community values in the criteria. The ESA listing of Chinook is different from tribal treaty rights or community values.
- There is a difference between policies and more quantitative criteria. Quantitative information exists for some criteria (e.g. chinook and habitat measures from the HDM project). For policies, use quantitative measures where possible and back-check that the intent of the policy is also being met
- WDFW should develop a decision-tree structure for applying the criteria to the management alternatives. For example, some criteria are drivers or requirements, while others are values-driven (community interest, etc.). Tribal treaty rights, HB1418, and the Endangered Species Act fall into the former category and indicate that full restoration is the option that should be considered. Once a decision is made on full restoration, then the other criteria can be looked at (e.g., amenities for hunters, etc.) as the next step in the decision tree.
- Weighting the criteria will have a similar effect as a decision tree.
- Access is an important consideration. Given that the site is a mid-channel island and boat-in access only, the analysis could include length of boat trip/paddle to get to the site and walkability once on the site.
- Impacts on recreational fishing will be difficult to predict, since fishing occurs in Puget Sound and not locally at the Island Unit. However, Eric Beamer's presentation during the February 3 Advisory Group meeting illustrated the link between tidal marsh habitat and Chinook survival.
- The Skagit Tidegate and Fish Initiative (TFI), and the concept that public lands should be looked at first for habitat restoration to meet recovery goals, are among the most important criteria for agriculture interests as they relate to the Island Unit.
- An Advisory Group member asked whether cost estimates will be established for each management alternative; WDFW is working on developing relative construction costs and relative O&M costs.
- Sustainability is not mentioned as a criterion, and some of the alternatives will be impacted by climate change (sea level rise) or sediment deposition. Climate change will be considered as part of the cost criteria (e.g. longevity of infrastructure function).
- An Advisory Group member asked where land agreements for changes in huntable habitats at Island Unit fit in. That concept is ideal for the discussion of how to maximize all values for each alternative, which will come later in the process.

Feedback on virtual meeting and next steps

- If meeting virtually, video conference by all participants is important to capture body language and other non-verbal cues.
- It may be difficult to draw everyone out in a virtual meeting.
- Less frequent, in-person meetings are preferred by some; others prefer to keep the momentum going by checking in more regularly.
- Advisory Group members requested meeting materials farther in advance of upcoming meetings so they have time to share with their respective interest groups.

Next Steps

- WDFW and Ross Strategic will be in communication with Advisory Group members over the coming weeks to provide a meeting summary and meeting materials, as well as to provide information about next steps and timeline.