

San Juan Initiative Policy Group

September 12, 2007

Senior Center, Orcas Island

Meeting Summary –Draft

Policy Group Members Present

Elizabeth Babcock	Lincoln Bormann	Jonathan White
Fayette Krause	Jeri Ahrenius	Sam Buck
Kit Rawson	Kevin Ranker	Lynn Bahrych
Ron Zee	Nick Jones	Jeff Bash
Peter Kilpatrick	Lisa Byers	Tom Cowan

Staff

Jim Kramer	Laura Blackmore,	Carol MacIlroy
Amy Windrope	Cascadia Consulting	

Public

Andrea Hendrick,	Lynn Hobbes	Barbara Rosenkotter
Councilman Alan	Jeff Hanson	
Lichter	Jody Kennedy	

Missing Policy Group Members:

Jodi Bush	Patty Miller	Bernie Hargrave
Bridget Moran	Steve Simpson	Rich Doenges
Peter Dykstra		

Fall Meeting Schedule: Oct. 26, 2007, Lopez Grange, Lopez Island, 1-4:30

Dec. 5, The Grange, San Juan Island, 1-4:30

7/30 Meeting Summary: Approved

Decisions regarding scope of work:

The Policy Group was presented with a proposed scope of work to assess the effectiveness of protection for nearshore habitats and terrestrial habitats. The outcomes of the assessment will allow the Policy Group to craft solutions to gaps in protection.

Decisions:

- Move forward on nearshore scope.
- Do not move forward on terrestrial scope for the following reasons:
 - The scope did not capture the intent of the Policy Group to identify important landscape connections necessary for overall ecosystem health.
- Terrestrial connectivity scope needs to incorporate economic and social functions that we want in the landscape.
- Task 3: Policy Analysis needs additional rigor. Interviews must be followed by data gathering to understand the effectiveness of programs.

- We want to understand how the rules and regulations we have passed affect both landscape and people making a living on land.

Out of the overall discussion emerged 8 key issues that needed further discussion:

1. Need to change uplands approach
2. Retain focus on single family development
3. Task 3 – Policy Analysis focus on interviews lacks rigor and needs to include a quantitative element in order to understand how to create solutions in Phase 3.
4. Community benefit of healthy ecosystem- quality of life, economics, human values...
5. Significance of landscape and habitat change from what basis – interaction between science and policy
6. Are we focused on what is most significant
7. Need to develop ways that engage the public not just the people who show up.
8. Reinforce pilot and partnership nature

General comments on overall approach

1. Need to tighten up focus on single family development- look at land ownership as basis for assessment- emphasis needs to look at private ownership- development standards- not just density of lots – must go into the nature and type of development
2. Really like premise of building on what is already there- concerns about how old data is in upland area- can we improve the data?
3. Important to clearly define what we mean by landscape change – connected to #2 – for science to engage you must evaluate change relative to something- what?
4. Not clear about purpose of Initiative- are we doing what is important?
5. Like that the scopes cover both upland and nearshore and continuum
6. Want to see if the pilot is transferable – can we apply it to intensively monitored watershed- where have data and information – could it work other places? Should do this sooner than later
7. Very well done and covered everything I would have suspected. Discrepancy between budget- skewed to landscape approach. Phase 2 is to evaluate effectiveness. The most important thing is to have measured effectiveness of programs. Not just a qualitative approach. Use CD as an example. Result would be that CD is doing the right thing and we could show why they have been successful. Roads program and contribution to stormwater. Want to have an adequate analysis of the programs. Concerned that Task 3 is being short-changed in the budget.
8. Community outreach- two categories - general outreach and which groups need the information and how to you actively engage the people who will implement all of this.
9. How are we really protecting the communities that depend on natural resources? CTED- guy who is thinking about economics that support rural

- communities. Recommendation is to fix county government to better issue permits.
10. Upland habitats are distinct areas- like garry oak woodlands. Not connected to nearshore. This connectivity is still really missing and is what is most important. Terrestrial habitats are critical for the functions they provide. How much terrestrial vegetation do we have and what has happened to it? What wetland systems do we have and are they working?
 11. Loss of agricultural lands – how addressed in the scope?
 12. Ecosystem health- have to show if things are getting worse - arrows up/down/flat
 13. Community meetings do not work. If want input from people who aren't meeting goers, we need to go to them.
 14. We may not know what is best for the ecosystem but we can know what is best for humans- quality of life, economic sustainability- are not in the scope. Lost the focus on human values.
 15. Question current value of the data- what do we do about this. We need something usable and what exists is piece meal
 16. Need a real summary of the cost and time – Phase 3 needs more time and effort there
 17. Need: tasks and associated costs with funded and unfunded and potential funding sources with partners

Summarized as 8 Issues:

9. Need to change uplands approach
10. Retain focus on single family development
11. Need to develop emphasis on Task 3
12. Community benefit of healthy ecosystem- quality of life, economics, human values...
13. Significance of landscape and habitat change from what basis – interaction between science and policy
14. Are we focused on what is most significant
15. Need to develop ways that engage the public not just the people who show up.
16. Reinforce pilot and partnership nature

#1—Uplands Approach

Concern: Garry oak woodlands is not as important as understanding functions provided by terrestrial and this is missing and at what scale can we advance this issue. How do we advance uplands?

Discussion:

Could define additional lands into habitats – include farmlands and broader woodlands as a middle approach between the connectivity question and the watershed approach for uplands issue

Westcott Bay on San Juan Island has more up-to-date information. Could do pilot. Rationale for why those specific areas were picked. Data exists.

Russell Barsh has information that could be used.

Issues of connectivity will not be addressed by habitat approach. The SJPT plan provides a broader set of lists including visual, etc. The plan is using really old data.

Connectivity is not hard to get to – definition is straight-forward
Connectivity it is a big deal to define connectivity.

Have good information about terrestrial landscape- Open space plan, google Earth, watersheds are well map, assessor tells us each year what garages went up, have permit system that tells us where information is—data is just a gathering exercise. Have been analyzing all this. Think it would be helpful to do...can't make a decision about what tactics to do until see the terrain. Haven't seen the terrain together yet.

We are missing the most important piece - toxics

Three options hearing from people--

Scope: number of important habitats and is that place protected

Kit recommendation: add additional features of the landscape

Lincoln: take a comprehensive look at overall landscape connectivity including human features (with time and money we have will need to be a more limited landscape scope)

Will we learn enough from looking at a few watersheds that it would be useful?

We are not getting to what is most relevant in this discussion? Can we pose these questions to the science and policy working groups? Then make a decision based on their recommendations.

Not wanting to lose out on the county-wide scale. If we pick particular areas how will that affect solutions.- still reluctant to go to the watershed specific approach.

Really important to do the connectivity piece. Would hope that the results would be applicable county-wide. If we really are doing an ecosystem approach.

If we pick smaller areas then we need to look across the county to represent people and if we choose well then we might be able to do better science and will be applicable county-wide.

Is there a definition of connectivity? Connectivity for what will need to be defined.

Kevin- water and sediment transport systems

Can we take an issue approach rather than connectivity? Failing septic systems, logging, wetlands.

What information are you trying to get out of the smaller scale analysis? What will you do with the information and how does it relate to the policy work later on? Needs to have a widespread benefit.

Decision: Directing staff to not pursue the written scope, but instead look at what a scope would look like and cost that would delve into the connectivity issue.

#3 – Emphasis on Task 3

Want to see more emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of programs than on Tasks 1 and 2. Not a funding direction but be sure that Tasks 1 and 2 are focused to get to 3. Be focused and directed.

Budget for 3 is just not good enough- 20 interviews will not get us there. Beef up HOW you will accomplish Task 3. Don't see the measuring of the effectiveness of the programs- we need more emphasis on this. I think there are various ways of measuring. Need something that is independent in evaluating.

Decision: more ways to evaluate effectiveness in 3 and further definition of 3; agreement that emphasis in 3 is critical as this is the main point of the assessment phase.

#2 – Development

Decision: Hold for more information and scale decision.

#4 Social/Cultural

Important to bring someone with social background on sooner than later.

Decision: Staff need to look at connectivity of economic and social functions that we want in the landscape. Look at nearshore scope also and where do we infuse this with social and economic analysis too.

#5 – Significance of landscape and habitat change

Decision: Need to better show sequence of science and policy especially as it relates to defining what significance and change will be measured against and how they are defined.

#6 – Are we focused on what is most significance?

I think Sam's question is really good- but we need to take some time to talk about this so you understand. I've been involved in this work from a very analytical approach. We are thinking about this in a way that moves from this place.

We want to understand how the rules and regulations we have passed affect both farmers and wetlands. Are they affecting them in a manner that we want?

There is a language of people who sit in meetings all day and it is not ours (Nick). Most of our regulations are completely irrational. Most people I work with have completely given up on this kind of effort. They see a continued decline in the natural resource. They see themselves giving a lot a lot of people appearing to get whatever they want and

things continuing to go down. Silt fences on flat lands – thousands of dollars – and then not happening where it is important.

How do we focus then on that?

#7 – Ways to engage public

Areas where most people are most degraded. Not necessarily true (Carol) People are not going to care about what happens in other areas that are not theirs – this limits participation.

Notes from Conversation with Patty Miller regarding scope of work. 9/17.

Comments on Scope of Work:

The scope was always presented as looking for the human impact on the environment and did not capture the environment's impact on the human. The scope lost the community focus that was discussed earlier in process. The scope needs to **consider** how one program **in one area** may partially mitigate the impact humans have on the environment in another area. As an example the voters supporting the excise tax to fund land conservation at some level offsets single family development impacts because there is less land subject to development. I am not saying that this is a one for one, and I do think single family development needs to be reviewed, but we cannot look at it in a vacuum.

Qualitative approach:

Concerned with the layering qualitative conclusions onto qualitative conclusions resulting in the wrong conclusions. We need to understand quantitative piece and then understand what is professional opinion. Task 3 needs to follow up qualitative interviews with quantitative analysis. Conventional wisdom doesn't provide adequate information in many instances and good data can point clearly to solutions.

When we communicate with public, we need to have both the qualitative and quantitative to present so that we can reach the broadest possible audience.

Comments on building on existing data:

As we go out to agencies, local and regional, to use their data, we need to get commitments for access that is timely and open. Without unfettered access from those who hold the data, this process could be unnecessarily long.

Given the foundational nature of the MSA Plan and the Conservation Plan, staff needs to prepare the Policy Group to be conversant in these documents. Gaining this understanding will require presentations at meetings. Foundational understanding of the data is critical. Need to understand what is qualitative and quantitative within documents.

Focus on Single family development:

While my "conventional wisdom" tells me that single family development is an important element to be assessed, predetermining it as an area of focus implies to me that we know the criminal before we know if there is a crime. I know from our conversation that the team asked for the Upland scope section to be reworked. I ask that the scope include a process that assesses the habitats/environments, their sensitivity and vulnerability, and then identifying what the issue/causes are versus starting with a perceived issue and working our way back to find the problem. When we do look at human impact on the environment I hope we can find a way to look at it from an ecosystem perspective and not just at a tax parcel level. Also we need to align closely with CAO initiative and ensure that there is solid public involvement in this area.

Tip:

County assessor's database has up to date buildings and square footage information while the CDPD tracks driveway permits – together it would tell you something about impervious surface and maybe other issues.