

WASHINGTON STATE BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL SUMMARY MINUTES

DATE: September 22-23, 2005
TIME: 10:00 a.m.

PLACE: Tierra Learning Center
Leavenworth, Washington

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brad Ack
Ken Berg
Dave Brittell
Bill Brookreson
Bonnie Bunning
Maggie Coon
Donna Darm
Rob Fimbel
Peter Goldmark
John Marzluff
Kate Stenberg
Naki Stevens
David Troutt
Wade Troutman
Dick Wallace
Josh Weiss
Paul Wagner (for Megan White)

Puget Sound Action Team
US Fish & Wildlife Service
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
At-large
Washington Department of Natural Resources
The Nature Conservancy
NOAA Fisheries
Washington State Parks
Double J Ranch
University of Washington
At-large
At-large
Nisqually River Council
At-large
Washington Department of Ecology
Washington Forest Protection Association
Washington Department of Transportation

PRESENTERS and GUESTS:

John Gamon
Mark Goering
Erik Neatherlin
Paul Nelson
Bobby Cochran
Dan Stonington

Washington Natural Heritage Program, DNR
The Nature Conservancy
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Kitsap County
Defenders of Wildlife

STAFF:

Lynn Helbrecht
Carole Richmond

ACTIONS TAKEN

Item	Action	Reference
Special Council Meeting 10/13	Approved	Page 10

SUMMARY OF MEETING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Information provided to Council on the information base for determining the status of biodiversity in Washington – from statewide, regional and local perspective.
- Reached agreement on the 30-year strategy framework (as revised)
- Initial scoping of 3 of the key questions in the 30 year framework

- Agreement on framework and selection criteria for pilot projects
- Agreed to advance 3 pilots to next stage of decision making
- Input into website developments and assignments to steering committee
- Agreed to have special meeting on October 13th to approve budget and workplan

OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Maggie Coon opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Peter Goldmark asked whether public notification of the meeting had been provided. The answer was no, because the retreat was originally conceived as a discussion/working session only; business items were added later. Because of the lack of public notification, the Council decided to remove the action items from the agenda and schedule a special meeting (see discussion below).

PRESENTATIONS ON THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY

Rob Fimbel introduced this session by noting that the reason for the presentations was to provide the information base for developing the biodiversity conservation strategy. He said it's possible to look at the glass as half-empty or half-full. He views the glass as half-full, noting that Washington has a tremendous amount of biodiversity, a tremendous opportunity to conserve that biodiversity, and a significant level of activity going on.

Each of the presentations are very briefly summarized below. Full sets of powerpoint slides from each presentation are available at the Biodiversity Council website:
<http://www.iac.wa.gov/biodiversity/documents.htm>

John Gamon, DNR, Natural Heritage Program:

- Biodiversity defined as “the full range of life in all its forms”
- Diversity: genetic, species, ecosystem, ecoregional
 - Genetic: genetic variability is important for conservation and recovery (Conservation occurs at the population level)
 - Species
 - 10% of native flora is at risk
 - Similar % for fauna
 - Ecosystem
 - Defined by predictable assemblage of species in landscape
 - Ecosystems are modeled, rather than fully known
 - We don't adequately understand how fragmentation affects ecosystem functioning
 - Ecoregion
 - All 9 ecoregions of the state extend beyond state borders
 - Delineated to reflect broad ecological patterns
- Invasive Species: don't have good info tracking in WA
 - Some noxious weed info work being done at UW
- Trends and transformative forces:
 - Habitat conversion/population growth
 - Invasive species
 - Disturbance regimes altered
- Take-home messages:

- Need both place-based and strategic statewide policy approaches
- Need different strategies for different geographic scales
- Monitoring and adaptive management are essential
- We have enough info to get started
- Monitoring and adaptive management are essential

Mark Goering, The Nature Conservancy:

- Ecoregional Assessments (not ecoregional planning) are a collaborative process to assess the status of biodiversity in a region.
- They can tell us where the biodiversity is located, how much there is, and how much we might need to preserve adequate representations.
- EAs are prepared at a coarse scale, may not reflect areas of local importance, no not tell us what to do or how to do it.
- EAs are place-based, provide multiple products, enable goal-setting
- Hexagons are the minimum mapping units (a little more than one mile in diameter)
- How much area is necessary to conserve biodiversity? No scientific consensus. Therefore, we set goals based on risk.
- Goal-setting can delineate areas that correlate to any level of risk, from 0 to 100 percent. TNC chooses 30 percent of historic range as a target.
- Q: what are we seeking to achieve in the targeted areas? A: Not trying to keep them pristine, but trying to maintain ecosystem function.
- Comment: “Green areas represent excellent mosaic opportunities for creating management beneficial to biodiversity.”

Paul Nelson, Kitsap County:

- Chico Creek Alternative Futures process
- Education is really important
 - Public lacks not only understanding of science, but lacks understanding of value for biodiversity.
 - Understanding in Kitsap that sprawl can prevent people’s kids from enjoying what they enjoyed as kids.
- County planning departments could use the following:
 - Data and maps
 - Help in understanding implications
 - Meet requirements for best available science
 - Funding.
- Q: great that Kitsap had political will to do this. A: strike while the iron is hot. People who were in office when they approved watershed planning are not there now.

Erik Neatherlin, WDFW:

- Local habitat assessment (suitability index for conservation) – part of the services WDFW provides to counties.
- Alternative futures scenarios are a great tool for communicating impacts of decisions and other options with the public

Donna Darm summarized the morning’s presentations:

- We know enough to get started
- Can work at both state and local scales
- EAs provided a lot of data
- Local governments need technical assistance
- Coordination is needed between agencies
- Education and incentives are key tools

Observations:

- Setting goals is a policy call
- Challenges of scale: translating what the council sets as goals to the local level.

30-YEAR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY DISCUSSION

Maggie introduced the session on the 30-year strategy and said the purpose of this discussion was to:

- Agree on the proposed outline
- Discuss how the outline translates into work plan
- Agree on the work plan

Key Discussion Points:

Science/Policy relationship

- Outline makes the assumption that science can determine the areas that need to be conserved but we learned early in the day from presentations that this is more of a policy decision.
- We should have a framework where we understand the extent to which policy decisions are based on science. Maybe we just need a paragraph at the beginning explaining a “policy framework” and context.

The human element needs to be woven in throughout the document

- In Part II, we’re discussing threats to biodiversity. In order for strategy to be effective, we have to address what people value. It is not enough to say we’re “engaging students and citizens”.
- Build education/outreach into each part of the strategy
- Suggestion: get good definition of “conserve” in Part III, and discuss how this relates to people’s values.
- Perspective is very important in writing about “values.” Are we going to do a statewide survey on this?
- There is a lot of common ground about valuing biodiversity.
- We should highlight that people in contact with biodiversity value it more and discuss what this means

How to address regulatory programs?

- What are existing regulatory systems doing for us? Want to make sure this is included in Part IV
- Status needs to include current regulatory framework. Regulatory changes are not part of work of council, but we need to provide information that will assist related regulatory programs to do their job better.
- Include status of regulatory programs in Part II.
- How are we measuring success of current programs? Question is “what do the programs contribute;” then, “how do we move forward?”
- Part 4.1 shouldn't be a regulatory review – its much broader than this.
- We need to make clear that there are regulatory issues and organizational impediments to addressing biodiversity issues. “There are regulatory and organizational issues that need to be addressed...” Could use the word “institutional” hurdles.
- Part 4.2: make sure that we don't forget that NGO-to-NGO partnerships are very important.

Setting Goals/Priorities

- Do we intend to discuss quantity in setting priorities? Do we need to address the question of “how much is enough?”
- We're trying to prevent ecosystem collapse. This is a reference point for, more specifically, what we are trying to accomplish. Therefore, we don't want to have the discussion be based on what is feasible, but what's necessary
- Suggested language in Part III: Identify places, species and habitats which must be conserved in order to ***maintain biodiversity and the processes that generate it.***
- This doesn't answer the question of “at what level?”

Summary of Changes to Outline

- Include “people” throughout
- Add new part: “Status of human landscape”, and include economic and social values
- Will flesh out list of key transformative forces
- 3.1 now reads “What places, species, and habitats must be conserved to maintain biodiversity and the processes that generate it?”
- 4.1 - Move this up to the “status” analysis in Part II (not just about regulatory)
- 4.2 - Include partnerships between NGOs.

SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT SESSION

The group split into three groups for focused conversation.

1. Transformative forces – John lead
 - John's group generated a long list of transformative forces – possible next steps: peer review of the list of most important forces
2. Setting Goals and Information Needs – Donna lead
 - Noted that it would be helpful to have options and examples of different goals as a starting point

- Possible goals Create conditions that sustain current natural diversity; Adequate local capacity; adequate education and outreach, No net loss of species, ecosystems, biodiversity; Stop habitat declines (loss); Identify and restore important habitat and functions; Identify and restore at-risk populations; Goals set at different scales (ecoregion, landscape); Goals set as milestones or benchmarks
3. Assessing Protection offered by Current Activities– Naki lead
- Suggestion: reframe question to three parts: Where does conservation come from, How do we evaluate measure biodiversity results and how do we improve progress
 - Focus on creative space that incentives provide
 - Difficult to assess combined effect of actions on different kinds of lands

PROCESS CHECK IN

Maggie asked members how the discussions were proceeding and for suggestions on improving our process. The following suggestions were made:

- Need to focus our feedback on specific examples – these discussions can be abstract
- Relaxed time provided by retreats is very valuable and productive
- It would be helpful to have more wide open discussions on where we're headed, since we're not necessarily all on the same page
- More homework on what other people have been doing would be helpful to us
- We need to get some products and then discuss those. Without tangible products, discussion is endless. We also need to check ourselves and not rehash topics and instead come to closure and move forward
- Maybe a one-pager on best available science would be helpful in terms of defining the problem that we're trying to solve
- Should start with long-term goal, agree on this, and then step back to create more measurable objectives. If we really want to finish by '07, we need to move faster
- We should come with more completed staff work. Council members should focus on tangible changes to documents and on solutions
- Would be helpful to have sub-committee work as part of retreats.
- Need to focus on education and people component
- We tend to talk too much. Focus on pilot projects because these are tangible way to explain our work to others. Very important for the Council to be successful.

2006 MEETING SCHEDULE

Options presented:

- Quarterly one-day
- Bi-monthly
- Alternative one and two day-meetings on a quarterly basis
- Quarterly two-day

No decision made by the group – staff will work with executive committee to develop proposed meeting schedule.

PILOT PROJECTS—FRAMEWORK, GOALS, SELECTION CRITERIA

Bonnie Bunning asked the Council for comment on the pilot project framework and on the appropriateness of the proposals outlined in the materials. The project proponents have been asked to make presentations to the Pilot Projects Committee on October 20. Council members are invited to attend this meeting (1:30-3:30). The Council will approve the final selection in December.

Key Discussion Points:

Would like stronger focus on citizen science.

- Engaging the public could come from having the public help collect information on biodiversity. Would be good to have a goal that allows the testing of a biodiversity index and tries to engage the public. Emphasis would be on testing ways of monitoring biodiversity.
- Suggestion for goal: “Use citizen science models whenever appropriate”
- Add selection criteria, increase use of citizen science.

Strengthen/Deepen work on Incentives

- Suggestion for goal 3: The projects should test a variety of incentive-based tools – focus on evaluation.
- Add another goal on identifying disincentives?

General Comments

- Need to be specific that we’re not simply fueling something that is already ongoing.
- The pilots can help us to understand how to move ongoing projects toward an emphasis on biodiversity
- Note: not all of the pilot projects will give all of the deliverables.
- Suggestions: change IDENTIFY AREAS... Q2. to “identify innovative ways to generate regional or local maps...”
- Add “final report” as deliverable
- Suggestion change #8: “increase understanding of how conservation incentives, citizen science, and outreach can...”

Bonnie summarized changes to framework for pilot projects:

- *Evaluate* use of incentives
- Add a component on disincentives and barriers
- Final report as deliverable
- Want projects that address as many of the council’s deliverables as possible.

WEBSITE

Carole introduced Jay Thompson of EDGE Design, the contractor retained to develop the biodiversity website. Jay presented the “creative brief” that outlines the general scope and

purpose of the website. Jay reviewed the goals for the site, which were based on suggestions made by the Website Steering Committee at its meeting on August 31.

Jay suggested that we need to be specific about demonstrating the relevance of biodiversity to peoples' lives. This site will be differentiated from other biodiversity sites in that it will feature stories and experiences in the "voice" of members of the audiences that we're trying to reach.

Regarding vision for the site, Jay asked whether the Council preferred a site that would continue past the present end-date of the Council and would need continued "care and feeding," or whether they preferred a site that would require minimal resources after its initial launch? The Council voiced preference for a site that will continue to change and grow, and that will live on.

Discussion:

- Regarding key messages, it's important to say *expanding* focus to ecosystems, not *shifting* focus.
- Issue of target audiences: What happens if you don't fall into one of these categories? Messages will strive to be universally relevant.
- No images of humans in the presentation. It's important to show lots of kids, farmers, working landscapes.
- What happens if people don't have high-speed internet access? Jay says that the code is lean, which allows high-speed loading the page.
- Josh said that if we stay true to message, he's willing to help with a possible legislative briefing.
- What would be images of "problems"? Need to be careful how we portray problems.
- Call to action should be on personal level. Specific messages for specific audiences.
- Like the idea of not assigning blame. Positive is good. We don't want to sell fear. Challenge is to balance sense of urgency with positive tone.
- Council members are invited to participate in the web steering committee.
- Kate Stenberg and David Trout volunteered to be on the web steering committee.

SPECIFIC PILOT PROJECT PROPOSALS – DISCUSSION

The purpose of today's discussion is to decide whether or not to advance proposals to the next phase. Lynn summarized the three proposed projects, beginning with the North-Central Washington project.

NorthCentral Washington

The focus is on trying to engage economic development interests in the region and on supporting landowner conservation efforts. The project would provide a forum for discussion of new incentives, such as grassland banking.

- Maggie wanted to be clear in the interest of full disclosure about TNC's connection in the north central WA pilot project – the lead staff person for IRIS is on loan to that organization from The Nature Conservancy. Bill Brookreson is also a member of the IRIS

board. Senator Phil Rockefeller has also expressed interest in trying to secure additional legislative funding to the North-Central project.

Pierce County

The Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance is an ongoing project. The proponents want to scale up from the current relatively small scale to the Puyallup watershed. This proposal focuses on residential landowners and on citizen science.

Discussion:

- What is the purpose of biological surveys? Monitoring, outreach, citizen science.
- Should try to get the Pierce County project to expand the scope of their conservation targets beyond wildlife.
- Don't see how this is a good pilot. This approach has been done before.
- What is the receptivity of the proponents to change their focus to biodiversity?
- These projects need to help the Council further its goals.

Thurston County

Lynn explained that the goal of the Thurston County project was public and stakeholder outreach and assisting citizens in identifying the biodiversity resources of the county.

- David thought the chances of success for gaining consensus on biodiversity priorities in Thurston County were low. The history of watershed planning under 2514 hasn't been good.

General Comments Regarding Pilot Project Proposals:

- Do we have sufficient funding for these projects? Suggestion to scale back # of projects and scale up budget allowed for each.
- Question about the solicitation process for proposals. Lynn answered that there wasn't time or resources for a competitive grant solicitation process – instead staff relied on recommendations for contacting likely projects and collaborators in desired regions.
- Don't think pilot is acceptable if it doesn't include working landscape component.
- North-Central Washington project meet this criterion. Conservation groups there have never gotten together in meaningful way.
- Is North-Central project too large? It needs to be that big in order to incorporate input from different sectors.
- All of the projects are too big and complex.
- Break down the projects into pieces that will more specifically help the Council. Example: focus on grass banking. The Pierce example could tease out the citizen science piece. Thurston County could focus on outreach piece.
- Need to remember executive order: "demonstrate applicability of incentive programs through pilot projects".
- Timeframe? Assuming that pilot projects will start in January and finish with deliverables after 6 months.
- The feedback on the framework should go back to each project proponent and each proposal should closely follow the pink sheet/framework.

BUDGET AND WORKPLAN DISCUSSION

In response to the concern raised that public notice was not provided for the current meeting, Maggie proposed that the Council hold a special meeting to approve the budget and the meeting minutes. The quorum requirement for the Council is 12 voting members. The Council decided it was permissible to discuss the budget as long as no decisions were made.

Special Meeting will be held on October 13th 10:00 to 11:30.

Lynn noted that the new requested staff position would focus on:

- Web site, Pilot project support, Research and write white papers

Clarification provided on IAC administrative fees – DNR is providing office space for biodiversity staff as an in-kind donation. IAC provides other services, such as administrative support, IT support, fiscal management and web hosting.

INCENTIVES COMMITTEE REPORT

Peter noted the completion of the Evergreen Funding Consultants report on existing incentive programs and recommended it as required reading of everyone on the Council. Next steps are to prepare a white paper summarizing Council position and recommendations on landowner incentives.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Kate said the Communications Committee is now the Education and Outreach Committee. The report from Pyramid on developing a communication strategy was distributed. A question regarding when do we begin to reach out to constituencies? Answer, should be continuous. Ed/outreach committee expects to make recommendations on this.

SCIENCE AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Rob noted that the CommEn Space report was delivered. Its goal was to assess the quality of assessments and plans on biodiversity. A key conclusion was that ecoregional assessments provide the most comprehensive biodiversity assessments we have. The report also suggested next steps:

- Working on quantifying biodiversity
- Working on developing a biodiversity index; a way of measuring that will involve students and citizens.

CLOSING REMARKS

Maggie suggested that the Council defer a decision on 2006 Council meeting options and dates for now and she reminded everyone that the next regularly scheduled Council meeting is on Dec 7th in Olympia. She summarized her thoughts on the retreat's outcomes:

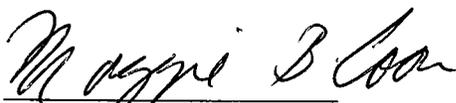
- Good set of take home messages from first day's presentations
- Agreement on the 30-year strategy framework as revised
- Initial scoping of 3 of the key questions in the 30 year framework
- Agreement on selection criteria for pilot projects
- Agreed to advance 3 pilots to next stage of decision making
- Input into website developments and assignments to steering committee

- Agreed to have special meeting on October 13th to approve budget and workplan

Maggie concluded by asking others around the table to share their insights:

- Longer meetings allow relationships to be built
- Nervous about how much work there is to do
- We seem to be reinventing the wheel
- Linking people with flora/fauna is not easy
- Need more quality time
- Seem to be different views on where we're headed
- Science v. policy tension in determining goals in biodiversity
- Should keep in mind how watershed and political boundaries overlap
- Energy changed when we started doing small group and focused work
- Different skills and formats were helpful at the meeting
- Web discussion was positive because it was about a tangible process
- Refreshing to hear on-the-ground/land perspective
- Dissecting issues is tough but ultimately productive
- Announcements: Ken announced Washington State has just been awarded \$11 million in grant funding from USFWS.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, September 23.

 12/7/05
Maggie Coon, Chair