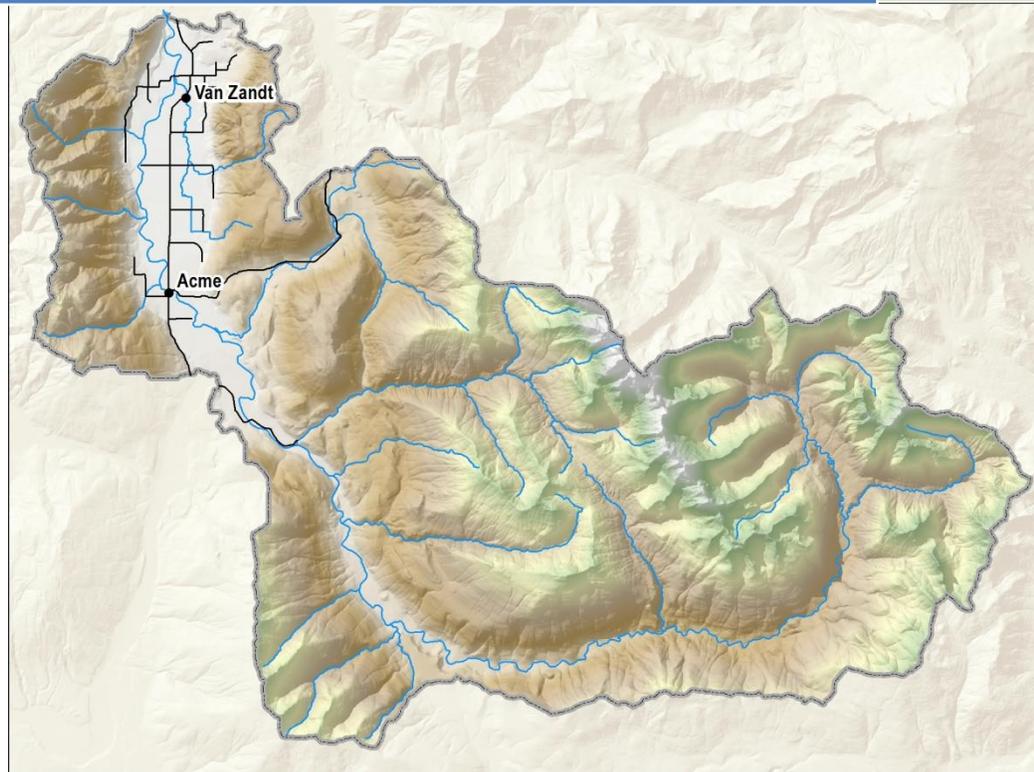


2017

South Fork Nooksack Public Involvement Report



This report was prepared for the
Nooksack Indian Tribe and the South
Fork Nooksack River Watershed
Planning Team

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

This document reports on the methods applied and results of a comprehensive public outreach and stakeholder engagement process applied for the South Fork Nooksack River Watershed Planning Project. The watershed planning project was developed to address issues, concerns, and opportunities identified by the general public; South Fork Nooksack River watershed residents, landowners, and businesses; public agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and stakeholder groups. The public outreach and stakeholder engagement process was developed to identify these to guide the watershed planning effort.

Section 1 – Goals & Objectives, Tools & Methodology, Communications

Goals and Objectives: Public Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement

Public involvement is critical to restoring healthy watersheds. In 2015, the Nooksack Indian Tribe received grant funding from a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) grant and the Washington Department of Ecology to conduct watershed planning that would address issues water quality in the context of climate change. The goal of the project was to develop and implement a public outreach and stakeholder engagement program that encouraged watershed, riparian, and instream habitat restoration through voluntary cooperation. The goals and objectives of the Public Outreach and Stakeholder engagement were as follows:

Residents and landowners would be:

- a. Informed of the importance of climate ready restoration in the South Fork
- b. Informed of the Watershed Planning process and given opportunities for input
- c. Provided with opportunities to vet riparian conservation and restoration priorities
- d. Provided with tools and opportunities to voluntarily implement restoration measures on their property

This report contains the findings of this work.

Tools Applied/Methodology

South Fork Planning Team

The South Fork Planning Team was formed in 2015 to develop a public involvement and outreach program and to determine a Watershed Conservation Plan framework. To support for this work, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, with input from the Planning Team, contracted with Kulshan Services LLC to conduct a public outreach and stakeholder engagement strategy. The Planning Team met approximately monthly throughout 2016 and provided direct feedback to the consultant team on the needs of the project.

Strategic Systems Mapping

The approach used in this public engagement project was loosely modeled after a process called Strategic Systems Mapping. This process begins with identification of interest groups. Facilitated conversations are held with each interest group designed to solicit values, ideas, and concerns for each group. Once this input is gathered from each of the interest groups, it helps groups understand linkages, gaps, and opportunities to work on. The findings are then presented at a community meeting for additional input. The next step in the process is to form planning group in the community to consider this input, along with information from scientific studies. The group

identifies common goals, openly discuss issues, and think creatively about solutions. Ideas and relationships are “mapped” to make them more understandable to the community.

The Planning Team adopted this general approach and identified seven different interest groups that exist in the watershed, within the limited scope of time and budget. The interest groups included agencies and tribes, small forest landowners, large forest landowners, fisheries, agriculture, utilities and transportation, and recreation and small businesses. The process diagram shown in Figure 1 was developed to describe the planned public involvement process including the expected contacts and timeline.

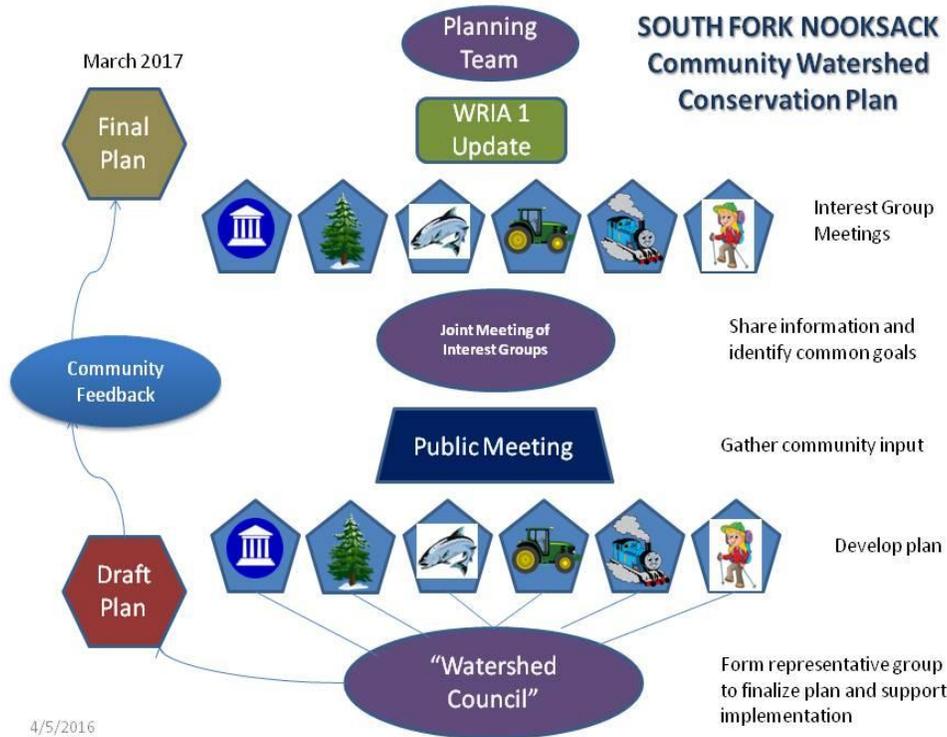


Figure 1 Original Community Outreach Flow Chart–April 2016

Prior to meeting with any of the interest groups, the Planning Team directed the consultants to engage in initial conversations with the Water Resources Inventory Area #1 (WRIA 1) planning process in the Nooksack River watershed and marine tributaries. This provided an opportunity to connect larger local planning efforts with the work targeted at the South Fork Watershed.

The method and approach to community engagement was modified several times during the process. The primary challenge was finding dates to meet with WRIA 1 programs and all key representatives of the identified interest groups. In late spring the joint meeting of interest groups was eliminated as well as follow-up meetings with interest groups after the community meeting simply because the grant deliverable schedule dictated the need to move the process along more quickly.

In late spring additional changes to the process were suggested by influential members of the community. The original concept of a “watershed council” was changed to a “Watershed Group.” In addition, the role of this Watershed Group was modified. The original intent of the watershed council was to develop a watershed plan. The later approach was “to develop a framework for talking about conservation and restoration efforts in the South Fork and engage in watershed planning.” Strengthening communication and providing an opportunity for meaningful dialogue were determined to be the first priority. In addition, the Nooksack Tribe requested that the group review and vet the Watershed Conservation Plan they are developing for the South Fork Nooksack River watershed. These changes resulted in this final version of the process diagram from January 2016.

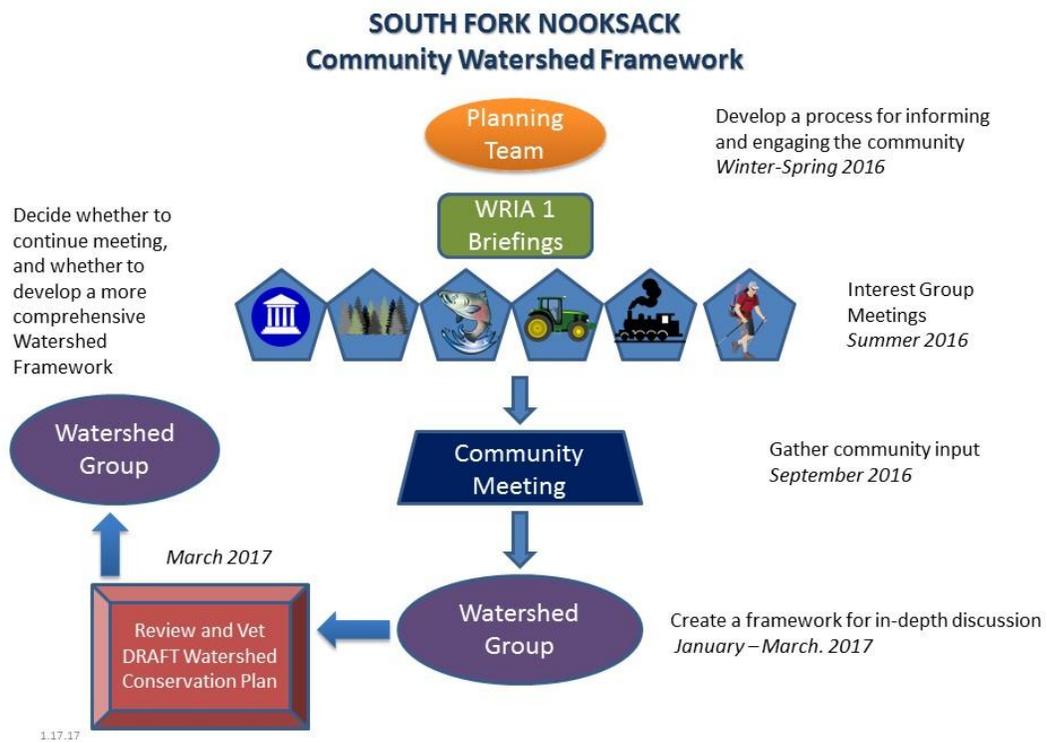


Figure 2 Final Community Outreach Flow Chart–January, 2017

The first half of the public engagement process was completed by the end of September 2016 with the community meeting. Input from over 30 meetings has been tabulated and throughout the fall of 2016. The second half of the process begins in January 2017. Watershed Group is scheduled to meet on four occasions this winter to learn about the watershed and to explore ideas and opportunities including whether the group should continue into the future.

The following is a description of the meetings with WRIA Programs and interest groups over the spring and summer of 2016.

Meetings with WRIA 1 Programs

The consultants met with four different teams associated with the WRIA 1 process. The focus was primarily to inform the teams about the outreach activities and to solicit their input on the public involvement process. Meetings with WRIA 1 programs were held on the following dates:

Date	Contact
3/10/16	WRIA 1 Watershed Staff Team
4/20/16	WRIA 1 Management Team
6/17/16	WRIA 1 Salmon Staff Team (serving as the Fish Interest Group – see below)
8/24/16	WRIA 1 Planning Unit

Interest Group Meetings

Next, representatives from each of the seven interest groups were identified using several community lists including those used for the WRIA process and various other lists provided by agencies. Each of these representatives was contacted by email or phone and encouraged to participate. Open meetings were held for the following interest groups on the dates shown:

Date	Interest Group
5/27/16	Agency and Tribal Interest Group
6/17/16	Fish Interest Group (WRIA 1 Salmon Staff Team)
7/19/16	Agriculture Interest Group
7/28/16	Large Forest Landowner Interest Group
7/28/16	Small Forest Landowner Interest Group
8/31/16	Recreation and Small Business Interest Group

Each interest group meeting involved a presentation to set the stage for the watershed planning process. Meetings began with presentations on the watershed and the current challenges. Presenters discussed the legacy impacts of land management activities and their link to Chinook salmon population decline, flooding concerns, temperature and water quality issues, and water quantity challenges. The importance of agriculture and forest management to the economy and quality of life of the community were recognized. Finally, the threats of climate change to the watershed and river as well as the way of life in the community were highlighted.

The stated intent of the watershed planning process was to:

- *Facilitate* a community conversation
- *Adopt* a multiple-benefit approach
- *Carefully examine* cultural, economic, and environmental needs and challenges
- *Utilize* the best tools and thinking available to develop a plan

Before soliciting input additional background was provided on the genesis of the project, the role of the South Fork Planning Team, the sources of the funding for the project, and a proposed process for moving forward.

The remainder of each meeting involved facilitated discussions during which the participants were asked to provide their thoughts regarding their goals or hopes for the watershed, their concerns for the future, and their ideas for how to address those concerns. Notes for each of the interest groups were used to develop summaries of input that are discussed later in this report.

Additional Meetings

In addition to the interest meetings discussed above, eleven interviews were conducted with leaders and parties who could not attend the interest group meetings. The consultants met with the following entities on the dates shown below:

Date	Interest Group
6/23/16	Whatcom County Planning Staff
6/24/16	Whatcom County PW River & Flood
6/29/16	City of Bellingham
8/9/16	Williams Pipeline
8/12/16	Whatcom Conservation District
8/12/16	Whatcom County Ag Water Board
8/18/16	Whatcom County Public Works Engineer
9/7/16	Whatcom County Parks & Recreation
9/8/16	US Forest Service
9/9/16	Washington State Department of Transportation
10/6/16	Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association

Community Meeting

Following the interest group meetings, a Community Meeting was organized in cooperation with the Acme Van Zandt Subzone Flood Committee. The meeting was designed to provide a summary of findings to date, solicit additional input to the process, and provide information about restoration tools and opportunities. A vision board and a survey were used to gather input at this meeting, and over 100 people were in attendance. Input from the vision board and survey tabulated and used in the summary found later in this report.

Watershed Group

One of the key findings of the public involvement process was the community's desire for a locally-driven process. That meant forming a Watershed Group composed only of residents and landowners. A survey form provided to participants at the Community Meeting was used to identify participants. Later, a second solicitation was posted on the website. Each applicant was asked to provide information about their interests (Agriculture, Forestry, Business, Mining, Transportation, Recreation, Resident, Fisheries, and Environment), their best availability for meetings, to verify they were a resident or landowner, and to agree to:

- Participate in four to five evening meetings
- Seek common ground with my neighbors
- Abide by the ground rules established by the group

The response was very good. A number of people signed up at the community meeting. In the weeks that followed there was a steady stream of new applicants. Thirty-five people confirmed their interest in participating in the Watershed Group. According to the survey data, the members represent a broad range of interests and perspectives in the valley.

The Watershed Group is expected to meet approximately four times between January and early March of 2017. The Planning Team suggested focusing these four meetings on increasing understanding of watershed processes and concerns, and less on reaching agreement on future direction. In addition, the Tribe will be looking to the Watershed Group for input on their planning

documents. If the Watershed Group decides to continue meeting beyond March of 2017 they will have an opportunity to work on additional issues perhaps pursue additional watershed planning.

Individual Meetings with Landowners

Concurrent with the public outreach efforts, landowners were contacted individually to discuss restoration and protection opportunities on their property. Fieldwork and conversations led to the identification of twelve (12) parcels with high value for ecological lift, and willing landowners who are interested in participating.

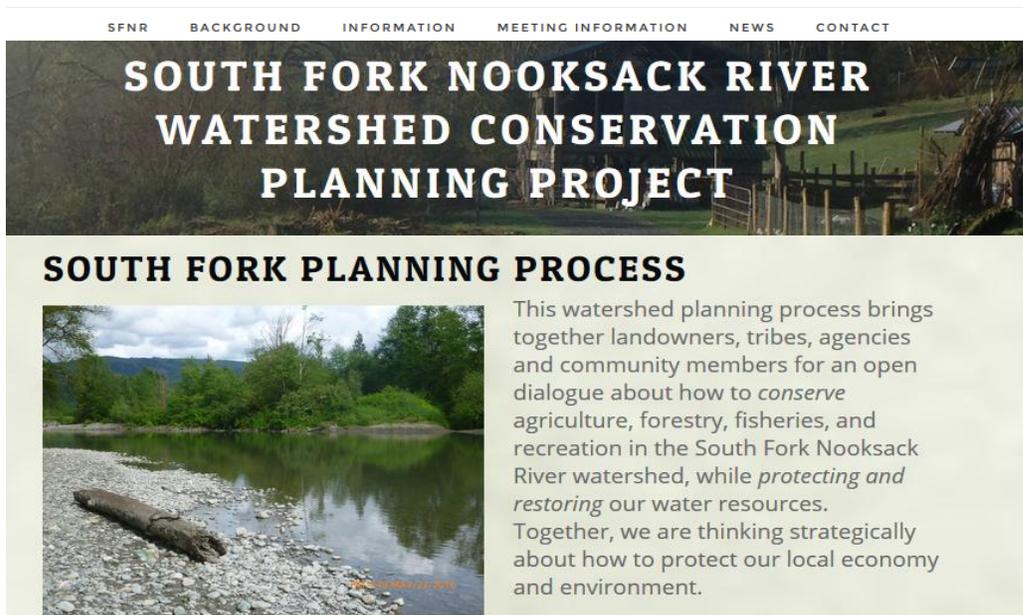
Communication Methods (website, posters, updates to Sub Zone)

A wide variety of methods for reaching individuals and organizations were used to identify potential interest group participants and stakeholders as well as the general public. The contact list currently contains the names and contact information for 353 people including residents, landowners, stakeholders, and others interested in the South Fork planning activities.

Email has been the primary method of keeping people updated and engaged in the process. Meetings were announced, information shared, and input solicited through the email contacts. Not everyone included on the list had an email, so letters and postcards were also sent out via US mail to stay in contact or solicit information.

In July of 2016 a website was created to post announcements for meetings, share background materials on the process, and provide information about the watershed. There were 192 views of the site over a period of six months. The website can found at SFNooksack.com.

Website (home page)



Community Outreach Survey

The website was also used to post a survey designed to gather additional input on community hopes, concerns, and ideas, in case people had not been able to attend an Interest group or the Community Meeting. The results of the survey were tabulated and are discussed later in this report.

Posters and Facebook Postings

Posters were hung at key locations early on, to inform people about the process. Posters describing the Watershed Planning process and how to get involved were posted at the Everybody's Store, Acme Store, the Acme Post Office, the Deming Post Office, and the Deming Library. Information and updates were also offered through the South Fork valley Community Association list-serve and Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/southforkvalley/>).

Letters

To engage small forest landowners, a letter was mailed on July 11, 2016 to every landowner who owned a parcel in the valley zoned as Rural Forestry. Later, a postcard was mailed to all residents in the valley to let them know that a community process was underway and encourage them to get informed and involved.

Subzone Meetings

The Acme Van Zandt Subzone Advisory Committee (Subzone) was informed regularly of the process and provided important input. The subzone engaged in the following activities:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| May 2016 | The Subzone reviewed the watershed planning process, the goals of the National Estuary Program (NEP) grant, and timeline and provided feedback. The Sub Zone voted affirmatively (4/0) "to actively engage in this planning process and to serve as the host for the community meeting (in September)." |
| July 2016 | The Subzone was updated on the planning process and members were encouraged to provide feedback on the project website. |
| September 2016 | The Subzone co-hosted a community meeting with over 100 people in attendance. Whatcom County staff members provided information about flood management, and the Tribe and others provided information about watershed conditions, climate change, hydrologic conditions, the planning process, and tools for restoration. Community input was gathered by the contracted facilitators and made available on the SFNR watershed project website. |
| November 2016 | The Subzone identified issues that they would like to see addressed through the watershed planning process in general and more specifically for consideration in the NEP reach scale plan, addressed questions raised by members of the public who were in attendance, and discussed hosting a community education session in 2017 on channel morphology and flood assessment. |
| December 2016 | Four members of the Subzone volunteered to participate in the community-based Watershed Group. |

Section 2 - Summary of Community Input

The engagement process focused on four primary sources for input: WRIA 1 teams, agency and tribal staff, interest groups, and the general community. The following section describes the interactions with each of these groups.

WRIA 1 Teams: Process Input

WRIA 1 Watershed Staff Team

This was the first of four meetings held from March 2016 through August 2016 to coordinate the project with the WRIA 1 process. The Watershed Staff Team works to coordinate watershed planning, policies and activities throughout the Nooksack River Watershed. Members of the team were primarily focused on the process and how it links to WRIA 1 processes underway. Effective coordination with ongoing water resources discussions and salmon recovery efforts were identified as concerns. They suggested that the process needed to integrate with assessments being done for salmon. They saw opportunities for similar planning efforts in the North Fork and Middle Fork Nooksack river watersheds. Finally, they suggested additional coordination with the WRIA 1 Management Team, which was accomplished.

WRIA 1 Management Team

The Management Team shared similar interests and concerns as those shared by the Watershed Staff Team. They also indicated there could be a community involvement role for the WRIA 1 Planning Unit. Some members indicated that the South Fork planning process is innovative, could help advance the overarching objectives of the WRIA 1 Boards.

WRIA 1 Salmon Staff Team

The Salmon Staff Team was engaged to act as the Fish Interest Group described below.

WRIA 1 Planning Unit

The Planning Unit was very interested in the South Fork planning project and how the process dovetails with the WRIA 1 management plan and the salmon recovery plan. Questions were raised about the nexus of the process and if it should have been approved by the WRIA 1 Joint Board. Several members expressed strong support for the planning effort pointing out that the project is focused in a sub-drainage and local community employing a process that addresses elements of the WRIA 1 salmon recovery and watershed management plans.

Agency and Tribal Staff Engagement

The Agency and Tribal Interest Group met on May 27, 2016 in the County Operations Training Building north of Bellingham. Twelve people attended the meeting representing 11 agencies, the Nooksack Tribe and the Lummi Tribe. Not all key staff from agencies and tribes could attend, so additional conversations with six people interested in the project were held in the weeks following the main meeting. In addition, Nooksack tribal staff met with Lummi tribal staff to discuss the details of the project.

The Agency and Tribal Interest Group represented public and tribal organizations responsible for a wide range of natural resource management. Goals expressed by the group were not necessarily shared by everyone. They included:

- Reducing near-term flood damages to public and private resources while reducing or avoiding the need to install or maintain hardened flood infrastructure in the future.

- Providing near-term instream habitat structure to provide critical functions while habitat forming and maintaining processes recover.
- Maintaining viable agriculture in the valley including access for agricultural uses of public and nonprofit ownerships so that we are not forced to choose between salmon recovery and agriculture on parcels key to recovery efforts.
- Agreeing to a set of strategies.
- Addressing mistrust between parties.
- Using the South Fork process as an entry point for establishing a landscape view of conditions and a technical process.

Staff from the City of Bellingham noted that the City’s pipeline crosses under the South Fork. The revetment for pipeline is not needed and could be removed if necessary. The County needs support for flood management improvements. More coordination and funding will be needed to move a flood management plan forward for the South Fork Nooksack River and floodplain.

Concerns raised by the Agency and Tribal Interest Group included both environmental factors and community dynamics. There are lots of different points of view in the watershed. Who speaks for whom? There continue to be challenges in achieving consensus on a plan and actions in the South Fork. The timeframe for the planning process appears to be very short. Some shared concerns included there may be limits to restoration of in-stream and floodplain processes. The County has found that the river is changing (incising) faster than they thought and this may increase restoration challenges. How can we address land-use “legacy” effects?

Interest Group Meetings

Fish Interests

The consultants met with the WRIA 1 Salmon Staff Team on June 17, 2016. Seven people attended the meeting. An additional conversation with the director of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) was held August.

Members of the Salmon Staff Team shared that they would like to achieve a net gain for all salmon species employing solutions that benefit multiple interests. The goals should be to restore properly functioning habitat conditions and ecosystem processes and to ensure that all life stages and life history requirements of salmon are met. The group saw an opportunity to incorporate the WRIA 1 project list and to integrate with the existing prioritization process. They were eager to learn from the project how to make their education and outreach efforts more effective.

The group expressed concerns about how high stream temperature will be addressed, while simultaneously balancing the needs of the community. They suggested coordinating landowner contacts to increase efficiency and avoid duplication and confusion. Some shared concerns about who participates in the discussions, and how policy issues related to water management and instream flows are resolved.

Agricultural Interests

The Agricultural Interest Group meeting was held 7-19-16 at the Van Zandt Community Hall. Individuals participating in the conversations were identified by Planning Team members and contacted by email and phone. Four people attended the meeting. Additional conversations with two other large-scale farmers and two small-scale farmers were held in the weeks following the main meeting.

The participants in conversations about agriculture had a range of goals for the future. These included economic viability and ability to keep and buy land. The importance of water availability and being able to farm the most fertile areas was emphasized. The participants expressed a desire for the public to understand and respect farming and hope there can be some common goals in that regard for the community. Several participants expressed desire for recovery of fish populations in the South Fork.

The group suggested that a primary area of focus should be to look at ways to address water rights through quantification and transfers. They suggested the County' Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program would be a useful tool to protect the viability of agriculture. They indicated a need for more awareness of floodplain processes and flood risk, and that there is a need to find places for flood water storage. Common goals could be achieved between climate change and farming. They would like children to understand the work of agriculture and the connection to the land. They also believe there are misconceptions about dairy farming that need to be addressed.

Many concerns were shared related to the environment and economics of the community. Water rights are by far the biggest concern. As water temperatures rise, there is a fear this could impact water rights. Prevention of river avulsion that takes away fertile farmland, all of which is in the floodplain, was another key concern. They noted that there are limited places for water to spread out and get stored in the floodplain. Some expressed concerns for increased flooding due to logjam projects. Other factors noted as influencing economic viability in the South Fork valley are the growing season, which is shorter than other parts of the County and fluctuating dairy prices.

Large Forest Landowners

The Large Forest Landowner Interest Group meeting was held July 28, 2016 at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region in Sedro-Woolley. Individuals participating in the conversations were identified by Planning Team members, based on known land ownership in the valley. Participants were contacted by email and phone. Nine people representing five organizations attended the meeting. The United States Forest Service (USFS) was not able to attend and was contacted later and they provided their input separately.

Participants in the Large Forest Landowner Interest Group shared a wide range of goals. The DNR and USFS operate under different management obligations than the private forest landowners though some themes were universal to all members. All participants share that they seek to maintain continued yield of forest materials. They seek public understanding of their objectives and recognition of the investment they have made. All plan and strive for economic viability and seek to maintain or increase the long-term value of their lands. Private forest landowners shared the desire to reduce regulatory burden, support incentive based systems and achieve no net loss of working forest lands. Some of the participants shared an interest in safe and appropriate recreation on their lands.

A number of ideas were proposed by the group, though not all ideas were universally shared. These included state funding for small forest landowners and incentives/compensation for large forest landowner contribution to environment and public good. Some suggested that education of new/current landowners about adjacent forest management is needed. Several participants felt that there is a need for significant changes in the State Labor and Industries insurance cost structure which

some felt unfairly burdens forest landowners with the high cost of providing raw materials for public needs. Finally, several of the private landowners would like to see harvest restrictions reduced on Federal forestlands.

Many concerns were shared related to the environment and economics of the industry. Two key factors limiting economic viability are the lack of mill infrastructure and a viable workforce (wages, equip/funding, L&I, visas for replanting). Changes in the market have been difficult. The condition of many bridges is beginning to limit access and options for hauling wood. Forest fires, disease and invasive plants are an ongoing challenge. A lack of federal timber sales has reduced overall production and issues with neighbors continue to complicate planning and threaten routine operations.

Small Forest Landowners

The Small Forest Landowner Interest Group meeting was held July 28, 2016 at the Van Zandt Community Hall. County staff provided the names and addresses of all landowners with a Rural Forestry zoning designation in the valley. An invitation was sent via US mail to all the landowners on the list. Ten people attended the meeting.

The participants in this meeting shared several basic goals. First and foremost, they want to take care of their land and be able to pass it down to their families. Most would like to make some money from the harvest of their trees, but most of the participants were conducting only minimal forest management, or none at all. Several people shared the desire to be able to have a community voice. They suggested the Planning Team look at the stream temperature data collected by a long-time resident named Nessel available at the Deming Library.

A great deal of concern was shared about the way decisions are made that affect landowners. Several participants felt they are not engaged or heard by government, although they also shared stories of direct conversations that they had with elected representatives in Whatcom County and State government. Some shared concerns about the constraining impacts regulations and a feeling that their leaders were not accountable. Others felt that public officials are not aware of the real needs of the community. There was a general sense that things are being done to them by outside forces and that they lack any genuine influence or power over access to resources and decision making. A few participants shared their skepticism about the planning process, who was driving it, and the source of the funding.

Some doubted that the plan would make any difference and others were concerned about duplicating the efforts of the WRIA 1 process. A few participants stated they would like to see a common vision, a holistic plan, and a free flow of information. Finally, some landowners shared their concern that root rot is becoming a common problem throughout the area.

Recreational and Small Business Interests

The Recreation and Small Business Interest Group meeting was held on August 31, 2016 at the Van Zandt Community Hall. Individuals participating in the conversations were identified by using a list provided by DNR for their recreational planning process and additional input from Planning Team members. Participants were contacted by email and phone. Ten people attended the meeting.

The goals shared by the Recreation and Small Business Interest Group were heavily focused on access to the river as well as the upland areas of the valley. There was a great deal of interest in water access for fishing and water recreation, especially swimming. There was a desire for improved access to walking, hiking, and horseback riding areas. The business community would like to keep tourism in the picture

because it is an important source of economic stability and tax revenue for the County. They also wanted to see that recreational opportunities are safe, sustainable, and well managed.

Ideas shared included building two new bicycle corridors to improve safety - one that follows the pipeline and one to connect the end of Hillside Road to Acme. They would like to see improved river access points for water recreation including good parking. There was also a suggestion that community level planning was needed to address the amount of recreation in the area and perhaps a change in the speed limit on Highway 9 to limit traffic.

A variety of concerns were raised by the group. Access to the river and uplands was an ongoing concern. The current Open Space policy in the County does not allow public access – and some felt this was a problem. Some see an inherent conflict between recreation and the protection of endangered fish. Others expressed concerns for pollution from agriculture and highway runoff. Bringing outside people into the valley to recreate increases safety concerns for some residents. Several folks felt that capacity for extra people (visitors) was limited due to a general lack of facilities. Theft has become a problem at trailheads. Forest fire danger is an ongoing concern. There appears to be no constituency to build support for recreation in the South Fork valley or to advocate for their needs. Finally, there was a sense that better agency coordination was needed to address recreation, parking, and access needs.

Transportation and Utilities

Representatives from Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Whatcom County Public Works, and Williams Pipeline. were contacted and interviewed individually for interviews in July and August of 2016. Attempts were also made to meet with staff from the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad, but this meeting was scheduled and then cancelled by BNSF on several occasions. Because of this, the meeting never occurred.

Only two goals were shared by participants in this group. The first was to meet State safety and transportation expectations for Highway 9. The second was to maintain safe and reliable pipeline services. There are opportunities for the County and WSDOT to partner on improving access to the South Fork near Acme and to address parking needs in Van Zandt. There are also opportunities for cooperation with tribes and others on habitat projects by linking to WSDOT's need to mitigate for highway construction projects. The Williams Pipeline staff want to work cooperatively with habitat restoration staff and can provide input on riparian planting projects. They would like the community to be better informed about the pipeline operations and safety issues.

A small list of concerns was identified, primarily by the Williams Pipeline representative. They need to know when landowners are planning excavations along the pipeline route. They want to prevent encroachments of plantings so they can maintain access to pipeline. They also expressed a concern that in-channel work (log jams etc.) in the vicinity of the pipeline crossing might change flow characteristics or the channel configuration resulting in potential exposure of the pipeline.

General Community: Meeting, Survey, Narrative and Findings

Community Meeting

Residents met on September 27, 2016 for a Community Meeting at the Van Zandt Hall in east Whatcom County to launch the creation of a South Fork Nooksack River Community Watershed Plan [later redefined as a framework].

Over 100 people attended the event to review the information that had been gathered and to share

their hopes, concerns, and ideas. Representatives from local organizations and agencies provided maps, displays and information about conditions and management efforts in the valley, as well as the latest opportunities for technical and financial assistance for landowners.

The Community Meeting included a vision board where participants were invited to write their hopes, concerns, and ideas. Input from the vision board is transcribed below:

Hopes

- Government gets out of the community
- Avoid federal government stepping in around water rights because the community is unable to come together
- Eliminate clear-cutting
- Healthy communication on issues

Ideas

- Public education about dairy farmers not harming environment
- Picking up derelict nets
- Private property owners must take care of their land
- Maintain river channel with well-placed dredging
- In planning, make sure that we account for proportionality – influence of large landowners/small landowners
- Would like another/different kind of meeting with residents only, where there could be a presentation with Q and A.

Concerns (*most of the following concerns were generated by five participants*)

- Scrutiny over water use; extra control, water metering
- Functionally disallowing farming
- Using tax dollars
- For log-jams – if/when they become dislodged, concern about safety, and who will pay for damages
- What are the lost opportunity costs related to log-jams – e.g. access, usual and accustomed uses
- Where do tribal rights come into play?
- Do these projects actually protect water? Are we wasting public dollars? (lack of confidence that the projects on the ground actually protect water)
- Bureaucrats not taking responsibility
- Concern that the community was not involved earlier in the process... Subzone should have called a meeting earlier in the process.
- Invasion of my privacy
- Unstable slopes (Devil's Slide)
- Inflated costs of restoration projects; not allowing or supporting landowners to participate in restoration on their own property.
- Disagree with how much of a buffer is needed on creeks/river (11 feet vs. 100 feet)
- Who defines a "salmon stream" (how is it defined)
- Lack of trust; fear of
 - Misuse of Funds
 - Misuse of Tax dollars
 - A process is driven by outside interests
 - A fake process – the people organizing this effort don't actually care

- A hidden agenda

Community Meeting Survey

In addition to the vision board, all attendees at the Community Meeting were asked to fill out a short survey to capture their opinions and ideas about watershed planning. Out of more than 100 attendees, 22 filled out the survey in hard-copy [an online survey produced input from an additional seven people]. The results are shown here with the original survey questions:

What are your hopes for the future of our watershed?

- Access to enough water, restoring salmon, keeping our rural way of life, and mitigating flooding and slides
- Stability of levees
- Regulate logging on the hillsides and steep slopes; protect wildlife and fisheries
- Salmon is an ongoing concern, with water and irrigation for farms to hold a constant value to make a living being
- Continued water access for private property owners
- No more clear cutting
- Access, restoration
- Try to keep the valley the way it has been. The community has been long established and we need to try to keep it the way it is.
- Access to enough water, restoring salmon, keeping our rural way of life
- Preserve local waters
- Collaborative effort wherever we go
- Yes to restoring salmon, keeping government and corporations out of our water interests, and definitely keeping our rural way of life.
- Restoring and improvements like cleaning it out
- Responsible, transparent resource management; preservation of critical infrastructure
- We as a community come together. That we work to find common ground, not meeting each other with sleeves rolled up. Sustainability is the goal.
- My hope is we can maintain our watershed and continue our way of life without more regulations.
- Stop the clear cutting. This is NOT forestry! It is deforestation! Ecosystem destruction!

What ideas do you have for how to resolve those concerns – both for you, and for other landowners in our community?

- Consume less, consume less. Have fewer children. Communication among varied interest groups. Find where interests and strategies overlap.
- Start dredging a permanent channel for county and gravel.
- Need to work with DNR to re-write regulations which have been mostly dictated by logging industry.
- Keep bringing facts, so the hearsay can go away.
- A balanced approach to instream flow studies to include the well data vs. river data. One doesn't always equal the other.
- Legislate an end to clear cutting
- More community input and solutions that are attainable.
- Working together and letting the folks that have lived here for a long time have more weight in decisions

- I believe the river should be dredged and be kept in its channel like it used to be done. As for disturbing fish habitat, the river bottom is never the same from one year to the next. Does anyone care about saving our homes and land?
- Keep on planning open meetings. Listen.
- Start at the mouth restoring and work your way up the River! Don't start at the end!
- Communication.
- This event is good. If there is to be a meeting, facilitators make people establish what they have in common before anything else.
- Forestry is the poster child of success in the watershed with habitat conservation plans and forest practice laws the landscape has changed for the better. The regulations put in place today have been providing this watershed success for years.
- Require selective logging, diverse, native tree planting

What are your concerns about the future of our watershed? (e.g. risk from fire, landslides and/or floods, loss of local wildlife or local farms)

- Risk from fire, landslides, loss of local wildlife or local farms
- Overpopulation of humans
- Risk from fire, landslides and/or floods, loss of local wildlife or local farms
- Logging, landslides
- Basin closure for water access; example – exempt wells
- Landslides, floods, less biodiversity
- Farming/water rights; safe access points; water quality/fish habitat
- Government involvement
- I'm afraid that the river is going to be let go wherever it goes. If that case it will, and has been, taking homes and more importantly farmland that cannot be replaced!!
- Depleting supplies; stabilizing banks
- Loss of wildlife and farms; Deforestation
- Landslides; loss of local voice; self determination
- Fires are inevitable. Landslides are from poor choices by logging companies. They shouldn't be allowed to log over homes.
- Concern that the watershed future is going to be taken away from the community and landowners
- Human impact will be irreversible.
- I'm concerned about government involvement and people's water rights. Fires, floods, and landslides have been happening long before we arrived.
- Deforestation effects – 1) reduces H2O retention; 2) Accelerates erosion/slides/river sediment; 3) Destroys diversity of biota/wildlife habitats

Survey Narrative and Findings

Additional information from the community was derived from seven people in an online survey.

What are your hopes for the future of our watershed? (e.g. access to enough water, restoring salmon, keeping our rural way of life, etc.)

- Water/Watershed that sustains ecosystem services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis. Island Press, Washington, DC.) - Restoring salmon and biodiversity - Planning on a watershed scale for holistic, sustainable futures - Community-based management - Considering how climate change may impact water resources
- Maintain a high quality level of the South Fork

- Having as little regulation as possible to maintain water rights of land owners and to promote agricultural interests.
- Harvest timber
- Maintain productive resource land (ag, forestry and mining), protect water quality, habitat restoration.
- Access to enough water, restoring salmon habitats and populations, keeping our way of life rural, protecting and maintaining a clean water source for generations to come. Also important to create more higher paying job opportunities in the valley for local families.
- Honest and realistic accounting of impacts and relationships in the watershed

What ideas do you have for how to resolve those concerns – both for you, and for other landowners in our community?

- Damage to water quality
- My biggest fear is having "conservation groups" that are funded via tax dollars or from out of area special interest groups, dictating how I use or limit my use of water.
- none
- Lack of understanding regarding responsible resource management leading to fear based decisions and under-utilized resources.
- Pollution, too much logging, flood damage,
- Risk from paradigm biases. WE MUST HAVE THIS OR THAT!

What are your concerns about the future of our watershed? (e.g. risk from fire, landslides and/or floods, loss of local wildlife or local farms)

- Watershed planning that incorporates ecosystem services and community-based input/management
- Maintain or reduce zoning density levels
- By not having out of area, private (for profit) business being paid by my own tax dollars, telling me how to use or not use water.
- Education and open, honest dialog between interested parties.
- Working together to listen to each other's diverse viewpoints, follow environmental laws to protect our resources, find creative solutions to solve problems.
- People do not voluntarily surrender economic interest. It is almost an insurmountable task to reduce sedimentation from clear cutting, and reducing ag chemical infiltration, over harvesting of fish and adding catch basins along the highway.

Summary

To summarize the input gathered to date, the facilitators identified the following key themes, and offered a few recommendations for future community action in the South Fork Nooksack River watershed.

Key Themes

1. Build a framework for open community dialogue around land management decisions, planning, and funding;
2. Keep the rural way of life as we know it today and protect it for our children;
3. Build cooperative, voluntary agreements with landowners and community partners and avoid management conflicts and overregulation;
4. Recover salmon populations and biodiversity by restoring river, wetlands and riparian habitat, reducing stream temperatures, and ensuring adequate stream flows in the summer;
5. Maintain and protect the agricultural land base, and promote long-term agricultural economic viability and public education about agriculture;
6. Maintain and protect the forest land base and a sustainable forest industry with a skilled and steady local workforce;
7. Evaluate a range of approaches to reduce flood risk and increase floodwater storage, while ensuring the protection and maintenance of critical infrastructure;
8. Evaluate water uses and needs in the valley, and develop local solutions to optimize benefits for humans and fish and address concerns about water rights;
9. Improve public access to the river, parks, and public land for recreation, and appropriate management;
10. Improve public safety-by addressing risks from landslides, fire, flooding, pipelines, and transportation;
11. Coordinate projects to ensure tax dollars are spent wisely and create opportunities that align with community interests;
12. Respect the ability and knowledge of local residents to manage land and water resources wisely, and adapt their practices as new information becomes available.

Recommendations for Action

- 1) Establish the Watershed Group and develop a vision of how they can work together. From the input received, consider focusing on the concepts shown below:
 - Develop and apply a locally-driven process for residents and landowners to share information, develop ideas and communicate with the community
 - Explore opportunities for long-term management of the river and the watershed in a manner that benefits people, fish and business.
 - Respect landowner privacy, property rights, protects water rights, and supports voluntary conservation and restoration efforts
 - Promote understanding of land use, fish and watershed processes through studies and education
 - Encourage cooperation between agencies and efficient use of resources
 - Ensure consistency with other local plans and processes
- 2) Find ways to work with interest groups and stakeholders to build a constituency and help refine their needs and long-term expectations.

- 3) Consider working toward a land use vision that identifies areas to preserve for long-term agriculture and forestry, and simultaneously identifies environments to conserve and enhance for fish, wildlife, water resources and flood control.
- 4) Support leadership development in the community.
- 5) Seek out opportunities to engage elected officials and agencies in conversations about the needs of the South Fork valley.
- 6) Hold an annual potluck or river festival and encourage valley-wide participation of all interests through food, activities, and sharing. Tie this event to a workshop where the community can learn about the latest science and projects underway or planned.
- 7) Develop a watershed curriculum for schools so kids learn to appreciate the beauty, natural resources, and way of life in the South Fork valley.
- 8) Continue to add to the science of climate change impacts on watershed function, sustainable forestry, sustainable agriculture, water supply, and water quality.

Supplemental Information

Summaries of the community's hopes, concerns and ideas organized by category are included in the Supplemental Document provided with this report. In addition, the Supplemental Document includes the listing of all comments organized by category showing responses provided to each comment.