

Alliance for a Healthy South Sound (AHSS) Executive Committee Meeting
January 28, 2015, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Pierce County Surface Water Management
2702 South 42nd Street – Tacoma Mall Plaza
Tacoma, WA

Executive Committee Members:

Commissioner Blake, Thurston County
Jeff Dickson, Squaxin Island Tribe
Justin Hall, Nisqually River Foundation
Councilmember Ladenburg, Pierce County
Executive McCarthy, Pierce County
Commissioner Neatherlin, Mason County

Additional Attendees:

John Bolender, Mason Conservation District
Tom Kantz, Pierce County SWM
Keri Rooney, Pierce County External Affairs
Al Schmauder, Chambers-Clover WS Council
Chris Schutz, Pierce County SWM
Stephanie Suter, PSP
Dan Wrye, Pierce County SWM/ECB
Representative, South Puget Sound

Meeting Summary

I. Introduction of Commissioner Bud Blake

Commissioner Blake is taking Commissioner Romero's position on the AHSS Executive Committee. Commissioner Blake introduced himself to the group and described his background and interests.

II. AHSS Administrative Updates

- The Executive Committee approved the December meeting minutes as amended by Squaxin Island Tribe.
- PSP staff is proposing that each LIO have a designated Leadership Council member as a point of contact. The designated Leadership Council member would periodically attend LIO meetings and would work with the ECB representative. The Leadership Council will consider the proposal; further information forthcoming.

II. US EPA NEP Funding Model Proposal

Dan Wrye reported that US EPA has not announced a decision on the funding model. Dan also noted that the date has passed by which EPA previously stated a decision would be needed, in order to prepare Congressional talking points for FY16 funding. Discussions are under way to arrange a meeting between LIOs and EPA.

According to recent conversations with EPA:

- EPA currently sees the multiple LIO option (currently in use) and the single LO option as the two leading scenarios at this point.
- EPA does not believe the timing of these conversations will impact the FY16 budget process.

Executive Committee Discussion:

- Commissioner McCarthy noted that she had early conversations with Senator Murray, who was sympathetic to this issue. To date, local officials have been careful not to overreach with the Congressional delegation and instead work primarily through the state process.
- Jeff Dickison commented that PSP has remained neutral and not participated in the conversation around NEP funding. Jeff also noted, from the EPA-Tribal meeting on 1/27:
 - EPA does not understand the proposed LIO funding model
 - EPA dislikes the local approach to funding
 - EPA is not comfortable with the Action Agenda as the criteria for funding
 - It appears that EPA believes that implementation strategies will narrow the scope of activities under Puget Sound cleanup so that funding goes to high priority activities; they probably do not yet know what that means in practice, but through the process they will filter activities into a narrower set of actions.
 - EPA discussed having an answer to present to the Leadership Council in March.
- Jeff suggested that the Executive Council prepare an approach for the Congressional delegation in the event that EPA does not adopt an acceptable funding model. Tribes have been clear that if EPA does not reach a mechanism to fund priorities, the coordinated Puget Sound restoration and protection effort will founder. The top-down approach has been tried since the days of the Puget Sound Water Quality Agency and it has not worked.
- Elizabeth noted that she has been working with the LIO/Tribal coalition to coordinate a response. A component of this strategy is to consider implementation strategies, as it is clear that EPA believes implementation strategies are a significant factor. PSP is developing a draft implementation strategy and AHSS has repeatedly stated its interest in providing input.
 - Dan suggested that AHSS put forward some suggested elements of implementation strategies.
- Stephanie commented that PSP Director Sahandy is committed to making the Action Agenda shorter, more direct, and more focused. Implementation strategies are an opportunity to do this, because they will be based on the Vital Signs. PSP will send a survey to its partners for feedback on which strategies would be the most useful.
 - Jeff responded that the Vital Signs are not recovery targets. And, tribes have attempted to provide feedback on the survey but believe it's misleadingly designed.
- Commissioner Neatherlin suggested directly contacting EPA Region 10 Administrator Dennis McLaren to advocate the proposed NEP funding model.

III. State Budget Reductions – South Sound Impacts

In June, Governor Inslee asked state agencies to consider the impact of a 15% budget reduction for the 2015-2017 budget cycle. WDFW's potential budget reduction measures include closure of the Minter Creek fish hatchery in Carr Inlet and the Coulter Creek satellite fish facility. Closure of these facilities would have a significant impact on South Puget Sound. Squaxin Island Tribe reported that WDFW has been reluctant to meet on this subject and there are no further updates on this topic.

IV. 2015 AHSS Priorities

Elizabeth reviewed the draft 2015 AHSS priorities document (circulated via e-mail prior to the meeting).

Prioritization of Local NTAs

In 2012/2013 the AHSS Technical Team reviewed approximately 200 projects in South Sound and ranked them; this became the basis for the interim South Sound priorities. The Team further filtered these and

developed NTAs based on them, but there was no prioritization process. The Technical Team has been working on a draft outline for a prioritization process.

South Sound Multi-Species Strategy

The Technical Team is also working on an ecosystem recovery strategy in conjunction with the Squaxin Island Tribe's GIS tool. The Technical Team has limited staff time and is considering applying for an NEP grant to hire contractor assistance. Most of the information for completing a South Sound ecosystem strategy is available and only lacks staff capacity to bring it together and complete the document. The proposal is due at the end of April; the Technical Team can present the scope and budget during the March Executive Committee meeting.

- Jeff noted that using AHSS as a forum to apply for NEP funding means that effectively the group will be competing against its members for project resources.
- Stephanie noted that PSP will support the grant application.

Other Potential AHSS Priorities

- **In-Lieu Fee Programs:** Commissioner Neatherlin reiterated support for hearing from HCCC staff on their experience with in-lieu fees.
- **Diversification of AHSS Funding Streams:** Commissioner Neatherlin suggested talking with HCCC staff or Nisqually River Council staff about their experience with transitioning to a 501(c)3 organization.

V. AHSS Council Activities

Justin Hall, AHSS Council Chair, reported on the January Council meeting. Among other items, the Council heard an update on South Sound Strategy Work, Nisqually Tribe Projects, and the work of the Septic Financing Advisory Committee.

VI. Summary of Action Items

- AHSS Coordinators will draft a letter of thanks to Commissioner Romero for her efforts on the AHSS Executive Committee.
- Randy will circulate the letter from the Hood Canal Coordinating Council (HCCC) on WDFW's proposed facility closures.
- AHSS Coordinators will post the December meeting summary to the website.
- AHSS Coordinators will develop a calendar of meeting dates (Leadership Council, ECB, etc.)