

Alliance Council Meeting Summary

**August 29th, 2012, 12 – 3:30 at the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge, Education Center
100 Brown Farm Road, Olympia**

Ron Sims, Vice-Chairman of the Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council presented awards for the first annual Puget Sound Partnership South Sound Puget Sound Champions program. He commended the recipient's commitment and dedication.

- Lance Wineka accepted the Habitat Restoration award on behalf of the South Sound Salmon Enhancement Group.
- George Walter, founder of the Nisqually Land Trust accepted a Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Vicki Kirkpatrick accepted a Public Engagement award on behalf of the Oakland Clean Water District Education Subcommittee.
- Erin Ewald accepted a Pollution Prevention Award on behalf of the Pierce Conservation District
- Earth Friendly Products accepted the Green Business Award

Two presentations were given on the process of designing a successful sustainability plan – focusing on the retrospective pros and cons of their different approaches:

Kathy McCormick and Veena Talbot, Thurston County Regional Planning presented the process that they had gone through to prepare the Thurston County Regional Planning. They are an inter-jurisdiction board with a strong track record of working together since the late 60s, focused on energy and transportation. They are the data management researchers for the region.

Kathy gave an over view of Sustainable Thurston. The Regional Planning Council has had this community conversation – taking a look at what they think the future should look like and how to become more vibrant and healthy as a region. We looked at three categories - the environment, economy and community.

The products we develop from this process will be a regional plan for sustainable development, a regional housing plan and a sustainable economy strategy. More than that, however, the community conversation will empower leaders to participate and understand what to do moving towards this vision of the future.

The sustainable community planning came about because of the appointments of the Obama administration – they understood that in land use, each of their missions was clearly tied to one another's. They pulled some money together to offer to communities for sustainability planning that ties environment and land use together. Thurston County was the recipient of one of those grants.

TRPC really wanted to pull in a bunch of people from the community through outreach and engagement. That has been the strength of this process – having the understanding and support of the community. The jurisdictions agreed to follow through with whatever comes out of this with Memorandums of Understanding that commit to participation and consideration of the recommendations made by TRPC.

TRCP had several handouts which they went over. They first began pulling experts together into panels that put together a topic white paper, looking at what was happening currently and working, what the issues and challenges are and what the opportunities are. They were also charged with connecting their topic white paper to the other white paper topics so you can begin to see connections and contributions.

The next stage of the process was doing public outreach on that information in a series of six workshops. The results of the panels and the public meetings went back to a task force which included the elected officials from each of the jurisdictions, additional representatives from housing authority and transit and the chairs of the panels. Everything that comes out of the task force then goes to the regional planning council and then it will go out to jurisdictional committees for them to incorporate into the individual jurisdictions. In other words, it was an iterative process.

In terms of what has worked well, you can see that reflected in the numbers (sustainable Thurston by the numbers hand out). Public participation – six workshops in the spring – gave us a lot of great feedback. Then to extend the conversations we had models that helped people visualize some of the choices embedded in the conversations. From all that panel work, the task force articulated a mission, vision and goals. There was a random sample survey, in addition to the listserv that WSU helped with. It went out to 5,000 people and the returns were good.

The other thing that has helped TRPC is that they've had the resources to make the project work. In Thurston County what we've learned through direct mailings is that 85% of people value the environment. People do pay attention to email – we've got now over 1,000 people that are following the process. We had the resources for the public outreach and then to articulate our mission, vision and goals. Veena then worked with our data team to pull together outreach materials and strategies for having city centers and corridors, which is something that it was clear people wanted to have.

Veena shared information about the outreach materials that TRPC used – that they had a healthy budget given to coordinate and to pursue their agenda. It was one thing to look at all the data and how it fit together and another to get public input and then translate that for the public in materials. For each topic area we developed it and looked at how it would be managed and then how they all fit together so that people could understand the connections. It was a complex model interactions. We got two other grants during this process – one from EPA and then a

Challenge grant, looking at how can we really change the places where people want to live to make them more sustainable for people and for the environment.

The jurisdictions were very much involved and provided the involvement of their planner – which was vital because it is those planners that are going to take what comes out of this process and move it forward into the individual communities.

Other information that was shared in the Q & A:

You can go to sustainablethurston.org to be on the listserv.

TRPC got 1.5 million over 3 years.

Land use and transportation were the focus of their regional plan, with the environmental piece attaching to that. They have a series of indicators (including environmental).

There will also be an action plan with performance measures and some kind of schedule.

The MOU with each partner was gentle, because they came very early in the process. It just includes working together on the plan. Whatever goals and policies are in the plan would be put forward but there was no pre-commitment. It all relates to building understanding in the community.

TRPC uses a simple allocation formula to determine distribution of funds to partners.

There were really strong food groups interested in agriculture and they are part of the action plan. We hope to pull in other groups/interests as well as we develop the plan. Communities that have done things like this – regional sustainability plans, have a leg up when it comes to funding opportunities.

Justin Hall from the Nisqually River Foundation gave a presentation sharing the process and history of the River Foundation.

The greatest outcome of our work has been to design a forum to deal with issues that come up in the community. We wanted to build trust before we had issues of contention to deal with. Though we're a rural watershed we're in between urban areas with Olympia, Tumwater and Tacoma surrounding us.

The first attempt to create a plan for the Nisqually watershed was in the early 70's and was driven out of Olympia without a lot of input from local stakeholders. Except for the very important creation of the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, the plan saw little success.

When we tried a second time, we included a much broader range of people and interests. It was a lot more concise and flexible, to use, and to show to people. We worked on implementing that for about twenty years. We had subcommittees that developed pieces and then brought it back to

a larger task force. When we would hit conflict – people that could live with a given solution, but weren't happy with it, we'd often go back and tweak it to try and keep everyone happy.

Justin shared a story about Billy Frank and Jim Wilcox meeting when their bus broke down. There was an ongoing conflict between environmental interests and property rights, but through their conversation, they realized that they had major goals in common. After that realization moving forward with new partnerships was collaborative and successful.

NRC spent a year and half updating the old plan and pulling together the sustainability plan – and it was the first time we could include the whole watershed and put on paper what we were already doing. The down side was that it became a “kitchen sink” plan – kind of a fifty year plan. Three years later we took another run at it and this time we worked with a smaller group of people at a retreat and hammered out the plan in a different way – taking the core vision and goals and setting measures, for salmon and the whole watershed, then took that back to the full River Council.

It's clear in our process when there were resources and when there weren't resources.

It's also clear that we didn't get it right the first time. But the process of moving forward is no less important and we can move towards that and work towards that. That organic process, if it includes many different voices, can really take hold in the community and this is where that starts for the South Sound.

Other information that was shared during the Q&A

When the Alliance originally costed out a sustainability plan – we decided we needed 2.5 FTE and currently have funding for $\frac{3}{4}$ FTE. So managing the expectations and products is going to be really important, particularly in terms of including the public voice.

Potentially there is room for the EPA to fund the effort if the funding model changes some, and we're positioned well to take advantage of that. Having clear goals and objectives will be key.

These are two really different approaches, one institutional and one more organic. We'll need to pull these together.

It will be important, in determining the ways in which this Council makes recommendations, to consider the ways in which political boundaries – jurisdictions – may or may not impact the successfulness and the outcome of policy recommendations. Counties can't be split in the middle, for example.

Alliance Council Approach to designing a Sustainability Plan

Gabby presented several options for moving forward with sustainability planning based on developing key problem statements and the developing topic white papers/ position papers based on each statement and beginning with developing key problem statements based upon the accepted priorities adopted by the Alliance Executive Committee.

The group agreed that there needs to be a visioning process for the Council to develop both a vision and clear goals and should involve a discussion about broadening out to other members of the community, stakeholders and folks with particular expertise.

The Council reviewed the description of the role of the Chair and Vice Chair and made some changes. They also determined that they would enter a nomination process for the roles of Council Chair and Vice-Chair. Nominations and self-nominations will be sent to Gabby and then will be vetted by Gabby and David to determine that each nominee is willing and able to serve in the capacity for which they have been nominated. Each nominee may speak on their own behalf at the next meeting of the Council, after which, anonymous elections will take place.

3:30 - ADJOURN