

**South Puget Sound Alliance  
Executive Committee Meeting Summary  
July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013 2 – 3:30pm  
University Place, WA**

**Executive Committee Attendees:**

**Commissioner Sandra Romero, Thurston County  
Commissioner Randy Neatherlin, Mason County  
Commissioner Charlotte Garrido, Kitsap County, Vice-Chair  
Executive Pat McCarthy, Pierce County, Chair  
Councilmember Connie Ladenburg, Pierce County  
David Troutt, Nisqually Tribe  
Jeff Dickison, Squaxin Island Tribe**

**2:00**

**Welcome, Introductions**

**2:05**

**Council Update - Justin Hall, Council Chair**

The last Council meeting included a presentation from the Puget Sound Partnership on near term actions and an update from Dan Wrye on the legislative strategy.

We have a number of new members, including Colonel Hodges (in attendance), Robert Johnson, representing Mason County citizens and Matt Matayoshi, representing Mason County Economic Development Council. We have a Health Dept. seat for Tacoma-Pierce County Health, but are still working to find the representative.

*Action Item: Approve/Deny membership request for empty Community Organization seat for the group CLIPA (Capitol Lake Improvement and Protection Association).*

Executive Committee members expressed concerns that CLIPA, as an organization with a single focus would be able to adopt a regional perspective. There were concerns expressed about the lack of science background given their focus. The Committee also recognized that restoration of the Deschutes estuary is already one of the resolved upon priorities of the Alliance.

The Executive Committee also stated that CLIPAs involvement in the organization provides educational opportunities as well as inclusivity of varying points of view. They point out that that adversaries can become advocates over the course of time.

*CLIPA – approved to take the community interest seat.*

**Legislative Strategy Roundtable Closed Session**

***The Executive Committee determined that a closed session was not necessary.***

**2:25**

**Legislative Strategy Discussion**

*Dan Wrye, Gabby Byrne and others gave updates on legislative strategy outreach.*

In all of our outreach efforts we brought the 4-pager and the conceptual projects page. The list of projects was prepared at the suggestion of Commissioner Romero to develop a “face” for the legislative strategy in advance of our first meeting at the Governor’s office (our first meetings were rescheduled because of the extra budget meetings that were happening that week in the Governor’s office).

Jeff, Dan and Gabby were able to meet with the Governor’s policy lead on Puget Sound on July 29<sup>th</sup>. The take home messages were:

- 1) There is a lot of interest in changing the PSP statute
- 2) She wanted to know what all the perspectives were – did we have bill language, sponsors etc.
- 3) Gov’s office had been considering changes to the PSP statute this year – but other things were on the front burner – defer until next session.
- 4) Statute is unwieldy and cumbersome
- 5) A lot of interest in changing the statute – some want to do away with the PSP or tweak it.
- 6) We emphasized that we would like to continue working with the Partnership.
- 7) Governor is looking for an action oriented director for PSP
- 8) She suggested that we meet with Kaylene Cottingham at RCO because they are supportive of patterning changes in PSP to model after the SRFB model. This is what the Alliance has proposed as well - with rolling up into the Action Agenda.

Jeff’s input – they are expecting and preparing for legislation that will relate to the PSP. They weren’t signing on to our version. What they are doing is gathering ideas and frankly, that there will be some kind of PSP bill whether we are the ones pushing it or not.

Committee reviewed the Outreach Matrix.

**3:00: Puget Sound Partnership – Alliance Discussion of Legislative Strategy**

*Discussion with Martha Kongsgaard, Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council*

**Executive McCarthy:**

There has been a level of frustration that the grass-roots work being done is not being recognized. That’s what is driving this conversation. How do we make sure we’re not meeting just for the sake of meeting?

**Commissioner Romero:**

The Alliance has been rich in collaboration. We've put our collective minds together to accomplish a regional approach. We'd like to have some acknowledgement for the regional prioritization of our efforts. We've achieved a lot.

**Commissioner Garrido:**

Local knowledge is very valuable and integrating it into the Action Agenda would also be very valuable. In talking with Denis McLerran at EPA, to get a better sense of where we fit in the big picture, it was clear how much communication is really needed and necessary here.

**David Troutt:**

When we went through setting this up – there was concern that we wouldn't be able to get the electeds together consistently. But we've done just that. If we're not empowered to move forward now, then people have other things on their plates. We need to have a purpose and a way to make a difference in the community to keep people sitting at the table.

I've been involved in the Salmon Recovery Board for a long time. At first it was opportunistic – not a strategic approach or based on local support. We moved towards regional allocations based on strategies that are credible and science driven and to have strong community support. That's what we're talking about here, and with the resources to ably that we think make sense. Rather than going to another agency, hat in hand, that isn't part of the community to have our projects funding. We're ultimately here to make PSP successful by implementing projects.

**Commissioner Neatherlin:**

Up until recently, I was the most skeptical of this whole process. I'm also a representative for the Hood Canal Coordinating Council. Watching how the money was spent, in particular, was frustrating. There's been a huge change – for example, the Hood Canal Coordinating Council didn't have a budget. There was a turning point for me at these meetings. The Alliance has come up with some great solutions – a different perspective. I don't want to sit here and do things that we're already doing. We want collective regional projects. The Alliance with the vision of this Executive Committee, and people like Dan Wrye, is offering a whole different answer. Every time the money touches another agency another 10% goes away. This strategic effort is the answer. It will be successful. The Partnership keeps advice and consent. But, frankly, this could be the process that saves PSP – this could make me a believer. I've read the audits. PSP needs to have success on the ground by 2016. This is the effort that can make that happen.

**Jeff Dickison:**

I've been clear with this group (PSP). We have all lived and worked through multiple iterations of saving Puget Sound – failing because they are top down efforts. We've been clear that we need to do things at the local level. Currently we cannot. We are being inhibited by PSP and the demands on process. We've spent time and money on identifying priorities for this region. We in the South Sound know what we need to do. We have the commitment of the elected community to do it and now we need the resources to do it. Let us go to work.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

PSP is not separate from you. We exist because you exist. You don't have to be a cartographer to understand why South Puget Sound is so important. It presents challenges and opportunities. I think you also represent an LIO that is a little different from the other LIOs. It's impressive to have the commitment of this panel of elected officials. You've some solutions in mind. That is where we need to go. We share a frustration about how the funding is brought through the National Estuary Program. The pot of money is not going to be enough. In terms of that money – that money doesn't flow through the PSP. EPA has set up a structure that sets up the State agencies for whole sale grant making. They have heard from us that the central organizing factor is the Action Agenda – that lists the priorities for cleaning up the Puget Sound. The second iteration is a huge improvement. It takes into account the tension between the top down and the bottom up.

The Holy Grail is getting that tension right – considering that there are not enough resources. I would argue, proudly, that we have the right architecture. We have to work to get the local voice into the action agenda. The state won't know where to put their money. We do have a plan. This region's voice is embedded in that plan. We insist that the EPA money should reflect that. That's where I think the pressure should be.

I have not heard anyone say, except for maybe Don Benton, they want to kill the partnership. We have not since we were created in 2007 had such a strong legislative session in terms of funding. We got 70 million in PSAR funds, thanks in part to the Salmon Recovery Council – pushing for the ecosystem projects that are the big wins. Even the Senate didn't blink. We got 100 million for stormwater, and 33 million for an integrated floodplain program. That will be a huge NGO piece (The Nature Conservancy). ESRP got 10 million dollars. It was a grand slam home run in the legislature. It was proof of concept and that the community has done so much work integrating science and policy into the vision for the region. I have two concerns about going to the legislature. Getting the LIOs in the statute and the lio/actions area language pulled together is important. LIOs should be mentioned in the statute. But I wouldn't want to give the impression that we're not all confident that this is the game – that this is our plan and that we're together as a region and we've pretty much got it right. The other concern is that I don't think that we can tell EPA what to do with their money. The money we're using to fund this isn't state money.

**Executive McCarthy:**

This is a great story that highlights our struggle. I disagree that we can't tell EPA what to do with the money. When Obama came out with the ARA (?) money, through Department of Transportation, then on to Puget Sound Regional Council and then the local councils, those ARA funds had certain requirement – for example, to be shovel ready. We did that as a state. Our success as a state, based on the local priorities was a great success story. There was one state agency – just one – that acted to help with that work and used some of the funds. I think our success with those funds was largely based on the fact that we used the local priorities. It was phenomenal and a great success story that came back as additional funds to WA.

**Councilmember Ladenburg:**

What made that successful was that we had an existing structure in place. The top needs to get our feedback and then deliver funds for implementation.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

That is the intent. PSP is the state agency that holds the plan for the recovering the Sound – assessing whether or not everyone’s actions are adding up to recovery for Puget Sound. What should be done, when, where and why. Then the money is supposed to flow through that plan. Two things aren’t happening and that’s where our focus needs to be. The EPA process with the LOs. 78% flows through the Action Agenda. I’m dismayed the rest doesn’t. Rick Perkin is the new liaison from EPA. He’s open, not to changing the process but to making it better. We have the pieces in place but we need to make sure it gets done better. You have your actions reflected in the Action Agenda.

My concern about moving to a block grant is that you’ll miss the ecosystem based part of this. Geographical locations alone won’t get it done. We are charged with determining what the work all rolls up and amounts to?

We need to insist that the system we have be more responsive to the local voice. I pledge that I will do whatever I can to help you be heard better. I would characterize the Ecosystem Coordination Board meeting – not a single hand went up to re-jigger the system. I think people are really invested in this and in what we have. Making it better is the simpler solution. I think if we’re all in it together, we can get the LIOs recognized and that’s doable.

**Commissioner Romero:**

We need to be able to collectively impact that change. You talked about the L.O.s and how they are part of the collective, but not totally. When I look at a model it’s laid out and the funding flows to that model. There’s a clear disconnect with our group in terms of where we sit and how the funding flows to us.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

The Lead Organizations are the state agencies and they are given a pot of money. They are charged with re-granting that money. 78% of the funds are doing that.

**Executive McCarthy:**

78% of the funds are...

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

Going through the Action Agenda

**Jim Bolger:**

They touch the Action Agenda at different levels. Some of the LO funding goes directly to implementing Near Term Actions. A good chunk of it goes to local jurisdictions or LIOs to implement projects or entities within LIOs. Some of that is competitive. Some of it isn’t. Some of is plugged from programs that local sponsors have proposed. It’s not an open...

**Executive McCarthy:**

And I think that's where the problem is.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

Yes – transparency and, your beef is our beef. We don't have control over that money.

**Commissioner Garrido:**

I heard your pledge that you would help to integrate the LIOS into the broader vision. What are the steps to do that? When Kitsap was doing their SMP – we heard lots of push back. A common theme was that in dealing with so many agencies etc. that everyone had their own rules, expectations, timelines and policies and so forth. You want to integrate the local voice and have some semblance of a system to do that.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

That lands in the PSP lap by statute. What are the barriers to getting what we need done, done. SRC and ECB and PSP staff is working on that. Everyone is working on that –

**Executive McCarthy:**

We (the LIO) has the ability to find that common thread. We have that with our County and Tribal representation. If there is an alignment that needs to be made to protect the South Sound and our policies are inhibiting that – than we can be the champions for finding those common threads and making the changes.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

We should be able to encourage that and help you.

**Commissioner Neatherlin:**

I disagree with the idea that no one is trying to kill PSP – I've seen it on numerous occasions. In reading the audit, I've seen that if real things can't be shown in 2016, you may be in trouble. Not wanting to re-jigger, that doesn't surprise me. The system is not local and the money is not going to projects. The Alliance is doing things differently, and the Hood Canal Coordinating Council is starting to follow that example. That's based on what I've learned here. The Alliance is changing the process to be able to do the big projects. I'm asking you to understand that this is the wave of the future. Getting these big projects on the ground is the answer. If you don't want to carry the water, then at least don't get in the way of it. I'm the skeptic, but these are the right answers.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

If it's not the wave of the future than we're not going to get this done. We can't do this piecemeal stuff. We need to do the big, big game changers. Someone is not going to get what they want for the smaller projects. I'm here to listen and understand where you're coming from. I think that logistically, the block grant is the difficult part, but we need to keep talking about it. There is not one meistro/a. It's a region wide effort.

**David Troutt:**

We're kind of like the orchestra that's warming up. The hope lies in that we can get on the same sheet of music. I disagree with the notion that we can't tell EPA how to move forward with the NEP funds. What we're proposing is that we all go to EPA and ask them to change the process, to drastically change the model. If we do that, I'm confident they will. Block grants (e.g.; PSAR) work. It's nationally recognized as one of the most effective programs. They are broadly recognized as a model that works. In some places there are no projects. There needs to be an effort to come together, recognizing LIOs and empowering them to implement prioritized big projects. If we went together with the Partnership, I believe the SRC money is just the beginning. We are committed to the PSP being successful. I think, like David Dicks was saying, it probably is our last best hope. We will never get the legislative attention again if it doesn't come together. I believe these folks have got it right. We know there will be a PSP legislative action moving forward in 2014. Let's get in front of it and have that be the Governor's request rather than something else. Let's be pro-active and work to accomplish what we need to do. Let's take a positive approach together and drive the discussion.

**Jeff Dickison:**

You heard the reports earlier – just in our first pass, there are people that will support this and others would oppose. We think that the system is broken. I can't accept your contention that we're almost there. We don't see *getting the job done* as the capacity for the system to fund us to do the job. Your contention that 78% of funding is going to local projects. We've scoured the numbers, to the degree that we've had access to them, and that is not happening. That number is not even close. Not even a majority of the money is going to the locals. It isn't happening and that's where the money should be. EPA is in the middle of 6 years of this process and want to stay the course. Another 3 years of this and we'll be done – long gone. The current system is not working. The L.O.s as a system are not working, and we cannot continue to support that method of distribution of funds - on the chance that someday, somehow there might be a flavor of something that we might have suggested as part of local priorities. I reject the notion that that current plan reflects our priorities. We contributed both times and it was re-written. Our items are hard or impossible to find. It was molded into a different message. I reject the notion that the plan is a reflection of our priorities. Our priorities are clear. We know them and they didn't just appear out of nowhere. They are science-based. The system is not structured to support and implement them. We have got to make changes.

**Commissioner Garrido:**

We'd like to help you move forward. I propose that the Alliance Chair and Vice Chair, along with Dan and Gabby meet with you (Martha) in the interim between now and the next meeting of the Executive Committee. There must be a strategy that we can put together and bring back to the committee.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

Yes. I'm happy to come to your meetings as well. Gabby, you play a liaison role with the Partnership...

**Jeff Dickison:**

She works for us. Some of your staff don't seem to know that.

**Martha Kongsgaard:**

Okay. The legislative docket gets written in September, so we need to move forward quickly.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Approval of May meeting summary**

**3:30 Adjourn**

**Next meeting September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2-4 in Thurston County**