

APPROVED DRMT Hybrid Meeting Notes January 11, 2023

Prepared by Todd Coward, Clallam County

DRMT Members Present:

Hansi Hals (Chair)/JST, Shawn Hines/JST(alt), Danielle Zitomer/WDFW, Robert Bebee /Riverside Property Owner, Powell Jones/Dungeness River Nature Center, Cathy Lear/Clallam County, Ben Smith/Water Users Assoc, Tony Corrado/Protect the Peninsula's Future, Bob Phraener/Olympic Audubon, Mike Auger/NOLT, Bowen Kendrick/PUD

Matt Heins/Estuary-Tidelands, Judy Larson (alt)/Protect the Peninsula's Future, Meggan Uecker/City of Sequim

Others Present:

Marguerite Glover/Sequim Assoc of Realtors, Phil Martin/Guest, Paul Moore/Guest, Stephanie Robinson/Washington Water Trust, Ann Soule/Guest, Joel Green/Streamkeepers, , Genie Mixson/Guest, Alexa Whipple/Presenter, Bruce Cornett/Guest, Carol Creasey/Clallam County, Mike Blanton/Guest, Randy Johnson/JST, Jenna Ziogas/Dungeness River Nature Center, Teresa Powell/WDFW (ret), Kara Cardinal/Strait ERN, Pete Tjemsland/City of Sequim, Sarah VanAusdle/City of Sequim, , Scott/Guest, Todd Coward/Clallam County

I. Introductions/Review Agenda

Hansi called the meeting to order at 2:00pm and asked each person present on Zoom to introduce themselves.

Hansi asked for a motion to approve the current meeting agenda. Ben made a motion to approve the agenda, Meggan seconded. Motion passed.

Hansi asked for a motion to approve the December meeting notes. She requested that the notes be amended in the Member Comments section to change the word "approval" with "support" of the Off Channel Reservoir project in describing the discussion for January's agenda. Ben made a motion to approve the notes as amended, Cathy seconded, motion passed with Judy Larson abstaining.

Public Comment

None

Member Comments

Matt commented on a Letter to the Editor in Tuesday's paper that mentioned that there were nets across the river once the hatchery fish were full. He stated that this was an untrue statement and that nets haven't been used in the 32 years that he has been a part of Dungeness Farms. This includes both State and Tribal. He is planning a response to the Letters to the Editor. Hansi added that JST is also planning a response to the Letter to the Editor.

II. Beaver Ecology, Use in Restoration, and Co-Existence Strategies (Partnering with Beavers for Sustainable Watersheds)

Alexa Whipple, Methow Beaver Project

Alexa began her presentation by describing the Methow Beaver Project and their partnerships. The presentation covered three main topics. The first topic was why beavers matter to the watershed and their biology. Alexa described the beaver lifecycle, diet and why they are a keystone species. They build dams, excavate bank dens and dig canals within a watershed. They are adapted to aquatic life and use their tail as a rudder, a kickstand, an alarm, fat storage and temperature regulator. The beaver help biodiversity of the watershed due to their management of the water. This is because the beaver slow down the flow of water, allowing for wetlands and riparian areas to develop.

Alexa shared two books and a movie that describes how the beaver was an important part of the settlement of North America.

The presentation then went on to discuss incised streams and rivers, some of which were caused by wildfires and subsequent debris flows. This led to the second topic of the presentation which was Basics of Beaver Benefits. The beaver helps to hold water and nutrients and spread sediment. These actions improve the aquatic habitat. Beavers also help in floodplain connectivity and slowing the flow and spread of water. This helps with groundwater recharge and to maintain the water temperature. This increases quality and complexity of the habitat.

Alexa shared a slide that cited a study by Walthen in 2019. It showed the improvement of stream bathymetry

Which improves fish habitat by maintaining differing depths and temperatures within a stream.

Beaver can help build resilience to disturbance within the habitat. The resiliency also helps with the restoration of damage caused by wildfire, flooding and drought. Alexa shared slides of areas that have been restored due to beaver activity.

The last topic was Partnering with Beavers. Alexa detailed the relocation efforts that the project does when dealing with conflict beavers. One challenge of relocation is finding a habitat that the beaver can thrive in. Currently, there are few relocation areas due to degraded habitat.

Alexa mentioned that there is unlimited recreational trapping of beaver during five months of the year. She is currently working to try and minimize trapping in areas where public funds are being used for habitat restoration and beaver establishment. The greatest loss of beaver populations is the nuisance lethal removal by landowners. There is no permitting or reporting necessary, so exact numbers are not known.

Beaver conflicts is a large part of what the Methow Project is involved in. This includes education and outreach, culvert protection devices and exclusion devices.

Alexa shared several restoration projects where damaged historic beaver dams were repaired to improve the surrounding habitat restore stream function. This includes the construction of Beaver Dam Analogs (BDA), which help with retaining debris and improving the habitat for beavers. The Methow Beaver Project also partners to restore stream function in areas damaged by wildfires.

The project works with Eastern Washington University, Department of Ecology and Wildlife Conservation Society to monitor the restoration efforts. This includes measurements of surface water storage, channel morphology, nutrient transport and wood density. Additionally, the presence of beavers in these areas are monitored.

More information regarding the Methow Beaver Project can be found at:

www.methowbeaverproject.org

[Alexa's slides and notes were provided to DRMT via email link following the meeting]

Q/A/Comments:

Ben asked about water temperature being a benefit when beaver slow the water down. Alexa explained that the surface water may be higher, but one foot below the surface the water is cooler. There isn't much research regarding temperature, but the Methow Beaver Project is starting one in the near future. It seems that the beaver complex helps regulate the temperature and provide a habitat for salmon.

Cathy asked about beavers and culverts. Alexa stated that the Methow Beaver Project has had good success protecting culverts following suggestions by The Beaver Institute.

III. City of Sequim Water System Plan-2022 Update

Ann Soule, City of Sequim

Ann started the presentation by introducing Sarah VanAusdle, Public Works Director and Pete Tjemsland, Water Utility Manager and Meggan Uecker, Resource Analyst.

The presentation started by describing the key infrastructure updates from 2013/2014. These include Assessment for current water demands, projected growth, system capacity, water supply strategy, Capital Improvement Plan and financial strategy.

Ann mentioned that all of the information that was shared in the presentation is available online on the City of Sequim's website. She then shared a slide showing map of the service area and the water sources. The three sources are the Port Williams well field, Silberhorn well field and infiltration gallery (adjacent to the Dungeness River).

The demand for water connections has been growing steady at 3% per year since 2013. The production has been relatively constant due to increasing customer usage efficiency and a decrease in the distribution system's leakage (DSL). Water demand is measured per Equivalent Residential Unit. This allows for the expression of non-residential usage of water (commercial, irrigation).

Ann explained that the annual growth is projected to stay at 3%, with no forecast in any large increases within the different use classes. There may be increases if areas are acquired, for example the John Wayne Marina. Additionally, a retail service area that is different from previous plans may be developed in the southern section of the service area.

The presentation then moved to system capacity and future demands. Ann shared a slide that showed the projected capacity needs for 10 and 20 years.

Ben asked why the maximum day source capacity was lower than average day source capacity in the System Capacity Table. Ann explained that the numbers (ERUs) represent the connections and not the amount of water.

The City of Sequim is planning to install a new deep well (3rd aquifer) at the Silberhorn wellfield. This project has been funded. They are also planning on establishing another deep source at the Port Williams wellfield.

The next ten-year plan might have a potential plan to exercise the Dungeness River water rights if needed. These rights have not been used in over 20 years.

Hansi asked for clarification regarding the new deep wells and the number of permits. Ann responded that the Port Williams is permitted for 5 and there are currently 3. The Silberhorn wellfield is permitted for 3 and there are three. The new well will be replacing an old one. The question of how deep the well would be was asked. Port Williams is at 340 ft. Hansi asked if the future Dungeness treatment facility would use the infiltration method. Ann said that that has yet to be determined.

Ben asked if the Ranney wells (infiltration gallery) were part of the Dungeness water rights. Ann stated that it is not because there is a separate water right associated with them.

Ann summarized the CIP Improvement Plan which included infrastructure improvements for servicing future development, remedies to the deficiencies in fire suppression flow and improvements to Operations and Maintenance.

The City conducted a rate study in 2021 which recommended annual utility rate increases. The City has not raised utility rates since 2020. The Utility will need to obtain additional funding beginning in 2026 to make up the inflationary pressures on all costs, O&M and Capital Projects.

Ann summarized the Review and Approval process for the proposed projects that were mentioned earlier. She then shared the 2022 Water Conservation/Efficiency Goals. This includes reduction of ERU usage by 5% over the next 10 years, conservation education, increasing the use of reclaimed water and a reduction in DSL by 3%.

There was a comparison between the 2014 and 2022 Water Use Efficiency (WUE) Measures. The 2022 measures added Customer Education, evaluation of conservation pricing and evaluation of DSL.

Ann concluded the presentation by updating the current permits for the proposed projects.

All documents associated with the presentation can be found at www.sequimwa.gov/356/Water

Q/A/Comments:

Hansi asked if Department of Ecology is part of the review for the upcoming projects. Ann answered that once Department of Health receives the application; it is shared with the Department of Ecology.

Hansi asked if there are companion documents regarding the reclaimed water. Ann stated that that would be tied into the comprehensive sewer plan.

Marguerite asked if the City of Sequim was planning on taking over Flauras Acres' water system. Ann referred the question to Pete who stated that they have reached out to the City, but that there are some issues with the system that need to be addressed prior to moving forward.

IV. Request to revise DRMT letter of support for Off-Channel Reservoir

Hansi summarized the request by residents that are down-gradient of the reservoir project for a revision to the DRMT's letter of support (most recently updated in October 2021). The request sought for the revision to include language addressing public safety.

The DRMT agreed to review the former letter of support during the December 2022 meeting.

The DRMT members also reviewed the DRMT's Resolution in Support of the Dungeness Flow Restoration and Aquifer Recharge Off-Channel Reservoir that was issued in 2018. The Resolution pages were placed on the Zoom screen by Powell.

The letter by the Dungeness Meadows HOA to the County was also shared via Zoom for the Group's review.

Ben shared ideas regarding possible suggested language that could be used to amend the current resolution. “The DRMT requests that the highest priority be placed on safety concerns of the down gradient residents”.

Carol stated that the project will be going through a rigorous permitting process including review by the State of Washington Department of Ecology’s Dam Safety office. A Dam Safety Permit would not be issued if the maximum is not done for safety of the project.

Hansi invited other members of the DRMT to share their thoughts on Ben’s suggested language.

Matt was asked to repeat his earlier comment by Cathy. Matt thought that Ben’s suggested language and Carol’s statement on the permitting process are similar and that he would not have an issue using the suggested language to amend the Resolution.

Discussion ensued between the DRMT group regarding the suggested language for the amended Resolution.

Bruce asked the DRMT if language could be added to have the stakeholders be part of the planning process of the project. Hansi stated that that would be a separate discussion and that the Group is currently working on the language to potentially amend the Resolution.

Carol mentioned that there is a public process for all of the permitting and that there will be additional open houses.

Ann shared the history of the original Resolution written in 2018. She shared that she would be uncomfortable passing judgment on the highest priority of the project.

Hansi spoke about the Resolution and how it pertains to the conceptual plan versus the current 30 percent design.

Meggan mentioned that she was in favor of the suggested language without adding conditions regarding the overall design of the project.

Discussion continued regarding the placement of the amended language in the current Resolution. A suggestion was page two, with a final “whereas” would be inserted with the suggested amendment.

Randy mentioned the cost/benefits and feasibility of the project may have changed since the original Resolution was issued. He stated that this is a different project than was proposed in 2018. The revision should take into account more factors than just safety.

Hansi asked the group for a unified statement. Ben suggested passing the amendment today and review the 30 percent design and Randy’s comments at a future time in order to possibly make additional amendments to the resolution.

Matt suggested a 30 percent design Resolution.

Carol asked if this amendment process was going to be done for all projects brought before the DRMT. She mentioned that this was a letter of support for a concept. Carol asked if there would be

resolutions for the different design milestones of the project. This would set a precedent for all future projects asking for support.

Hansi stated that due to the scale of the project letters of support may follow along with the design milestones.

Cathy mentioned that the date of the Resolution should be changed if the amended language is added.

Further discussion by the group included not amending the Resolution at this meeting, but instead hold further discussions during future DRMT meetings. Hansi asked the group if the DRMT should write a separate letter to Clallam County highlighting the priority of safety for the down-gradient residents. Shawn mentioned that public safety is in the DRMT's Purpose and Goals.

Matt mentioned that the down-gradient residents came to the DRMT for support and that the process is working.

Robert suggested instead a letter of recognition that addresses the Homeowner Association's concerns and states the DRMT's goals regarding public safety.

After some discussion, Hansi asked if there were any additions to the motion for the DRMT to write a letter to the County that recognizes the concerns of the down-gradient residents. Should language addressing the resident's participation in the design process be added?

Carol stated that safety is a concern for the project. The project team and project consultants have heard the concerns of the residents and there have been design amendments to the project to ensure safety.

Hansi asked for a motion for the letter. Ben asked for the clarification regarding the wording of the motion. Hansi detailed the motion as, "DRMT to write a letter to Clallam County, as the Off Channel Reservoir project sponsor, in recognition of hearing down gradient neighbors' concerns about safety and to highlight the goal of DRMT, which includes reducing risk of loss of life".

Ben suggested adding " the neighbors' concerns about making safety the highest priority". Hansi agreed.

Matt made the motion which was seconded by Powell. Motioned carried with Cathy Lear abstaining.

Matt asked if the group has finished reviewing the Resolution. Hansi answered that the group held off on proposing amendment to Resolution at this time, in favor of a letter as discussed above. The group discussed revisiting the Resolution after everyone has had a chance to review the 30 percent design.

Matt mentioned that due to Randy's comments, he has questions if the project costs could be used elsewhere and whether the project is cost effective.

Hansi suggested that DRMT would benefit from having potential workgroup review the project. Carol was asked when the workgroup meeting was scheduled. She answered that it was scheduled

for end of February, beginning of March. This will allow for some of the field work to be completed which will make some changes to the 30 percent design.

Clarification was made that the working group would be for the project design, not the amendment to the resolution.

Carol stated that a recent cost/benefit analysis for the project was completed and it currently stands at 1.91, which indicates that the benefits are almost twice the costs.

It was suggested that DRMT review the 30 percent design in relation to the original Resolution and return for discussion during the February meeting and possibly in March. A subcommittee needs to be formed to review the details of the project.

V. Other Orders of Business

Operating Procedures

Review of December's discussion. Item #3 Confidential voting, edit to add "electronic voting". Item #7- Tony and Danielle were to determine the possible edits. Hansi stated that the current language should stand.

Powell made a motion to update the DRMT Operating Procedures as presented. Matt seconded. Motion carried.

VI. Project Updates

Off Channel Reservoir Update

Carol Creasey, Clallam County

Carol shared that the 30 percent design report is on the County's website along with information from the open house. Also on the website is the Open House PowerPoint. The Factsheet Answers to the comments /questions provided prior to and during the open house are being compiled and will be made available on the Reservoir website in February.

The Cultural Resources report is complete. The geophysics field work is complete and the County is awaiting the report. Surveying was conducted on the Highland irrigation ditch and along the borders of the parcel. The permitting applications are being compiled.

Carol mentioned that there are several ways to provide comments or questions regarding the project. These include the County Reservoir website, the QR code on the flyer and Factsheet, and emailing or calling Carol directly.

Levee Setback Project Update

Cathy Lear, Clallam County

Cathy updated the group regarding the recent rain and the floodplain. The River has created several new channels due to the increasing flow.

Joel shared a video of the Dungeness River flowing over the old levee footprint and through the newly expanded floodplain on December 27.

Q/A/Comments:

Matt asked Cathy when Towne Road would open. Cathy answered it would be paved sometime in 2023.

Cathy shared a drone photo of the floodplain that was recently taken. Hansi pointed out the coniferous island and the old Towne Road and Corp dike. Powell asked if the coniferous island will be maintained. Cathy mentioned that either the River or the beavers would change that area.

VII. Standing Agenda Items

None

VIII. Public Comment

None

Meeting Adjourned at 5:00pm.