**APPROVED DRMT Hybrid Meeting Notes March 8, 2023**

Prepared by Todd Coward, Clallam County

**DRMT Members Present:**

Hansi Hals (Chair)/JST, Shawn Hines/JST (alt), Robert Beebe/Riverside Property Owner, Powell Jones/Dungeness River Nature Center, Ben Smith/Water Users Assoc, Tony Corrado/Protect the Peninsula’s Future, Bob Phraener/Olympic Audubon, Judy Larson (alt)/Protect the Peninsula’s Future, Kim Williams/CCD, Ann Soule/City of Sequim (alt), Michael Auger/NOLT, Matt Heins/Tideland Owners, Montana Napier/Dungeness River Nature Center (alt), Cathy Lear/Clallam County, Rebecca Mahan/Clallam County (alt)

**Others Present:**

Phil Martin/Guest, Paul Moore/Guest, Joel Green/Streamkeepers, Genie Mixson/Guest, Bruce Cornett/Guest, Kara Cardinal/Strait ERN, Todd Coward/Clallam County, Mark Ozias/BOCC, Jenna Ziogas/JST, Christina St John/Clallam County, Allison Frike/Clallam County, Carol Creasey/Clallam County, Nate Roberts/NOSC, Steve Gray/Clallam County, Susan and Paul Makay/Guests, Mike Gallagher/ECY Water Resources, Lorenz Sollmann/USFWS, Will Habel/Clallam County, Robert Knapp/JST, Chris Burns/JS , Jason Hatch/WA Water Trust

I. **Introductions/Review Agenda/Approve February 2023 Draft Meeting Notes**

Meeting was called to order at 2:00pm. Hansi reviewed the river flows and SNOTEL totals. The SNOTEL sites showed 80-85 percent of normal for the snowpack. Hansi noted the USGS gage is down for mechanical issue as of March 5, so we’re relying on Ecology gage.

Ann commented that the 85% would be for the Olympic Range as a whole. An accurate number for the Dungeness Region would be 156%.

Introductions were made starting with the in-person group and followed up by Zoom attendees.

The March agenda was reviewed and there were no comments.

The February Notes were reviewed. Hansi had one comment on Page 5 which clarified her response regarding the draft letters. It should read, “Hansi answered yes Judy, the January 20, 2023 dates were the correct correspondence”.

Ann wanted to correct that she was listed as a guest in the Attendance for the February meeting, when in fact she was acting as the City of Sequim alternate member.

Robert made a motion to approve the notes as revised. Tony seconded. Motion passed.

**Public Comment**

Judy mentioned that she found the final EIS report for Dungeness River Agricultural Water Users Association plan at the Sequim Public Library. She noted that the individuals that received the report were listed at the conclusion of the report. She mentioned that members of the DRMT received the report. She asked if there is a practice for former members who receive material as part of the DRMT to leave that material in a library for retention.

Hansi answered that each organization has their own records retention policy.

**II. Invasive Plants Management on the Dungeness River**

*Nate Roberts, NOSC*

Nate open his presentation by sharing the North Olympic Salmon Coalition’s mission statement. There are fourteen Regional Fishery Groups and Dungeness is in Group 7. NOSC works to repair habitat that drains north into the Strait.

NOSC is working on the Dungeness River Riparian Project to restore degraded riparian conditions. A problem with these degraded areas is the invasion of non-native vegetation. The non-native species out compete native species which causes a loss of riparian functions and increases water temperature.

Nate then reviewed the benefits of a healthy riparian area. These include bank stabilization, shade, filtering, habitat complexity provision of side channels and flood mitigation. The goal of the Dungeness River Riparian Project is to create a functioning riparian area to improve river health and salmon habitat. The goal entails the removal of invasive vegetation and replanting/seeding with native vegetation. A map showing the areas that NOSC has already completed. These areas were on the south side of Highway 101.

The majority of the non-native species are located in the lower 11 miles of the Dungeness River. NOSC is using a top-down approach to removing the non-native vegetation. The project is made difficult because it is reliant on the cooperation of the riverside landowners.

The two main non-native species are Japanese knotweed and butterfly bush. Butterfly bush has been seen along the entire lower 11 miles, while the knotweed is found from 101 bridge downstream. Nate then explained the biology of both butterfly bush and Japanese knotweed.

Control measures for butterfly bush includes foliar herbicide treatment for smaller plants and cut stump treatments for larger plants. Treatment for knotweed is primarily done with a systemic aquatically approved herbicide. Treatments are completed during the summer. Revegetation takes place in the winter and early spring. Since 2015, over 150 acres have been treated for butterfly bush and knotweed and 94 acres have been re-vegetated.

**Q/A/Comments:**

Powell asked if NOSC deviates from the top-down approach. Nate stated that difficulty with landowners sometimes forces them to deviate and treat areas that they have permission to treat.

Matt agreed with the top-down. He shared his concerns with planting in the restoration areas and having the seeds and propagules move downstream.

Judy asked Nate if NOSC has looked into alternatives to herbicides, such as goats to control the invasive species.

Nate explained that the biology of the invasive does not lend itself to biological control methods.

Nate also mentioned that their budget would not support the use of goats for invasive control.

Kara made note that the change in native soil chemistry and climate change plays a role in non-native species.

**III. Invasive Plants Management-Lower Dungeness Levee and River’s Edge**

*Christina St John, Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Program*

Christina started the presentation by explaining what the Noxious Weed Control Program does, including compliance with State noxious weed laws, education, and technical expertise.

He guidelines of treating along a river/floodplain/wetland was reviewed. This included the licensing and permitting to apply herbicides near water.

Christina reviewed the common weeds that are being treated within the lower Dungeness project. These include poison hemlock, Himalayan blackberry, common teasel, knotweed, and reed canary grass. Treatment of these weeds are site and weed specific.

The biology of the main weeds found in the Project area were reviewed. Christina highlighted the need to take safety precautions when working are poison hemlock.

She then spoke about the type and timing of herbicides that are used to control the invasive weeds in the project area.

Christina highlighted areas within the project that manual/mechanical control was effective. The area was mitigated with native seed, and because of the bare soil, native willow and cottonwood seedlings gained a foothold. This was due to the reduced competition from the reed canary grass that was mechanically removed.

**Q/A/Comments:**

Matt mentioned that the teasel is sought after for as a dry flower and decoration.

Powell asked about herb Robert control. Christina described its biology and how using an herbicide that has residual activity helps to control this annual invasive weed.

Hansi complimented the Clallam Weed Program for their quick response to treatments for the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe.

Judy asked if there is an online library of photos of the noxious weeds. Christina directed her to the Clallam County Noxious Weed Program website and the State Weed Board’s website.

**IV. DRMT OCR Letter**

*DRMT Members*

Hansi summarized the history of the draft letter, including January’s approved motion to write a letter and February’s approved amendment to the motion to get DRMT review before sending letter. The draft letter went out for review and comment by the DRMT members after the February meeting. As of March 3, there is a clean version of the draft letter.

Clallam County had some contextual comment regarding the letter. The County did not vote during February’s motion and cannot provide edit to the draft letter. Hansi and Cathy spoke prior to the meeting and the County will explain the contextual comments.

Cathy stated that the DRMT is acting as a watershed council and is fulfilling its role to pass along concerns from the downgradient neighbors of the Project. There were several technical items that County felt needed revision. In the first paragraph, technically, it is not a berm, but an embankment. It was also asked that clarification be added to the last sentence such as “potential” embankment failure. She also asked for it be made clear in the second paragraph that the DRMT is not weighing in on safety, but only passing along concerns from residents along the river.

Hansi then invited Robert and Matt to share their comments on the letter. Matt stated that it was a good letter. He mentioned that his opinion is tainted due to past experiences with Clallam County. It is the responsibility of Clallam County to ensure the safety of the Project. Matt agreed to send the letter. DRMT has done all of the right things with regard to passing along the concerns of safety to the County. Robert concurred with Matt’s statements.

Ben brought up the language saying the County has not presented to the DRMT. Hansi corrected this statement and added that the letter states that the DRMT has not reviewed the current design documents nor heard a presentation on measures to ensure safety of downgradient residents. It becomes the semantics of the sentence. As a group, the DRMT has not reviewed the design, nor the safety measures.

Cathy clarified that the goal of the requested revision would contain that the DRMT has been presented with the information and has not reviewed it technically and isn’t making a statement that it has.

Ben stated that the purpose of this letter has been met by the length of time spent on it, and County individuals being aware of the letter’s intent. It has fulfilled its purpose.

Kim stated that her interpretation of the sentence suggests that the County had not presented on the safety concerns. She stated that there were two presentations given to the DRMT on safety.

Hansi then suggested the following amendment to second sentence of second paragraph: “We have listened to presentations; however, as a group we have not reviewed the current design documents no heard a presentation of measures to ensure safety for downgradient residents.”

Ann added that “formulated comments” should be added. She also recommended removing “presentation”.

Hansi read the final edited version of the sentence: “We have not formulated comment on the current design documents or safety measures”.

Cathy stated that it now reads more clearly.

Hansi asked for a motion to approve the letter. Powell made a motion to approve the letter containing the revisions in the first and second paragraphs. Motion was seconded by Ben.

Judy recommended that the letter be reviewed in writing prior to voting. Hansi stated that her group’s (PPF) representative was at the table, so she would defer to Tony.

Hansi asked for a vote. Cathy and Kim abstained. The motion carried. Robert asked if members that abstained will be listed on the letter.

Hansi said that procedurally, it isn’t in the DRMT’s bylaws to remove the names. The record keeping will be in the notes.

**V. DRMT Draft Website**

*Shawn Hines, JST*

Shawn shared that the DRMT website has been transferred to a new platform. She asked members to review the new website. She would like members to concentrate on the Resources page to try and make it more user-friendly. Also, what needs to be added and removed from the Resources page. Comments can be shared with Shawn and the Executive Committee.

**VI.** **Other Orders of Business, Announcements & Standing Agenda Items**

**Standing Agenda Items:**

*Off Channel Reservoir Update*

*Carol Creasey, Clallam County*

Carol commented that the Dungeness Reservoir Workgroup is meeting on Monday with all of the partners. The County had a meeting with the Department of Ecology Dam Safety Office last Wednesday to talk about what has been done with the design and to find out the permitting costs. This will be ongoing to ensure a safe and approvable project.

The geophysics study was completed. Findings are now being verified. This will identify the location of the till layer and what the subsurface material consists of.

Carol mentioned that she had a preliminary meeting with Dungeness Meadows HOA to see if there can be an informal meeting to discuss safety.

**Q/A/Comments:**

None

Levee Setback Project Update

*Cathy Lear, Clallam County*

Cathy stated that side channels are active with 1/4-1/3 of the flow of the river. She mentioned two questions that have been asked included what the SOP for monitoring and is there any current fish use.

Hansi added that she has been asked what is expected during low flow. Low flows will show where the water is and isn’t.

She also shared that there were 42 spawning chinook and there was no scouring out because the main stem was calm.

Hansi mentioned that the Towne Road project did not go out to bid and asked for clarification.

Mark stated that the future of Towne Road is uncertain. The bid did not have adequate accommodations for pedestrian and bike traffic. The project needs to meet the grant obligations. It will need safe accommodations for all users.

Matt asked why the accommodations were not part of the original design.

Mark answered that the timeline changed and the levee users have become vocal regarding the road. This is different than the goals of the original public outreach in 2015.

Matt asked if extra money went into the construction to make sure that the road was re-installed. He also added that instances like Towne Road creates mistrust from the public with regards to County projects.

Hansi shared that there is an increase in pedestrian use on the new levee. She appreciates that the Commissioners are being Reactive and Adaptive.

Kim updated the DRMT on the revegetation project along the tribal section of the levee. In total, 28K plants were installed in the last two years.

**Q/A/Comments:**

None

**VII. Announcements**

Ben invited the group to participate in the CCD elections on March 21. Kim added that in-person voting will be from 12 pm to 8 pm. All registered voters are eligible. Voting will be held outside the Armory Square Building.

Joel asked about candidates. Kim stated that candidate statements are online and are with the ballots.

Hansi asked the group for suggested items for future Agenda items. Shawn mentioned that there are several WRTG presentations for April including the Saltwater Intrusion Study and Characterization of the Fourth Aquifer.

**VIII. Public Comment**

Matt asked about the status of a County representative to attend the DRMT meetings and if anyone has reached out to Mark Ozias or Bruce Emery. Hansi stated that Bruce was asked during his last attendance of a DRMT meeting and he was unsure of if there would be an elected County official attending the meetings.

Powell asked if the Group had heard from a USFS representative. Shawn said that she has reached out several times to them, but that have had a lot of transition in their departments. Shawn will reach out again to the USFS.

Cathy mentioned the County’s Climate Advisory Committee is about to complete a study and it will be presented to the County Commissioners on 3/27. She thought that the study could be a future agenda item.

Rebecca mentioned that the Clallam Marine Resource Committee is collaborating with the Shore Friendly Group of the Northwest Straits Foundation on Saturday at Rainshadow Hall. This is a workshop and beach walk.

Hansi mentioned that the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe just passed a Carbon Neutral Plan.

Powell mentioned that the Dungeness River Nature Center received a grant to complete wayside signage within the facility.

Shawn stated that a field trip could be scheduled to the levee. Powell mentioned Caldero.

Hansi read Commissioner Ozias’s chat regarding the DRMT’s desire to have the County’s voting member be an elected official. It should be a formal request so that it can be a topic of conversation at the Commissioner’s work session.

Hansi mentioned that the DRMT was started as a joint effort between the Jamestown Tribe and the County. How the County is represented will need to be research further.

Ben asked if all of the Zoom participants could be shown on the screen during the meeting. Shawn answered that some attendees are not sharing their video.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10pm