

**South Lewis County Subarea
St. Mary's Mission
107 Spencer Rd., Toledo, WA**

Steering Committee Meeting

March 26, 2009 – 1:30 P.M.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Ms. Kincaid called meeting to order at 3:05 P.M. and introduced Mr. John Carlton, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

II. Watershed and Local Habitat Assessment

Mr. Carlton explained that the landscape is an area that encompasses the South Lewis County area for subarea planning. The landscape has stream basins that ultimately affect the planning area. He tried to take a fairly broad look; animals move; they do not respect boundaries so it is necessary to look at a larger area in order to get an idea of the context of the wildlife using the area.

The power point showed what happens to wildlife without conservation measurement and a comparison if a jurisdiction that practices habitat conservation.

Lewis County has a good analysis area for habitat assessment and the area we are focusing on for development is also in good shape.

Focal species list included birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. There is a lot of habitat for forest animals and lot of habitat for open-area animals and across the entire landscape the only barrier for amphibians and reptiles is roads.

The analysis of the conservation focus area shows the Lackamas Creek Corridor offers large areas of habitat.

Mr. Carlton stated it is more efficient to look at a focused area within the general area he outlined. It has the advantage for being productive for wildlife and for economic development to take place. The area is split by I-5 and Highway 505. If roads are widened some passage structures for some species can be built. There is a public safety issue regarding larger animals.

A lot of the areas around creeks and streams are wetlands and not conducive to development.

Mr. Carlton's recommendations state there are things you can do to limit impacts, such as cluster housing, conservation easement payments, etc. A draft report has gone to the County that explains in detail the analysis and the recommendation as to how habitat can be protected in this area.

Ms. Kincaid is considering forming a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to look at the suggestions and guidelines.

Mr. Wagoner asked Mr. Carlton if his recommendations talk about the advocacy of the adoption of the County's CAO adoption of habitat areas.

Mr. Carlton stated he has not looked at that; he does the technical study. WDFW has a local representative, Ted Labbe, who coordinates with the County.

Ms. Kincaid stated the exercise is habitat and hydrology combined with development suitability and ranking the different aspects of where develop would be acceptable. We need to get a focused idea of how they fit together: the area is based on its proximity to I-5, rail access, parcel size, water, sewer, etc. That scoring will be combined with the habitat mapping and Stephen Stanley and Susan Grisby with Department of Ecology are looking at hydrology.

Mr. Stephen Stanley, DOE, has a draft report undergoing internal review and the committee will see that shortly. DOE is combining development suitability, characterization of water flow, habitat assessment, broad and mid scale. Mr. Stanley presented a power point.

He considered the importance of water flow on the landscape because of its importance to humans, wildlife and fish as it drives an ecosystem. Understanding important areas can help guide future development.

One map showed important areas for water flow; the Cowlitz River area is fairly high in importance. Another showed the areas of lowest importance which is best for development suitability.

Q - Assuming build out along the highway corridor, which areas are best for development?

A – We take areas of importance in the ecosystem for water flow and then take a rating of impairment. Protection, restoration and development are areas to consider.

The map of Restoration and Protection Priorities showed areas that are best suited for protection and others that are best suited for restoration. Also to be considered are the transfer of development rights and credits for development, as well as cluster housing which was mentioned earlier.

Q – Can we get maps?

A – Susan can provide PDF maps.

Ms. Kincaid stated the maps are part of the report so they will be available via e-mail.

Q – If no development occurred, would the landscape change or the habitat change over a 20-year period.

A – This is a snapshot in time, not of the physical things, such as geology, but those things that the parent map shows would change over time, such as the amount of forest, which affects water flow. If the landscape changes over time and some of these parcels are restored, you can go back and evaluate and see some change. That would be a way of net gain or net loss for habitat. It is not an accurate idea but it is a general way.

Q – Areas of conservation efforts we make now, can that come back to bite us in the future if we have not looked at everything? Can you speculate or project what would occur in 20 years?

A – That is the purpose of alternative future analysis. If the committee decides what the pattern would be, you can run the analysis for impairment.

Q – We want development to occur and still be okay in 20 years and not hurt the habitat.

A – We have been looking at a 20-year period.

Mr. Wagoner stated the tough aspect is how to knit this analysis with the end goals, policies and regulations. More importantly, what types of actions are necessary to get the type of development we want and protect this habitat?

Q – It appears that the closer we are to restoration the better support of water systems. This would enhance what we have in the upper section and we could mitigate at the highway interchanges.

A – You are looking at maintaining the water movement; some is going into the Olequa and some is going into Lackamas Terrace.

Ms. Grigbsy asked Mr. Stanley to speak to the improvement of water quality that restoration above is not as effective as doing restoration below.

Mr. Stanley stated right now this area does not have high nitrogen and chloroform in streams. Wetlands play a big role; sources of those chemicals above a wetland affect streams below.

Ms. Kincaid stated we need to make that what is going to come out in the report is not regulatory direction but guidance.

Mr. Jones stated development in the corridor can not be avoided. We have to do something about it because we are impacting it now and regulations will be required.

Mr. Stanley emphasized these are values placed upon as humans, so most functions have human based value applied. You are applying value to the plan and you must determine what is more important to you. Is it development at the corridor? Balance this option by taking a broader view. The way our environmental reviews work, we do the work right at that site. It is up to you to emphasize your values.

Ms. Kincaid stated we have heard the terms enhancement, protection, conservation, restoration. When we ratchet down on these discussions to determine what we do with this information and begin to apply values, we need to understand those concepts.

Mr. Hewitt stated even DOE has radically different views on this process.

Ms. Kincaid stated there is a difference in this planning exercise: the site specific discussion versus the watershed, and that matters.

Ms. Kincaid stated the reports are in draft form and we need to assemble a small working group of about four people who can review the reports.

Mr. Carlton stated the reports offer guidance and recommendations and are not applied to individual sites.

Mr. Stanley stated his report has recommendations and a table that lists sub basins by their actual number. There is the restoration and protection category and a description of what we recommend to be done for habitat improvements. Anything else the committee would like to see he can introduce.

III. Development Opportunities Draft memorandum

Mr. Eric Hovee has drafted a memo which identifies land use and opportunities, and advantages and disadvantages of each use concept. It has overlapping objectives including vision and capacity of land support. It gives a broad sense of the landscape. Land use includes concept of which types of use and implementation which we need to apply as we get to our 2030 vision for Lewis County.

Mr. Smith stated tourism should be a key component and tourism language needs to be repeated over and over.

Mr. Hewitt stated we need an addition of retention of existing tourism. We have lost significant pieces of tourism in Washington State and we should be achieving no net loss of industry.

Ms. Mary Garrison stated the matrix represents strong industry and while that is a way to earn money, we need to enhance what we already have; the first three do not include that.

Mr. Smith stated we need something that will draw lots of visitors and is bringing in dollars and has a small footprint. A distribution center takes up valuable space.

Mr. Hovee asked besides the REQ what else could be considered.

Mr. Smith has been approached by people who are interested in water parks. Wisconsin Dells started this sort of park and they have two now in that town.

Mr. Kincaid asked why tourism is being lost in Washington.

Mr. Hewitt stated older institutions have suffered from lack of investment capital. GMA is a part of that. Permitting processes on small family-based operations are disappearing. He believes tourism needs its own category on the matrix.

The State is cutting back on fishing which negatively impacts tourism and yet it has a low impact on habitat.

Ms. Garrison because of the “green” issue the focus over a 20 year period must be a green focus. Wine and wineries would enhance the equestrian aspect: let one thing grow on another. Enhance cottage industries. The passion she has felt and strived for for years is our being different. What we have to do is make it fit; do the networking, look at what will sustain us and still get everything we want.

Mr. Coyle stated the interest in Mt. St. Helens from 1980 to 2002 has declined. We must find a way to sustain the interest.

Mr. Smith stated this corridor will become a mega metropolis. Studies on water parks show when people travel they look for places that are 4-5 hours away by car. They can spend 3-4 days and spend a couple grand and then they go home. Projected visitors for the Portland metro and Seattle areas are huge – and we are in the middle.

Mr. Hewitt stated visitors are amazed with this area. We have to understand we are used to this but the vast majority of people do not usually see the mountains, etc. Cottage industries that can survive here are just as important as a big industry. Private industry can play a huge role and government needs to get out of running these types of industries (interpretive center).

Mr. Smith stated an additional environmental element in the areas of Toledo, Vader and Winlock are 5-10 acre places that the owners do not want to develop but they can't keep them any more and they have to sell them to a developer. The people Larry Hewitt is talking about have the money and are buying up those small places and can afford to keep them protected.

Mayor Meyers stated he agrees a committee is needed to study this. Tourism is necessary but it takes a lot of dollars and advertising. The State does spend tourism dollars but mostly up north.

Mr. Smith suggested inviting someone from the State.

Mr. Dick Larman stated two things are going on: 1 – There is incredible pressure for large development on I-5 and if we do not say in this sub area what is going to happen it will happen without us. 2 – Small businesses that are important are ag tourism and ag related business. They are part of our rectangle. Everything that has been said is valid. The State parks are out of money. Our task is about the balance of the small locally owned businesses and being careful about the land we have in this rectangle.

IV. “2030 View” Homework Assignment

Ms. Kincaid stated that leads in to last month’s 2030 view by Roger Wagoner. We must come up with a concept: how do we see the planning area and the I-5 corridor development in the big picture.

Mayor Meyers stated the Hovee report is very good and can serve our needs in the future. Winlock took in 1100 acres into its UGA to include industrial land and commercial opportunities, new WWT plant, water rights. You can plan until you are blue in the face but until you get something started nothing is going to happen. Get the political will to move this along. Tell the BOCC we need some real help and some leadership.

Mr. Smith stated there is no political will to get anything done down here. That is why Benaroya moved away.

Ms. Kincaid stated we should not underestimate the power we have. We need to tell the politicians these are the strategies we have come up with and they are supported.

Mr. Wagoner had put together an analysis of strategy options. He stated that what Mr. Smith talked about Mr. Hovee has shown in retail. That is what the cities need to think about. Mr. Wagoner had lunch today at Great Wolf and said “it rocks”. Unfortunately, what is happening is the mile from I-5 to the resort is an endless strip of tacky businesses.

When Mr. Wagoner looked at Mr. Hovee’s table, he needed to get to the actions that need to be taken and determine how likely implementation is. Interchange retail came up as #1. Local serving retail #2 – not what the county will do but what local people will do – destination entertainment #3; industrial #4. He worked on a combination of what has been proposed and whether this plan should be conservative, ambitious or aggressive. The more aggressive you are the more it will cost in time and staff.

On Mr. Wagoner’s chart Winlock is top bar on all three scenarios and the bars are divided up into 5-year increments. From a development standpoint, the land is ready but not really ready until pipes are in, etc. If Winlock is to reach full build out in 5 years, someone has to be moving quickly. Winlock is more ready than anybody else and being ready and partially building will affect what else will happen in other areas.

For Toledo and Vader to get what they want means their comp plans need to be amended to complete utility planning and design to substantiate the UGA; it will be appealed so it will take time. It could be done in 5 years but it depends on what you want to put into the efforts.

Industrial planning without Benaroya could be to start an industrial land bank, which is a location for future development but requires a lot of planning to market the plan. Once a master plan is adopted it must be zoned That could take a fairly long time, probably not less than 10 years and it would most likely be a UGA.

Freeway retail under current county regulations is pretty small. Without creating a UGA you will not create anything similar to Great Wolf. That will take strong work. If this committee says that is what they want to do it will be a lot of work for the County.

Finally, Master Plan Resort (MPR) is another category that is a high level plan to establish in a UGA.

This chart was created to help you think about what you want and ultimately what this plan can do to get you there. Mr. Wagoner suggested the committee read Mr. Hovee's material and tell us how we might put this plan together. Where do we put these ideas on the map and be fairly certain there is some level of reality that they can be achieved. Scientific analysis shows high potential for development farther north in between the two interchanges. If the committee likes that area we could see another major road that needs to be built by the County. It is necessary for the committee to go through this exercise.

Ms. Kincaid stated we need smaller working groups. She will set those up and when we come back at the end of April those groups could have already met.

Mr. Hovee stated Great Wolf was unique in that the County had a pre-existing sewer system. Even then it took a number of years for the right player to come along.

Mr. Larman stated Cabelas and Great Wolf are next to each other all over the country.

Mr. Hewitt stated we can't lose site of the fact that in South County people have put in an enormous amount of work, such as Winlock. We can't push those out of the way – we need to get something moving. We must have money and property.

Mr. Larman stated we need to own our responsibility. We have to give the political will to the State. That is our job here: to have nowhere to go except in the right direction. It's on us.

Ms. Kincaid stated she would telephone people about the smaller TAC group.

Ms. Bertucci stated she came from Pierce County and if they had done what we are trying to do she would have stayed there. Hopefully with this kind of planning, everyone who lives here will have a clean place to live and keep the country atmosphere.

Ms. Kincaid stated we are told that we're ahead of the curve and we have a great opportunity to keep it that way.

Mr. Rupp stated if we don't do the planning it will be done to us.

Mr. Larman stated the developers have not backed off; they just don't have the money. When the money comes development will happen faster than we can imagine.

Ms. Kincaid stated we need to focus in on this plan and agree to promote it and tell them we want public money spent here.

Citizen – The airport is a concern. We are seeing some things in writing such as an air freight facility. He and Ms. McGoeghegan represent 17 parcels and they do not support

significant expansion. That is a big concern. He would like to be a better participant and know what is going on.

Ms. Kincaid stated the County is looking at its investment portfolio. This group is tasked to come up with alternatives and bring them out in a public meeting.

Citizen – we are hearing a discrepancy of where you want to go: distribution centers, manufacturing. We want tourism and horse related industry – why come up with something like this before you talk to the community?

Ms. Kincaid stated this is not part of the study, but a discussion piece to help us focus. It is more than just economic development; we need to conceptualize.

Mr. Hovee stated there are two ways of doing market analysis. Local investors and local preferences and determining the market that fits with that.

Mr. Dale Merten stated we must see all the opportunities, like them or not.

Citizen – We do have ideas and inputs that we have not had an opportunity to offer except through the survey.

Ms. Kincaid stated we will get there. This process seems to work; otherwise we will end up with too broad a base. We will put ideas out there for you to give us your feedback. We are about a month behind for our public meeting. By June we want our draft analysis done so we are anticipating a public meeting in May. We do appreciate your coming every month because it allows you to know how we got from there to here.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday, April 30 at St. Mary's, 3:00 P.M

Adjournment was at 3:15.