Western Straits Conservation Planning

Minutes of Meeting 3, April 6, 2011, Crescent Grange, 9-11 am

Focus: (1) Continuation of Nearshore and Estuary Habitat Classification, and (2) Discussion of Large River Floodplains.

Attendance: Meghan Adamire, John and Karolyn Burdick, Coleman Byrnes, Eric Carlsen, Michele d'Hemecourt, Bill Drath, Mike Haggerty, Don Hamerquist, Sue Nattinger, Karl Spees, Peter Vanderhoof.

Intro (NOLT) – Michele d'Hemecourt gave a brief introduction and thanked Meghan Adamire for bringing the projector.

Mike Haggerty – *Unless otherwise noted, all text below is a summary of Mike Haggerty's presentation. Where there were questions or comments from the group, it is noted.*

Mike handed out copies of his PowerPoint slides, and, as he has done for previous emeting, started with an overview. The general outline for the Conservation Plan is (1) Introduction, (2) Background, (3) Approach and methods used to prioritize habitat conservation, (4) Prioritized habitats and parcels, (5) Recommendations, and Citations. Chapter 3, Approach and methods used to prioritize habitat conservation, includes habitat classification, biological indicators, and other metrics, such as landowner willingness, relative position to other conserved land, threats of negative impacts, and parcel size.

Today, we continue our focus on habitat classification of nearshore and estuary, and initiate the discussion of freshwater systems. Future meetings will focus on large river floodplain, other important streams, important off channel habitat, and uplands.

Continued discussion of Nearshore and Estuary Habitat Classification:

Habitat process Units - There are 33 delineated Habitat Process Units within WRIA 19. Each shoreline habitat unit is assigned to a habitat process unit, most typically defined by drift cell dimensions. Mike showed an example of a drift cell spanning the mouth of the Sekiu to the mouth of the Hoko, which is one Habitat Process Unit.

Prioritization - Pete Vanderhoof asked about the prioritization scheme. Mike gave a scenario, but explained that it's still being developed. One factor will be looking at where we have intact habitat forming processes. Mike envisions 3 big data sets with different prioritization and attributes, one for large river floodplain, another for estuary and nearshore, and an additional category. Mike noted that we still have unclassified zones, and we don't have fish use, forest condition, or infrastructure incorporated.

Attributing habitats – Shoreline habitat unit attributes include the following categories: kelp (continuous, patchy, or absent), Eel grass (continuous, patchy, or absent), Forage fish spawning (known [surf smelt, sand lance, or both], potential, none), and salmonid usage (categories yet to be defined). Mike explained that we are still developing the salmonid usage category. He also noted that these attributes have been added since he received the WDFW data. Forage fish spawning ground data are now integrated with habitat units.

In order to finish up the habitat classification of nearshore and estuary, Mike listed the following next steps and also asked for feedback:

- Develop habitat attributes for estuary habitat units
- Develop habitat prioritization scheme for shoreline and estuary habitat units. This includes integrating habitat conditions and shoreline alterations into the habitat prioritization scheme.
- Define habitat adjacent conservation zones to be used to prioritize land parcels for conservation. PSNERP used a 200 meter landward buffer on the shoreform polyline to define their upland nearshore habitat unit. Mike will integrate into the habitat process units a sensitivity to land parcel conservation .

Discussion of Large River Floodplains

Mike defined large river floodplains as channel networks where the bankfull edge of channels can be remotely defined. Floodplain extent may be defined by LiDAR and FEMA. Mike showed an example and noted that, in order to define the bankfull edge, LiDAR can be used because it clearly shows the bank of the river. In the example shown, it was very clear.

Floodplain Channel Segments – There are a total of 24 channel segments and 494 acres of stream channel within the Sekiu, Hoko, Clallam, and Pysht River watershed. Channel segments were defined based on gradient, confinement, and tributary confluences. SSHIAP channel classification was used.

Primary Floodplain Habitat Unit Classification:

- Large river channels (area within bankfull)
- Floodplain habitat within 200 feet
- Floodplain habitat between 200-400 feet
- Floodplain habitat between 400-600 feet
- Floodplain habitat between 600-1,000 feet
- Floodplain habitat between 1,000-2,000 feet
- Floodplain /Riparian habitat within 200 feet (indeterminate)
- Riparian habitat within 200 feet
- Terraces

Everything within the potentially floodable valley is defined in one of these units. Mike showed an example, using FEMA's 100 year floodplain data. Karl Spees asked where the date came from, and Mike thought it came from USGS, and noted that it's the most recent data, FEMA's Q3 data from 2010. Peter Vanderhoof questioned the accuracy of the data.

Mike noted that there are 4 large river systems in WRIA 19 (Sekiu, Hoko, Clallam and Pysht), and 3,807 acres of Floodplain Habitat within those watersheds. There is also a small amount of "indeterminate area"/

- The Sekiu River, which contains 428 acres of habitat area, is constrained by the road, as shown on an example map.
- The Hoko River contains 1,175 acres of habitat. When the map was shown, Karl Spees asked about the Cowan Ranch Heritage Park, and Coleman Byrnes asked where Spyder Wrights place was located. John Burdick asked if the Hoko contains the most land already protected in some manner. This data has not been factored into the analysis yet. Eric Carlsen noted that CMZ data will be available soon for the first

10 miles of the Hoko. Mike noted that CMZ is typically defined as being within the constraints of the valley.

- The Clallam River contains 756 acres of habitat.
- The Pysht River contains 1,448 acres of habitat. Mike noted that there is a lot more floodplain habitat in the Pysht, but it's compromised by the Road.

Mike asked for the following feedback related to attributing habitats and prioritization:

- How do we integrate habitat conditions?
    - This should weight more highly weigh in prioritization because it is more effective to preserve intact habitat forming processes.
    - Karl Spees noted that beavers positively impact habitat, and wondered if beavers could be introduced. Michele noted that this is currently not within the scope of the Land Trust's work, but could be considered.
- What about riparian conditions?
- What about biological indicators?
    - Peter Vanderhoof felt that the streams that are currently used by a high number of fish should be a priority because these will be the "seed beds for recovery".
    - Karolyn Burdick – what about other salmonid species? Most of the work has been done in relation to coho. How will other species factor in? Mike replied that he'll look at the species most at risk, for example, Chinook. If their recovery is highly ranked, will probably weight more highly the compromised streams. Coho habitat will emerge as most intact.
    - Peter asked about the timing of high fish use assessments. Mike replied that this is the problem of fish use data. Some of the data is very old, and there is too much variability. He gave an example. Right now, we have 1998-2009 data pulled from the coho modelthat Mike built to estimate spawning escapement. Karolyn felt we should use the existing data bases regardless of the variability.

Don Hamerquist thought that Green Creek should show up as a priority because there is a high risk of adverse impact, there is high fish use (spawning for coho, steelhead, and chum), there's off channel habitat, and intact floodplain habitat. That could be compromised by logging activities. Mike noted that, for the next meeting we'll discuss other streams and off channel habitat. This will cover Green Creek, Charle Creek, and Salt Creek, among others. Don also noted that conservation from ridgetop to ridgetop should be considered because uses in the uplands impact the streams.

Michele noted that, for the next meeting, we will have to deviate from our normal date of the 1st Wednesday of the month. In May, it coincides with the SRFB fieldtrips, so the meeting will be on May 11th instead.

John Burdick thought that the streams that have the best likelihood of recovery should be prioritized. John also asked of uplands would be incorporated. Michele and Mike replied that they would not be. John asked how nearshore would be prioritized, and Mike noted that they would be prioritized on a separate scale. There will be 2 prioritization lists: nearshore and estuary, and large river floodplain, other streams, and off channel habitat. John also asked if high cost restoration projects would be incorporated, and Michele replied that this is unlikely because of the high cost, but could be considered.

Peter Vanderhoof thought that we should prioritize areas that are more clearly threatened. For example, Salt Creek. Don Hamerquist and Karl Spees also agreed with this, and felt that willingness of landowners to do conservation, and the high likelihood of negative impact with conversion should add extra weight to the prioritization.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00. The next meeting is scheduled for 9am, May 11th, at the Crescent Grange.