

Skagit Feasibility Scoping Meeting
Draft Meeting Notes
May 11, 2001
Army Corps of Engineers

The second meeting of representatives from natural resource agencies regarding scoping flood risk management alternatives for Skagit County was held on May 11th, 2001, at the Corps of Engineers building in Seattle. The meeting started just after 9:00 AM when most of the participants had arrived.

I. Review of May 4th Notes

Mike Scuderi welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained that the goal of the meeting was to finish scoping the various alternatives. He had emailed materials from scoping sessions in the past when the groups looked at an overtopping option. **Alisa Bieber** the notetaker from Environment International, suggested that the group begin by reviewing and approving the previous meeting's notes. **Lou Ellyn Jones** made one correction, and the notes were approved.

II. Additional Questions about the Swinomish Diversion

Mike asked if anyone had any further questions about the Swinomish Diversion to add to the list from the previous week. **Larry Wasserman** suggested that the questions be grouped according to the area of expertise that would be needed to answer them. For example, group all the estuarine questions together and all the engineering questions together. Then when meetings are held about groups of questions, the appropriate experts can attend. The group supported this approach and Mike agreed to categorize the questions.

Dave Burick asked who would make the decision about when to start shunting floodwater into the diversion. His concern was that officials or other individuals might want to use the diversion to prevent a possible levee breach during floods for which the diversion had not been designed. **Stephen Pierce** explained that the structure controlling the inflow of the diversion would operate on its own, and no person would need to make that decision. **Dan Tonnes** and **Dave** asked whether a person could override the decision. Stephen ascertained that opening the gates manually without a flood of appropriate size would probably need large equipment such as a crane.

Referring to the question about the woody debris present at the diversion's inlet, **Don Dixon** asked if the goal of the diversion was to attract fish. **Larry** clarified that in his view, the benefits of the diversion are directly related to the number of fish that use it. Because it would be designed with benefit to fish in mind, it will probably be better habitat than the main stem of the river, which is lined with riprap and constrained.

Brendan Brokes brought notes from **Kurt Buchanan**, who could not be present. He suggested opening up old sloughs on Fir Island as overflow protection. **Mike** responded that only opening up the old sloughs had been modeled and did not provide enough flood relief. However, restoring the sloughs could offer mitigation potential for other alternatives.

Mike raised the question about whether opening old sloughs would be considered a consumptive use. **Rod Sakrison** believed that it would not be considered consumptive if the water returns to the main river in a relatively short distance. **Rod** thought that opening old channels was an important habitat improvement, which would provide an additional incentive for agencies to approve such a project. **Brendan** relayed that one of **Kurt's** ideas would be to allow flow from the diversion to enter Big Indian Slough, which currently provides salmon habitat. **Jackie Vander Veen** commented that Skagit County Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt was interested in restoration for that area.

Reading **Kurt's** input, **Brendan** commented that some of the downstream dikes that were already fairly far from the river needed very little repair. Thus, the levee setbacks might offer cost savings to the County if setbacks were combined with the diversion alternatives.

In all, the following questions were added to the diversion questions:

- How will salinity affect the quantity of habitat for different fish species?
- How will the amount of water in the diversions be determined?
- How will the fish passage structure function?
- Will the gate allow woody debris to flow into the channel at high and/or at low flow?
- How is the diversion going to change over time? Although the inflow for the diversion may be located at a place favorable to fish now, what is it going to look like in 20 years?
- Will a viable riparian zone be feasible along Highway 20 as planned in Alternative 7?
- How will the sport and commercial fish harvest change as fish travel along a narrow diversion channel?

One suggestion was added:

- Setbacks offer reduced maintenance costs, and therefore would be financially advantageous to include with the diversion alternatives.

III. Discussion of Overtopping