

Dear TAG members,

I want to thank you all for your comments on the BAS Report. I also want to follow-up with you regarding the Habitat Conditions Report, which has been delayed due to challenges with application of Watershed Characterization. Initially, the FWHCA update process was going to include the development of two reports: 1) Existing Conditions Report and 2) the Best Available Science (BAS) and Recommendations Report. The purpose of the existing conditions report was to describe watershed processes and habitats within Island County. The purpose of the BAS Report is to synthesize the science that pertains to FWHCA in Island County and outline general recommendations on what is needed to improve regulation of FWHCA in Island County (to be consistent with BAS).

The intent of the Existing Conditions Report was to examine ecological conditions at the landscape scale (using Watershed Characterization) and at the site scale (using WDFW Priority Habitats and Species Data and other finer scale data sets). The Existing Conditions Report would then describe the findings of this analysis and the condition of habitats in Island County on multiple spatial scales.

The consultants ran the Watershed Characterization model and the mapped results were shared at two separate TAG meetings. TAG members, Department of Ecology (DOE) and Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff identified several challenges with the application of the Watershed Characterization model in Island County. Staff from DOE and WDFW contributed significant amounts of time trying to address these challenges. DOE and WDFW staff have provided feedback on how to proceed in response to these challenges. The attached memo summarizes these challenges and outlines how the existing conditions analysis will proceed in response to these challenges.

Because the Watershed Characterization model was going to provide one of the major components of the Existing Conditions Report, this report will be significantly shorter than was originally intended and will focus primarily on the finer spatial scale. Rather than remaining as a stand-alone document, Island County staff and the consultants propose to combine the Existing Conditions Report and the BAS Report into one document. The report will be called the Best Available Science and Existing Conditions Report.

Jennifer Thomas is currently undertaking this analysis. On January 10, 2014 the Best Available Science and Existing Conditions Report will be distributed to the TAG. Comments received from the TAG (by December 17) on the BAS Report will have been considered and results of the existing conditions analysis will be incorporated in track changes. TAG members will have two weeks to review and submit comments on the Existing Conditions component of the report. The deadline to submit comments will be January 24, 2014. The consultants will then review and address comments and the Best Available Science and Existing Conditions Report will be finalized.

Because there will not be work products for review at the January 7 TAG meeting, I have canceled this meeting. While there will not be a TAG meeting to discuss the final draft of the Best Available Science and Existing Conditions Report, the geo-spatial analysis that underlies this portion of the report has already been discussed at 3 previous TAG meetings. The next TAG meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 18, 2014. A revised schedule is also attached.

I realize this is a lot of information to digest. Please call or email me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you all for your time and contributions to the FWHCA update!

Many thanks,
Kira

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