

## Checkerboard Partnership Planning Committee Meeting Notes 12.29.20

Attendees: Gary Berndt, Nancy Lilliquist, Larry Leach, Darcy Batura, Vic Monahan, Judy Hallisey, Patty O'Hearn, Phil Hess, Melissa Speeg

### County Support

- Commissioner Wright wants to know there is a good strong business plan and what that looks like. Had an assumption that we were not working to create that. Darcy reassured him that we are. Creating some structure for regular communications to engage regularly.
- Gary - that echoes what we talked about with Corey. Does anyone listen to the public lands committee? Laura chairs that and following the last meeting she asked if anyone had anything for the good of the order? Gary called her after the meeting and spoke with Laura. Gary hasn't had a chance to talk to Brett yet. Once we have the talking points we should talk to all of them individually. The county can't assume a liability long term.
- Larry - do you think the Land Use Advisory Committee would engage in this? Gary - think it is important to provide them in writing. We have presented some and they did provide a LOS for the LWCF for the Cabin Creek area.
- Larry - I think the nexus is around access and it could be access to the Central Cascades Properties or access to the TCF. If the CCF is sold off and there is a line of mansions looking down into the Teanaway, DNR and WDFW's ability to control recreation in the west fork would be nearly impossible because the number of all the user-built entry points would be huge. The lands committee would care about this. Concern is that the LUAC is pretty under-represented by upper county community members. Getting the committee to care about upper county things might be difficult. There is about 15 miles of boundary along the TCF.

### Chris Martin Letter

- Main concerns are access to the lands and the order in which the lands are being selected for conservation.
- Also points out that the owners of the CCF are dedicated to conservation. TNC is a conservation agency and that is why they took the step that they did.
- Towns to Teanaway have been working on easements to connect the towns to the CCF lands.
- Would public ownership of the lands change the need for easements and address Chris's concern.

### YBIP Lands Subcommittee

- Darcy's engagement started this year because they are 10 years in on a 30-year plan and Darcy joined because they are trying to build in forest health goals.
- One of the things they are looking at is targets for acquisitions that were in the original YBIP plan. Most of it was scooped up really quickly when the TCF was acquired. When they revised the plan, there had been a conversation around the question of if the number of acres should be adjusted so they can acquire more land as it becomes available. We have been working quite hard on a principles-based approach. Commissioner Wright serves on that committee and

voiced some of the concerns he had over the CCF lands. He is feeling increased discomfort because of the amount of public lands in the county and he needs to justify that to his constituents. What it has come down to the landscape we are talking about - the Cle Elum Ridge.

- Nicky has joined on behalf of CPPC. Asked if they would be willing to have a deeper conversation about the Cle Elum Ridge in relation to their acquisition goals. Nicky thought there would be support for that. If we do end up having that conversation and having support for that pathway, it brings a lot of financial and political support for this project.
- Next week or the week after (January 7th) is when we are going to be considering that conversation.
- Don't have a feel for where YBIP is at currently. Larry feels that somewhere in the sausage making there will be an opportunity for a win-win-win. With all the politics that go along with everything we do, it just takes getting everyone's lightbulb going on at the same time. That will be where the work lies.
- What do you see being discussed at the next conversation? Darcy - I think we had a land subcommittee meeting where we thought we had a path forward and then the commissioner expressed some concern. At the last meeting the group identified that these landscapes were a high priority from the beginning. Key members remembered that it was important. Larry - I think the next step is backing up. They met their 10-year goal with TCF. Looking at the next 10 years, they need to decide if they need more land conservation in order to keep conservation groups on board with the other elements of YBIP; and if that is the case, what will be the new priorities given the original goals YBIP had established.
- Does this revolve around its ability to be a watershed? There is a lot of concern from some groups that the water storage aspect of YBIP is going to have severe impacts. Since the TCF was purchased so early on, now the question is do we need another conservation "win" to demonstrate to conservation partners that YBIP is focused on everyone's interests.
- Judy has very few concerns if the ridge were to be attached to the TCF as long as we can segregate it from the poison pill part. Judy still likes the idea of the Cle Elum Ridge being its own community forest entity, but if we can't move forward, then enveloping it into the TCF is a good plan B.
- Patty - what was the poison pill? When the legislature was working on the acquisition, they were split on which state agency should own it, which is why it is split between DNR and WDFW. The second part was if the conservation groups get what they want in the first year, will they stick it out with supporting the water storage portion of the project. So, one of the legislators put in that if the storage needs aren't met, the TCF would go to DNR trust lands or be sold and the proceeds would go toward other DNR trust lands. DNR is hesitant and will be hesitant to add acres to the TCF until they know what the outcome will be. The deadline is 2025.
- Nancy thinks it is a good second option. Perhaps PDA, land trust, then DNR. Not clear how the values that have been set out by the CPPC and the vision for operating the forest changes if it is managed by DNR/WDFW. Can they meet those same access, fire, logging, goals? How does it work in terms of management?
  - There are three options. Trust land would be heavy on the forest health, fire, timber, etc. On the trust lands we are required to provide recreational access. The next step in the tier sequencing would be the TCF, which is a working forest, works on forest health

and also focuses on recreation. Over time the makeup of the TCF Advisory Committee would change to reflect the interests of community and these lands. Or another advisory committee could be developed to advise on these lands - similar to if it was held by a land trust or PDA.

- Patty - if I am hearing everything correctly, it sounds like the TCF would be a viable option but we won't know until 2025.
- Vic - preserve it in its current state. How we do that is the question. Do I have a preference? That is a complicated answer for me. DNR is a good manager and that is an avenue that we should put some emphasis on. There are some other options that need to be brought out and discussed and some of those things are being talked about. Primary goal is to keep it forest land in a community forest concept.
- Could we explore the DNR Community Forest avenue?
- Gary would prefer the DNR Community Forest avenue.
- Phil my concern is if our community forest is to be sustainable financially, then it is important that the entity not be export restricted (government owned). We have a hard enough time getting rid of domestic logs as is. There may be provisions that we can get a waiver for that regardless of the entity. County and state have export restrictions too. Started at the federal level. If our community forest was with the county for example, then it seems like it could be fixed.
- When we go to the commissioners it will be good to hear what they would like to see.

#### RCO Grant Update

- Worked on getting a bill passed in 2019 that was unsuccessful, so they worked to get language in the 2020 budget to get the state to pay for this program and that was a success. Cathy was one of the people sitting on the board. 15 projects submitted for a total of \$22 million. Work done lobbying the governor to fund the program at \$22 million. The governor's budget came out at \$9.7 million which funds the top 4 projects but doesn't extend down to our project. Good news we have gotten this far and that there is \$10 million for this program. Now it goes to the legislature and there is an opportunity to see if we can get additional funding for the program and maybe go further. Wanted to give us this status report. There is a loose group of project sponsors being coordinated by WALT. They meet to coordinate advocacy and funding. If anyone is interested in participating, let Cathy know.
- It was asked if our project will remain ranked if it goes unfunded this year? Next year, if the program persists, we would have to start all over again.
- Was the cut off on the budget conscious on funding the top four and if so, is there a reason why our project wasn't supported by the governor? Cathy doesn't have the answer for that. There is only so much capacity in the state capital budget so it is always a balancing act. It does appear to be that they were thinking consciously about the number of projects that would be funded.
- There are a couple of projects below our project that were really strong projects that Cathy thinks will have strong advocacy. It is helpful that we have some strong projects below us on the list. Know that Darcy has had one or two conversations with Senator Warnick. It is really helpful that Warnick, Dent and Ybarra know about and are excited for this project.

- Important that they hear from us on this project. Judy participated in the advocacy day for Audubon. She covered Audubon's top three issues but in her discussions with Alex Ybarra she found out that he is skilled and interested in carbon trading. So, if we can develop more what this Community Forest could bring for a carbon market that would really pique his interest and support. Darcy - that is great and we do have people doing research on that through TNC. A little premature for what that might look like on the Cle Elum Ridge. Fingers are crossed and rubbing bellies and patting heads but Darcy will need to talk to other people on the conservation team. Might be spring before we have some answers on that. Ybarra did make a point to attend Tapash and has expressed interest in these efforts.
- WALT will be coordinating another letter of support to the legislature. There was a tremendous letter to the governor that was really strong and we want that for the legislators as well.

The group discussed and made decisions on the following:

- Conversations with local representatives
  - All agreed
- FS Community Forest Grant
  - All agreed that not to move forward with this grant.
  - Asked whether the With other RCO grants you don't sign the contracts until you have the money and there is flexibility there. If we are successful in the legislature, we would get the money earmarked for us.
- RCO Community Forest Grant
  - All agreed we should advocate.
  - Suggestions included:
    - Collectively do a Zoom
    - Send a letter signed by partners
    - Should use the videos.
    - Send fact sheet.
- Setting up a non-profit
  - Vic supports that. Thinks it makes sense. Probably should have done it sooner than now. Will take some time to set up and should be moving on it.
  - Trying to apply for grants and things - need an entity. Maybe after talking to the county commissioners this could be a place that we lean as well.
  - From TNC's point of view a non-profit is a viable pathway. There is a heavy lift. It would need to become Land Trust Alliance (LTA) accredited. TNC would be interested in helping the group achieve those things if that is the way the group wants to go. TNC might help manage for a period of time.
  - Nancy - I think that demonstrating a viable budget that shows sustainability over time would alleviate a lot of the concerns the commissioners have about the PDA and other alternatives. If we are going to embark on creating a new land trust, would want these things as well. Need a budget to show this can be done, which will be important in the conversation.

- Should we look at KCT instead of creating something new? Melissa said if that is the desire of the CPPC, then it would be very helpful to have members come to a board meeting and ask directly. Shooting for a March meeting might be reasonable. Have a tough gap to fill between revenue and costs. Going to take some creative ideas to fill that gap. With the lands being cut over to the extent that they are, it puts us in a hole until the timber matures.
- Should we send a letter in response to Chris Martin's letter?
  - The letter would be public record of a response. Does the letter impact our ranking? No. Darcy, do we gain anything putting something in writing? Gary thinks we need to go to the parks folks and have discussions with them one-on-one. We can verbally address Chris's issues with them in those conversations.
  - This could be a letter stating some facts. What if we did a letter of response to Chris with RCO cc-ed, KPRD, commissioners, etc. It would show good faith in sending a letter to Chris to show we want engagement.
  - Melissa, could we get a letter by the next meeting? Patty likes the idea too.