



Meeting Minutes

PURPOSE

SEEC Quarterly Business Meeting

DATE / TIME / LOCATION

March 17th, 2023

IN-PERSON, BLAINE

COMMISSION ATTENDANCE

USA		CANADA	
Leo Bodensteiner	Rob Smith	Shannon Bentley	Stephen Hui
Richard Brocksmith		Bob Chamberlain	Gail Ross
Tim Reynon		Peter Chapman	
Jon Riedel		Brodie Guy	
Administration Support		Administration Support	
	Kiyomi Keckemet		Rudy Kehler

Absent: Kate Engel (USA), Chris Tunnoch (CAN), Lynn Best (USA), Amy Trainer (USA), Matt Love (USA), Sue Hammell (CAN)

Call to Order/Territorial Acknowledgement/Introductions/Agenda Overview

(Shannon)

- Call to order at 9:36.
- Acknowledged the addition of a territorial acknowledgement that has been incorporated into the meeting agenda.
 - Commitment to improve and continue to plan how/what SEEC can do to address the intent.
- Introductions.
- No changes to the agenda.

Minutes of Last Meeting (Shannon) (attachments)

- Review of minutes.

Motion to approve the Q3 meeting minutes from January 20th, 2023 with edits as written on the published document.

Tim (Motion) Stephen (Second)

Decision: Approved, Motion Carried

Co-Chairs Update (Shannon)

- Silver Skagit Road
 - The road may be open to the public by summer 2023. There is concern that this might not occur, which would have an impact on programming and work that is funded by SEEC.
 - SEEC sent a letter to BC government urging to make this rebuild a higher priority for this spring. No response - the co-chairs will follow-up.
 - Discussion on rebuild impacts.
 - Peter cautioned potential impacts (e.g., environmental) if rebuild was not done up to construction standards, methods, quality, etc. Bob added that building up to standards/the standards themselves may not be taking into consideration the potential, future impacts of climate change.
 - Watershed Integrity committee to address. It may require a discussion with government.
 - This may be a discussion item for strategic planning.
- SOP
 - Co-chairs are developing Standard Operating Procedures to help codify what SEEC does. Co-Chairs will be seeking input in the future after the first draft is finalized and dispersed.
- Commissioner Resources
 - Meeting facilitation – Commissioners can create doodle polls and zoom invitations for an existing meeting within the website. Rudy is still setting up a way to schedule a zoom meeting from the website.
 - Project tracking – Rudy is developing a way within the website to track project/program status (what has been funded, progress, etc.).

Finance Committee Update (Peter) (attachments)

- Endowment is stable/slightly up. Reminder of year end in March.
- A quarterly statement was not received due to the transition between asset managers. First quarterly statement from new asset manager will be presented at next meeting.
- SEEC budget is significantly underspent. Part of this underspend is stemming from project or program inability to move ahead due to road washout. Currently

, 50% of underspend is attributed to road access issues, 50% is attributed to unallocated funds.

- Discussion around how SEEC plans to manage these additional funds/budget. It will be a discussion topic for the strategic plan.
 - Highlighted the need to:
 - Develop a process for identifying this additional funding e.g are they “opportunity funds”?
 - Determine how to reallocate funding.
 - Identify how to get the money out the door in a timely manner.
 - Review how much goes to the multi-year commitments to partners. Currently we adjust for a 2% inflation rate, where in reality, partner expenses may be experiencing closer to a 6% rate.
 - With regards to taking on new proposed projects:
 - Currently there are 5-year proposals and annual proposals.
 - Discussion around how outreach occurs/to whom and how that can be improved upon.
 - Shannon noted there is a need to shift from passive funding to proactive funding. Also noted the need to be mindful of fiscal differences between entities.
 - Bob noted previous discussions around allocating funds to projects out of the opportunity fund for First Nations and Tribes. Can we set aside available unspent \$100k to encourage the Indigenous (potential) funded partners to participate with SEEC?
 - New SEEC members were given a quick overview of budget and planning.
 - The discussion will be tabled for later. Potential a conversation for the strategic plan.
- Finance Committee is meeting at end of April. They will discuss their input for the strategic plan and goals for the next period.
 - Send suggestions to Committee by April 15th. Specifically, information that you would like to get, information that is not clear, etc.

Communications Committee Update (*Sue/Rudy*)

- Story of the Skagit is on hold until the videographers can get additional footage – limited by the Silver Skagit Road. They will get an update in April when they connect with the videographers.

Recreation committee update

- Lynn is absent.
- Rob provided an update on recreational opportunities stemming from the SCL Relicensing process.

- Potential funding opportunities for recreation facilities in the upper Skagit was discussed.
- Discussions around the future of the North Cascades Institute's Environmental Learning Center have been happening during the relicensing discussions – for example, whether it should stay within the project boundary.

Indigenous Peoples and Engagement Committee Update *(Shannon)*

- Shannon will step down as chair.
- Two projects funded by SEEC and NNTC are underway. Status updates were provided. Existing projects that have had funding approved will potentially need additional, future funding in future years. More project proposals should be expected in the future.
- The Committee will meet to identify a new chair.
- Suggestion/question around whether to potentially build on the original Hozomeen gathering for a larger future gathering. Further discussion may be necessary.
 - Background was provided on the previous Hozomeen gathering; provided by Rudy. For the previous gathering, they hired a consultant to help with communication.
 - Rudy to distribute link to the documentary video.

Education Committee Update *(Gail)*

- Rob is the new Education Committee Chair.
- Presentation developed and presented at the meeting by Gail. The presentation provided an overview of SEEC history, work, etc. The presentation will be available on the SEEC Website for future updating and use.
- Discussion around how/when funded partners presented to SEEC in the past.
 - Note of the value to partners and SEEC in having engagement throughout the year. Suggestion to increase engagement at business meetings.

Watershed Integrity Committee Update *(Richard)*

- Committee has not met.
- Limited capacity but it needs to be reinvigorated.

Ecosystems Committee Update *(Leo)*

- Committee has not met.
- MOA for funding up to \$499,000.
 - Current studies are still underway. Though underbudget. Some of this was due to lack of access to the road.

- This is a transitional time; relicensing will pick up things like water quality monitoring and some recreational items.
- Note that FERC process and studies north of the border are not typically funded.
- Bear boxes – NPS will be doing the bear boxes though they have not been installed yet.
- Relicensing process includes a settlement agreement. In this agreement, there may be funding for studies that SEEC is currently funding. Thus, projects in the existing budget may not be needed in the future.
- Rob provided an update on re-initiated grizzly bear recovery discussions. Previous NPS administration chose not to make a decision. Current administration is restarting the process using archived public inputs. Invitations for fresh public input around whether to reintroduce bears will occur in June/July. Separately, a decision around how to reintroduce bears will be part of the process. Note that BC is also interested in bear introduction, which has encouraged the discussion around decisions on the US side.
 - SEEC should consider comment period engagement.

Relicensing Ad Hoc Committee Update *(Richard)*

- Tim recused.
- Committee continues to meet every other Friday.
- Considerable time is currently spent around discussing the nexus between the relicensing process and SEEC. Will Stelle provides informed guidance for the committee.
- The committee is building its understanding of how SEEC can help fill gaps in the relicensing process. There is intent to incorporate some SEEC needs/desires into the process.
- Committee is thinking about how to prepare/fund issues north of the border to ensure matching initiatives from south of the border provide a coordinated effort.
- Discussion around United States and Canadian engagement.
 - Do we know what would be involved on the CAN side if salmon were introduced in the Ross reservoir? What hurdles would be imposed? What implications would this pose for fisheries management?
 - This would be a question for the Province; it is a question that a number of folks are asking. There is no active dialogue known to date between SCL and the Ministry. The question regarding Ministry engagement will be raised by Bob who is meeting with Minister Cullen next week.
 - SEEC has reached out successfully to FN/Tribes

- Are there copies of letters or engagement between US and Canada that are publicly available?
 - There have been no known letters between US and BC on this. However, there is interest in how SEEC might foster that relationship. Can SEEC track future correspondence and play and accountability type role?
- What about a comprehensive stewardship plan?
 - This is something that still needs to be discussed. The strategic plan might be a venue for this to be further fleshed out.
- The relicensing process will continue to move forward, and the timeline is tight. The Commission needs to be aware that there may be upcoming decisions that will need to be made in a relatively short amount of time.
 - Some issues to consider include the need for a watershed, climate resiliency and/or stewardship plan, bull trout population impacts, NCI programming impacts, summarizing the need for a transboundary scope, etc.

Committee Membership Review and Update (*Shannon*)

- There are two upcoming Canadian vacancies, which might mean other updates in the future. Discussed changes include the following:
 - Relicensing - Shannon will resign; Bob is missing from the list; Jon will be added.
 - Indigenous Peoples Engagement – Shannon, Stephen and Peter will resign; New chair needed; Brodie will be added.
 - Education - Gail will be removed; Rob will be the chair.
 - Communications - Gail will be removed; Tim will be added.
 - Watershed Integrity - Gail will be removed; Peter will be added.
 - Recreation - no changes.
 - Ecosystem - may need to address in the future.
 - Finance/Audit – Tom will be removed; Brodie and Shannon will be added.
 - Note to identify where a Canadian Commissioner is needed on the list, add US/CAN labels to Commissioners; add note on who the chair is.
- Hybrid meeting discussion
 - The Commission is not in favor of all virtual meetings.
 - Discussion around pros/cons of hybrid meetings:
 - There is value in doing hybrid, where you get additional/increased perspective and have flexibility; however, in person engagement, you get the added value in the subtleties, momentum, continuity and ability to build relationships.

- Additional staff energy would be required to manage the camera/microphone. A unit would need to be purchased and stored (potentially an Owl unit worth ~\$1,500) or borrowed.
- The Commission discussed having flexibility of hybrid option, but with the expectation that Commissioners come in person.
 - If it is an occasional accommodation, it is not a big deal. It's an exception, but not the rule.
 - Note that there need to be expectations around how to engage in the video.
- Comment around the value of meeting in the place where the Commissions work takes place.

Strategic Planning Overview *(Leo/Shannon)*

- Ad Hoc Membership: Leo, Shannon, Stephen, Bob, Jon, Richard, Brodie
- Determined in a previous meeting that a facilitator is not needed.
- Desired updates include/areas to address:
 - Ensuring the strategic plan is more targeted.
 - Adding a line for the funding of Indigenous projects.
 - Address issues like the Silver Skagit Road (e.g., how issues like this impact the continuity of funded projects/programs).
 - Address stewardship planning.
 - Address the role of relicensing.
 - Thinking about how Hozomeen gathering will take shape.
 - Transition toward a proactive funding.
 - Areas to do more around ESG (environmental, social, governance) investments; recommendations from the Finance Committee.
 - Address potential strategy for usage of opportunity fund when funding is available.
 - Address long term planning; how to address funding or commitments through/beyond 2066.
 - Generally discuss the top risks/external threats/opportunities the Commission faces and how the Commission chooses to engage or situational awareness.
 - Potential discussion around doing a risk assessment or hiring a consultant to do a risk assessment or risk management plan.
 - Connect with FN/Tribal communities to talk about available funds and/or potential projects for proposal. Needs to happen before Strategic Plan discussion so ideas can be incorporated. Ideally find a communicator
 - Address the question around not funding projects that are supposed to be funded via government agencies. Where does SEEC draw the line there and whether criteria or guidelines can be developed.

- How might the Commission address the current hierarchy of partnerships?
- Address improvements to tracking funding.
- The Strategic Planning is on the agenda for the June meeting.
 - **Action Item:** have committees recommend topics or goals around the strategic plan. Deadline for submissions – June meeting.
 - **Action Item:** How can the commission most effectively communicate strategic planning and/or funding to help inform further planning?
 - This could help the Commission identify how to provide entities or people with information.
 - Engage the appropriate Committees to identify how this can be done.

Carry over from last meeting

- **Work Group** - "Focused on creating recommendations to increase controls over reporting and disbursement of funds" – project management
 - Communications can take this on in part through the project reporting process.
 - There may need to be a way to better distribute information around invoicing, whether a project was completed, and the payment of projects.
 - Noted suggestion that invoices to go to the co-chair, chair of the committee, and the finance committee.
 - Also note the need for a standard reporting process. The need to circulate annual reports.
 - There may be an opportunity to incorporate language in grantee contracting regarding cash flow financing language.
 - Incorporation of controls in SOP. To also be addressed by co-chairs.

Loose Ends, Other Business, Action Items, Transitions, and Future Meetings (Leo)

- Thank you, Gail! Been with the Commission for 10 years.
 - Without Gail – the Commission would not have gone into action on the logging in the Skagit or issues stemming from the Silver Skagit Road.
 - Suggestions from Gail:
 - Reengage and rebuild communication with partners.
 - Share the annual partner reports with the education committee to use that to engage the public and provide awareness on research and other work going on.
 - There are 4 international peace parks. Suggestion to pursue Manning, North Cascades, BC Parks a national peace park.
 - Frasier Valley District; work on the wilderness management area.

- Encourage SEEC to have the Communication Committee update the SEEC map.
- Come up with a way/communication strategy to continue to engage with alumni so they can serve SEEC when help is needed.
- Business Meeting Scheduling
 - June 16th, 2023
 - September 15-17th, 2023
 - Retreat location: US/Newhalem
 - January 19th, 2024
 - Consideration: Are there guest speakers that folks are interested in?
- If Commissioners need help accessing information on the website, let Rudy know.

Adjourn

MEETING END at 2:20PM

DRAFT