

South Fork Nooksack River Watershed Project  
**Public Involvement Report**  
January, 2017

# Public Involvement and Stakeholder Engagement

## Section 1 – Introduction

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Many residents and landowners recognize the importance of protecting our water supply. It is ultimately our responsibility, as members of this community, to ensure that there is enough clean water for our working farms, for our fish, and for our children and grandchildren. The South Fork Nooksack River Watershed project was conceived in this spirit.

Over the last several years, citizens and organizations with land or responsibilities in the Valley such as the Acme/Van Zandt Flood Advisory Committee, the Nooksack Tribe Natural Resources Department, Lummi Nation, Whatcom Land Trust, the Evergreen Land Trust Association, and local government agencies, had identified the need for watershed level planning in the South Fork Valley, and the need for open community dialogue about land and water management priorities outside of a regulatory framework.

Recognizing the need for a locally driven process, there was also a strong planning framework already established by the Initiating Governments of the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Project and Salmon Recovery Project, and the related WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan and Salmon Recovery Plan, which South Fork Nooksack efforts could act upon. An initial Planning Team was formed 2015 when several grants were received to help fund research and community engagement for various aspects of watershed planning.

This document describes the public outreach and stakeholder engagement process for the South Fork Nooksack River Watershed Planning Project through 2016. The process was intended to invite a holistic dialogue about the issues, concerns, hopes, and opportunities identified by South Fork residents, landowners, and other key stakeholders. The hope was that any planning efforts in the Watershed would be well-informed about the interests of the people who care about this place.

## Section 2 – Methodology

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### Project Goals

The overarching goal of the public involvement was to engage landowners, tribes, agencies and community members for an open dialogue about how to conserve agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and recreation in the South Fork Nooksack River Watershed, while protecting and restoring our water resources.

### Planning Team

The South Fork Nooksack Watershed Planning Team began meeting periodically in 2015 to help determine a method for engaging the community, and to eventually develop a Watershed Conservation Plan (Planning Team Members are listed in the last section of this document). A contractor was hired to coordinate and facilitate the public outreach and stakeholder engagement. The Planning Team met approximately monthly throughout 2016 and provided feedback to the consultant on the needs of the project as it evolved.

### Strategic Systems Mapping

Stakeholder/Community engagement was loosely modeled after a process called Strategic Systems Mapping. This process began with the identification of interest groups. Facilitated conversations were held with each interest group and designed to solicit values, ideas, and concerns. After the Interest Group conversations were

completed, a full community meeting was held, and surveys conducted. The next step in the process was to form a volunteer group which would consider all the input gathered, along with information from pertinent scientific studies. This group would actively engage in planning by identify common goals, openly discussing issues, and think creatively about solutions.

### Interest Group Meetings

The Planning Team identified seven different interest groups (within the limited scope of time and budget) for engaging in these preliminary conversations. Sessions were held during the summer of 2016. Participants were identified from several community lists including those used for the WRIA process.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Interest Group</b>
5/27/16	Agency and Tribal Interest Group
6/17/16	Fish Interest Group (WRIA 1 Salmon Staff Team)
7/19/16	Agriculture Interest Group
7/28/16	Large Forest Landowner Interest Group
7/28/16	Small Forest Landowner Interest Group
8/31/16	Recreation and Small Business Interest Group

Each interest group meeting involved a presentation of issues including stream temperature, flooding, habitat loss, drought, economics, and quality of life. Climate change was emphasized as a factor influencing and potentially exacerbating all the identified issues. The facilitator explained that the community process was intended to:

- *Facilitate* a community conversation.
- *Adopt* a multiple-benefit approach.
- *Carefully examine* cultural, economic, and environmental needs and challenges.
- *Utilize* the best tools and thinking available.

Through a facilitated discussion, the participants provided their thoughts regarding goals and hopes for the Watershed, concerns for the future, and ideas for how to address the concerns. Notes for each of the interest groups were used to develop summaries of input that are discussed later in this report, and were posted on the website.

### Community Meeting

Following the interest group meetings, a Community Meeting was organized in cooperation with the Acme/Van Zandt Subzone Flood Committee. The meeting was designed to provide a summary of findings to date, to solicit additional input, and to provide information about restoration tools and opportunities. A vision board and a survey were used to gather input at this meeting. Over 100 people were in attendance.

### Watershed Group

The concept of the Watershed Group and its purpose was modified with community input. The original concept was to form an organization akin to a “Watershed Council”, which would give input on a Watershed Conservation Plan, and ideally develop a more comprehensive, long-range Community Watershed Plan. After considering the input from the community, it became clear that the first priority was strengthening communication and providing a framework for meaningful dialogue.

From strongly voiced community feedback, it was determined that the Watershed Group should be composed of only residents and landowners. To ensure that all residents and landowners were aware of the opportunity, a postcard was mailed to everyone in the watershed, and the invitation was also offered in surveys at the Community Meeting and on the website. Each applicant was asked to provide information about their interests (Agriculture, Forestry, Business, Mining, Transportation, Recreation, Resident, Fisheries, and Environment), their best availability for meetings, to verify their residency or ownership of land in the South Fork Valley, and to agree to:

- Participate in four to five evening meetings.
- Seek common ground with their neighbors.
- Abide by the meeting ground rules

Local facilitators were contracted to provide administrative support for the Watershed Group. The complete agendas, minutes, and materials for those meetings can be found on the [sfnooksack.com](http://sfnooksack.com) website.

### Individual Meetings with Landowners

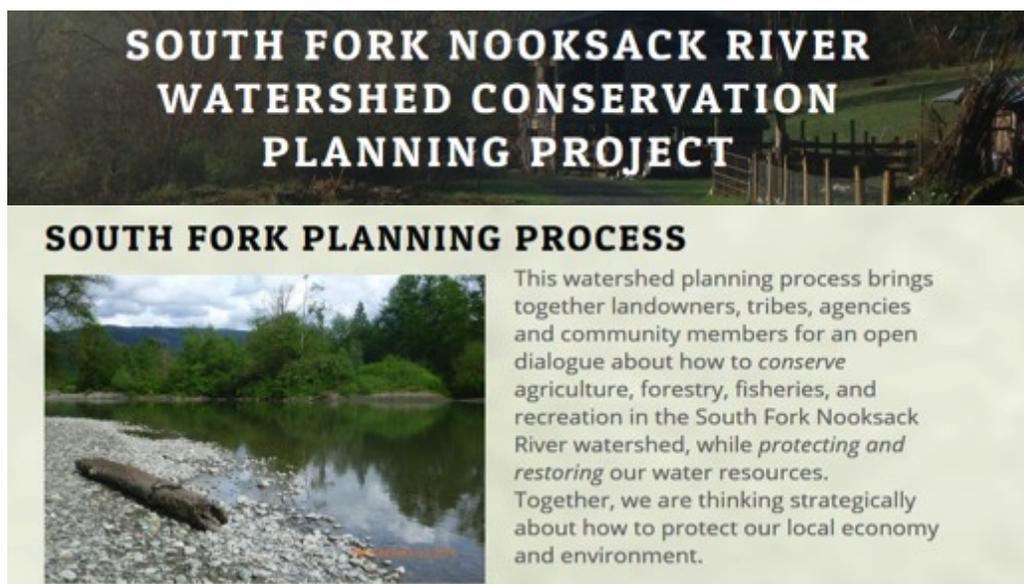
Concurrent with the public outreach efforts, landowners were contacted individually to discuss restoration and protection opportunities on their property. Fieldwork and conversations led to the identification of twelve (12) parcels with high value for ecological lift, and willing landowners who are interested in participating.

### Communication Methods

A wide variety of methods were used for reaching individuals and organizations comprising the interest groups and stakeholders, as well as the general public. The contact list currently contains the names and contact information for 353 people including residents, landowners, stakeholders, and others interested in the Project.

In July of 2016, a website was established to post announcements for meetings, share background materials on the process, and provide information about the watershed. There were 192 views of the site over a period of six months. The website can found at [www.sfnooksack.com](http://www.sfnooksack.com).

#### Website (home page)



#### Posters

Posters describing the Watershed Planning process and how to get involved were posted at The Everybody's Store, Acme Store, the Acme Post Office, the Deming Post Office, and the Deming Library. Information and updates were also offered through the South Fork Valley Community Association list-serve and Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/southforkvalley/>).

#### Community Outreach Survey

A survey was designed to gather additional input on community hopes, concerns, and ideas, and made available on the website. The results of the survey were tabulated and are discussed later in this report.

## Letters

In the summer, a letter was mailed to invite every address zoned as Rural Forestry to convene the small forest landowner interest group. All residents in the valley received a postcard to let them know that a community process was underway and encourage them to get informed and involved.

## Subzone Meetings

The Acme Van Zandt Subzone Advisory Committee (Subzone) was informed regularly of the process and provided important input. The subzone engaged in the following activities:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| May 2016   | The Subzone reviewed the Watershed Planning process, the goals of the National Estuary Program (NEP) grant, and timeline. The Sub Zone voted affirmatively (4/0) “to actively engage in this planning process and to serve as the host for the community meeting (in September).” |
| July 2016  | The Subzone was updated on the planning process and members were asked for feedback on the project website.   |
| Sept. 2016 | The Subzone co-hosted the Community Meeting   |
| Nov. 2016  | The Subzone identified issues that they would like to see addressed through the Watershed Planning process and discussed hosting a community education session in 2017 on channel morphology and flood assessment.  |
| Dec. 2016  | Four members of the Subzone volunteered to participate in the Watershed Group. Due to the public meetings act, only two will be able to participate in any given session of the Watershed Group   |

## Section 2 – Input

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### ➤ WRIA 1 Watershed Staff Team and Salmon Recovery Staff Team

Periodic meetings were held from March 2016 through August 2016 to communicate about the project with the WRIA 1 process. The Watershed Staff Team works to coordinate watershed planning, policies, and activities throughout the Nooksack River Basin and the entire Resource Inventory Area. The Watershed Staff Team and the Salmon Recovery Staff Team noted the importance of effective coordination of the South Fork Process with ongoing water resources discussions and salmon recovery efforts, pursuant to the WRIA 1 Management Plan and the Salmon Recovery Plan. They saw opportunities for similar planning efforts in the North Fork and Middle Fork Nooksack River watersheds. They also recommended discussion with the WRIA 1 Management Team.

### ➤ WRIA 1 Management Team

The Management Team shared similar interests as those shared by the Watershed Staff Team and Salmon Staff Recovery Team. They also indicated there could be a community involvement role for the WRIA 1 Planning Unit. Some members indicated that the South Fork planning process is innovative and could help advance the overarching objectives of the WRIA 1 Boards.

### ➤ Agency and Tribal Interests

The Agency and Tribal Interest Group met on May 27, 2016 in the County Operations Training Building north of Bellingham. Twelve people attended the meeting, representing 11 agencies, the Nooksack Tribe, and the Lummi Tribe. Not all key staff from agencies and tribes could attend, so additional conversations with numerous other agency representatives interested in the project were held in the weeks following the Interest Group meeting. Additionally, The Nooksack tribal staff met with Lummi tribal staff to discuss the details of the project.

Concerns raised by the Agency and Tribal Interest Group included both environmental factors and community dynamics. There are many different points of view in the watershed. Who speaks for whom? There continue to be challenges in achieving consensus on a plan and actions in the South Fork. The timeframe for the planning process appears to be very short. Some shared concerns included that there may be limits to restoration of in-stream and floodplain processes. The County has found that the river is changing (incising) faster than they thought and this may increase restoration challenges. How can we address land-use “legacy” effects? Staff from the City of Bellingham noted that the City’s pipeline crosses under the South Fork. The revetment for pipeline is not needed and could be removed if necessary.

From this Interest Group and other conversations with agency and tribal staff, key discussion points included:

- Reducing near-term flood damages to public and private resources while reducing or avoiding the need to install or maintain hardened flood infrastructure in the future.
- Providing near-term instream habitat structure to provide critical functions while habitat forming and maintaining processes recover.
- Maintaining viable agriculture in the valley including access for agricultural uses of public and nonprofit ownerships so that we are not forced to choose between salmon recovery and agriculture on parcels key to recovery efforts.
- Evaluating the cumulative impact of legacy impacts with climate change impacts on watershed function water quality and quantity, and fish.
- Agreeing to a set of strategies.
- Addressing mistrust between parties.
- Using the South Fork process as an entry point for establishing a landscape view of conditions and a technical process.

#### ➤ **Fish Interests**

A meeting with the WRIA 1 Salmon Staff Team was held on June 17, 2016. Seven people attended the meeting. An additional conversation with the director of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) was held August.

Members of the Salmon Staff Team shared that they would like to achieve a net gain for all salmon species employing solutions that benefit multiple interests. The goals should be to restore properly functioning habitat conditions and ecosystem processes and to ensure that all life stages and life history requirements of salmon are met. The group saw an opportunity to incorporate the WRIA 1 project list and to integrate with the existing prioritization process. They were eager to learn from the project how to make their education and outreach efforts more effective.

The group expressed concerns about how high stream temperature will be addressed, while simultaneously balancing the needs of the community. They suggested we coordinate the landowner contacts to increase efficiency and avoid duplication and confusion. Some shared concerns about who participates in the discussions, and how policy issues related to water management and instream flows are resolved.

#### ➤ **Agricultural Interests**

The Agricultural Interest Group meeting was held July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Van Zandt Community Hall. Individuals participating in the conversations were identified by Planning Team members and contacted by email and phone.

Four people attended the meeting. Additional conversations with two other large-scale farmers and two small-scale farmers were held in the weeks following the main meeting.

The participants in conversations about agriculture had a range of goals for the future. These included economic viability and the ability to keep and buy land. The importance of water availability and being able to farm the most fertile areas was emphasized. The participants expressed a desire for the public to understand and respect farming and hoped the community shared some common goals with their interests. Several participants expressed desire for recovery of fish populations in the South Fork.

The group suggested that a primary area of focus should be to look at ways to address water rights through quantification and transfers. They suggested the County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program would be a useful tool to protect the viability of agriculture. They indicated a need for more awareness of floodplain processes and flood risk, and the need for locations for floodwater storage. Common goals could be achieved between climate change and farming. They expressed a desire for children to understand the work of agriculture and the connection to the land. They also believed that there are misconceptions about dairy farming that need to be addressed.

Many concerns were shared related to the environment and economics of the community. Water rights are by far the biggest concern. As water temperatures rise, there is a fear that water rights would be impacted. Prevention of river avulsion that takes away fertile farmland, all of which is in the floodplain, was another key concern. They noted that there are limited places for water to spread out and get stored in the floodplain. Some expressed concerns for increased flooding due to logjam projects. Other factors noted as influencing economic viability in the South Fork valley is the short growing season, and fluctuating dairy prices.

#### ➤ **Large Forest Landowner Interests**

The Large Forest Landowner Interest Group meeting was held July 28, 2016 at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region in Sedro-Woolley. Individuals participating in the conversations were identified by Planning Team members, based on known land ownership in the valley. Participants were contacted by email and phone. Nine people representing five organizations attended the meeting. The United States Forest Service (USFS) was not able to attend and was contacted later. They provided their input separately.

Participants in the Large Forest Landowner Interest Group shared a wide range of goals. The DNR and USFS operate under different management obligations than the private forest landowners though some themes were universal to all members. All participants shared that they seek to maintain continued yield of forest materials. They seek public understanding of their objectives and recognition of the investment they have made. All plan and strive for economic viability and seek to maintain or increase the long-term value of their lands. Private forest landowners shared the desire to reduce regulatory burden, support incentive based systems, and achieve no net loss of working forestlands. Some of the participants shared an interest in safe and appropriate recreation on their lands.

Several ideas were proposed by the group, though not all ideas were universally shared. These included state funding for small forest landowners and incentives/compensation for large forest landowner contribution to the environment and public good. Some suggested that education of new/current landowners about adjacent forest management is needed. Several participants felt that there was a need for significant changes in the State Labor and Industries insurance cost structure. They felt that it unfairly burdened forest landowners with the high cost of providing raw materials for public needs. Finally, several of the private landowners expressed that they would like to see harvest restrictions reduced on Federal forestlands.

Many concerns were shared related to the environment and economics of the industry. Two key factors limiting economic viability are the lack of mill infrastructure and a viable workforce (wages, equip/funding, L&I, visas for replanting). Changes in the market have been difficult. The condition of many bridges is beginning to limit access and options for hauling wood. Forest fires, disease, and invasive plants are an ongoing challenge. A lack

of federal timber sales has reduced overall production and issues with neighbors continue to complicate planning and threaten routine operations.

### ➤ **Small Forest Landowner Interests**

The Small Forest Landowner Interest Group meeting was held July 28, 2016 at the Van Zandt Community Hall. County staff provided the names and addresses of all landowners with a Rural Forestry zoning designation in the Valley. An invitation was sent via US mail to all the landowners on the list. Ten people attended the meeting.

The participants in this meeting shared several basic goals. First and foremost, they wanted to take care of their land and be able to pass it down to their families. Although most would have liked to make some money from the harvest of their trees, the participants were, in actuality, conducting only minimal forest management, or none at all. Several people shared the desire to be able to have a community voice. They suggested that we look at the stream temperature data collected by Mr. Nessel, available at the Deming Library.

A great deal of concern was shared about the way decisions are made that affect landowners. Several participants felt they were not engaged or heard by government. On the other hand, they also shared stories of direct conversations that they had with elected representatives in Whatcom County and the State government. Some shared concerns about the constraining impacts regulation and a feeling that their leaders were not accountable. Others felt that public officials were not aware of the real needs of the community. There was a general sense that things were being done to them by outside forces and that they lacked any genuine influence or power over access to resources and decision-making. A few participants shared their skepticism about the planning process, who was driving it, and the source of the funding.

Some doubted that the plan would make any difference and others were concerned about duplicating the efforts of the WRIA 1 process. A few participants stated they would like to see a common vision, a holistic plan, and a free flow of information. Finally, some landowners shared their concern that root rot is becoming a common problem throughout the area.

### ➤ **Recreational and Small Business Interests**

The Recreation and Small Business Interest Group meeting was held on August 31, 2016 at the Van Zandt Community Hall. Individuals participating in the conversations were identified through a list provided by DNR for their recreational planning process and additional input from Planning Team members. Participants were contacted by email and phone. Ten people attended the meeting.

The goals shared by the Recreation and Small Business Interest Group were heavily focused on access to the river as well as the upland areas of the valley. There was a great deal of interest in water access for fishing and water recreation, especially swimming. There was a desire for improved access for walking, hiking, and horseback riding areas. The business community expressed they would like to keep tourism in the picture because it is an important source of economic stability and tax revenue for the County. They also wanted to see that recreational opportunities are safe, sustainable, and well managed.

Shared ideas included building two new bicycle corridors to improve safety - one that follows the pipeline, and one to connect the end of Hillside Road to Acme. They would like to see improved river access points for water recreation that includes good parking. There was also a suggestion that community level planning was needed to address the amount of recreation in the area and perhaps a change in the speed limit on Highway 9 to limit traffic.

A variety of concerns were raised by the group. Access to the river and uplands was an ongoing concern. The current Open Space policy in the County does not allow public access – and some felt this was a problem. Some saw an inherent conflict between recreation and the protection of endangered fish. Others expressed concerns for pollution from agriculture and highway runoff. Bringing outside people into the valley to recreate increased

safety concerns for some residents. Several folks felt that the capacity for extra people (visitors) was limited due to a general lack of facilities. Theft has become a problem at trailheads. Forest fire danger is an ongoing concern. There appears to be no constituency to build support for recreation in the South Fork valley or to advocate for their needs. Finally, there was a sense that better agency coordination was needed to address recreation, parking, and access needs.

### ➤ **Transportation and Utilities Interests**

The Transportation and Utilities Interests were contacted individually for interviews in July and August of 2016. They were comprised of staff from Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Whatcom County Public Works, and Williams Pipeline. There were multiple attempts to meet with staff from the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad, but this meeting was scheduled and then cancelled by BNSF on several occasions. Because of this, the meeting never occurred.

Public safety was a shared interest expressed by these informants. Concern about safety on Highway 9 was noted, and the importance of maintaining safe and reliable pipeline services. There are opportunities for the County and WSDOT to partner on improving access to the South Fork near Acme and to address parking needs in Van Zandt. There are also opportunities for cooperation with tribes and others on habitat projects by linking to WSDOT's need to mitigate for highway construction projects. The Williams Pipeline staff wants to work cooperatively with habitat restoration staff and can provide input on riparian planting projects. They would like the community to be better informed about the pipeline operations and safety issues.

A small list of concerns was identified by the Williams Pipeline representative, including concern about the prevent encroachments of plantings so they can maintain access to the pipeline. They also expressed a concern that in-channel work (log jams etc.) in the vicinity of the pipeline crossing might change flow characteristics or the channel configuration resulting in potential exposure of the pipeline. Lastly, they noted the importance of being informed of any time that a landowner is excavating near a pipeline.

### ➤ **Community Meeting**

A Community Meeting was held at the Van Zandt Hall on September 27, 2016. Over 100 people attended the event to review the information that had been gathered so far, and to share their hopes, concerns, and ideas. Representatives from local organizations and agencies provided maps, displays, and information about conditions and management efforts in the valley, as well as the latest opportunities for technical and financial assistance for landowners.

The Community Meeting included a vision board where participants were invited to write their hopes, concerns, and ideas. Input from the vision board is transcribed below:

#### Hopes

- That the government gets out of the community.
- Avoid federal government stepping in around water rights because the community is unable to come together.
- Eliminate clear-cutting.
- Practice healthy communication on issues.

#### Ideas

- Create public education about dairy farmers not being harmful to the environment.
- Pick up derelict nets.
- Private property owners must take care of their land.
- Maintain the river channel with well-placed dredging.
- In planning, make sure that we account for proportionality – influence of large landowners/small landowners.
- A resident only meeting where there could be a presentation with Q and A.

Concerns (most of the following concerns were generated by five participants)

- Scrutiny over water use, extra control, and water metering.
- Functionally disallowing farming.
- Using tax dollars for process.
- For logjams – if/when they become dislodged, there are concerns about safety and who will pay for damages.
- What are the lost opportunity costs related to logjams – e.g. access, usual and accustomed uses.
- Where do tribal rights come into play?
- Do these projects actually protect water? Are we wasting public dollars? (lack of confidence that the projects on the ground protect water)
- Bureaucrats not taking responsibility.
- Concern that the community was not involved earlier in the process. A recommendation that the Subzone should have called a meeting earlier in the process.
- Invasion of landowner/resident privacy.
- Unstable slopes (Devil’s Slide)
- Inflated costs of restoration projects; not allowing or supporting landowners to participate in restoration on their own property.
- Disagreement about how much of a buffer is needed on creeks/river (11 feet vs. 100 feet)
- Who defines a “salmon stream?” (how is it defined)
- Lack of trust; fear of
  - Misuse of Funds
  - Misuse of Tax dollars
  - A process is driven by outside interests
  - A fake process – the people organizing this effort don’t actually care
  - A hidden agenda

➤ **Community Meeting Survey**

In addition to the vision board, all attendees at the Community Meeting were asked to fill out a short survey to capture their opinions and ideas about watershed planning. Out of more than 100 attendees, 22 filled out the survey in hard-copy [an online survey produced input from an additional seven people]. The results are shown here with the original survey questions:

What are your hopes for the future of our watershed?

- Access to enough water, restoring salmon, keeping our rural way of life, and mitigating flooding and slides.
- Increase the stability of levees.
- Regulate logging on the hillsides and steep slopes; protect wildlife and fisheries.
- Salmon is an ongoing concern, with water and irrigation for farms to hold a constant value to make a living being.
- Continued water access for private property owners.
- No more clear-cutting.
- Access to and the restoration of the watershed.
- Try to keep the valley the way it has been. The community has been long established and we need to try to keep it the way it is.
- Access to enough water, actions towards restoring salmon habitat and population, and keeping our rural way of life.
- Preserve local waters.
- Collaborative effort, whatever the process, wherever we go.
- Salmon restoration, keeping government and corporations out of our water interests, and keeping our rural way of life.
- Restorations and improvements, cleaning it out.
- Responsible and transparent resource management; preservation of critical infrastructure.

- That we as a community come together. That we work to find common ground, not meeting each other with sleeves rolled up. Sustainability is the goal.
- Maintain our watershed and continue our way of life without more regulations.
- Stop the clear cutting. This is NOT forestry! It is deforestation! Ecosystem destruction!

What ideas do you have for how to resolve those concerns – both for you, and for other landowners in our community?

- Consume less. Consume less. Have fewer children. Communication among varied interest groups. Find where interests and strategies overlap.
- Start dredging a permanent channel for county and gravel.
- Need to work with DNR to re-write regulations, which have been mostly dictated by the logging industry.
- Keep bringing facts, so the hearsay can go away.
- A balanced approach to instream flow studies to include well data vs. river data. One doesn't always equal the other.
- Legislate an end to clear cutting
- More community input and solutions that are attainable.
- Work together and let the folks that have lived here for a long time have more weight in decisions.
- Dredge the river and be keep it in its channel like it used to be done. As for disturbing fish habitat, the river bottom is never the same from one year to the next. Does anyone care about saving our homes and land?
- Keep on planning open meetings. Listen.
- Start at the mouth restoring and work your way up the River! Don't start at the end!
- Communication.
- This event is good. If there is to be a meeting, facilitators make people establish what they have in common before anything else.
- Forestry is the poster child of success in the watershed. With habitat conservation plans and forest practice laws the landscape has changed for the better. The regulations put in place today have been providing this watershed success for years.
- Require selective logging and diverse native tree planting.

What are your concerns about the future of our watershed? (e.g. risk from fire, landslides and/or floods, loss of local wildlife or local farms)

- Risk from fire, landslides, loss of local wildlife, or local farms.
- Overpopulation of humans.
- Risk from fire, landslides and/or floods, loss of local wildlife, or local farms.
- Logging and landslides.
- Basin closure for water access; example – exempt wells.
- Landslides, floods, and less biodiversity.
- Farming/water rights; safe access points; water quality/fish habitat.
- Government involvement.
- That the river is going to be allowed to go wherever it goes. If that is the case, and has been, it will take homes and, more importantly, farmland that cannot be replaced.
- Depleting supplies; stabilizing banks.
- Loss of wildlife and farms; Deforestation.
- Landslides; loss of local voice; self-determination.
- Fires are inevitable. Landslides are from poor choices by logging companies. They shouldn't be allowed to log over homes.
- Concern that the watershed future is going to be taken away from the community and landowners.
- Human impact will be irreversible.
- Government involvement and people's water rights. Fires, floods, and landslides have been happening long before we arrived.

- Deforestation effects – 1) reduces H2O retention; 2) Accelerates erosion/slides/river sediment; 3) Destroys diversity of biota/wildlife habitats.

### ➤ On-line Survey

Additional information from the community was derived from seven people in an online survey.

What are your hopes for the future of our watershed? (e.g. access to enough water, restoring salmon, keeping our rural way of life, etc.)

- Water/Watershed that sustains ecosystem services and restoring salmon and biodiversity. Planning a watershed scale for holistic, sustainable futures. Community-based management. Considering how climate change may impact water resources.
- Maintain a high-quality level of the South Fork.
- Have as little regulation as possible to maintain water rights of landowners and to promote agricultural interests.
- Harvest timber.
- Maintain productive resource land (ag, forestry and mining), protect water quality, habitat restoration.
- Access to enough water, restoring salmon habitats and populations, keeping our way of life rural, protecting and maintaining a clean water source for generations to come. It's also important to create higher paying job opportunities in the valley for local families.
- Honest and realistic accounting of impacts and relationships in the watershed.

What ideas do you have for how to resolve those concerns – both for you, and for other landowners in our community?

- Damage to water quality
- My biggest fear is having "conservation groups" that are funded via tax dollars or from out of area special interest groups, dictating how I use or limit my use of water.
- Lack of understanding regarding responsible resource management leading to fear based decisions and under-utilized resources.
- Pollution, too much logging, flood damage.
- Risk from paradigm biases. WE MUST HAVE THIS OR THAT!

What are your concerns about the future of our watershed? (e.g. risk from fire, landslides and/or floods, loss of local wildlife or local farms)

- Watershed planning that incorporates ecosystem services and community-based input/management.
- Maintain or reduce zoning density levels.
- Having out of area, private (for profit) business being paid by my own tax dollars, telling me how to use or not use water.
- Education and open, honest dialogue between interested parties.
- Working together to listen to each other's diverse viewpoints, follow environmental laws to protect our resources, and find creative solutions to problems.
- People do not voluntarily surrender economic interest. It is almost an insurmountable task to reduce sedimentation from clear cutting. Reduce ag. chemical infiltration, reduce over-harvesting of fish, and add catch basins along the highway.

## Section 3 – Summary of Input

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From all of the input gathered through the process, a number of key themes are offered, which were then considered by the Watershed Group as **potential community goals and values for long-term watershed planning**, as follows:

- Build a framework for open community dialogue around land management decisions, planning, and funding.
- Keep the rural way of life as we know it today and protect it for our children.
- Build cooperative, voluntary agreements with landowners and community partners.
- Avoid overregulation and lack of management coordination.
- Recover salmon populations and biodiversity by restoring river, wetlands, and riparian habitat.
- Reduce stream temperatures and ensure adequate stream flows in the summer.
- Maintain and protect the agricultural land base, promote long-term agricultural economic viability, and provide public education on agriculture.
- Maintain and protect the forestland base, and promote a sustainable forest industry with a skilled and steady local workforce.
- Evaluate a range of approaches to reduce flood risk and increase floodwater storage, while ensuring the protection and maintenance of critical infrastructure.
- Evaluate water uses and needs in the valley and develop local solutions to optimize benefits for humans and fish. Address concerns about water rights.
- Improve public access to and appropriate management of the river, parks, and public land for recreation.
- Improve public safety by addressing risks from landslides, fire, flooding, pipelines, and transportation.
- Coordinate projects to ensure tax dollars are spent wisely and create opportunities that align with community interests.
- Respect the ability and knowledge of local residents to manage land and water resources wisely.

## Section 4 – Participants and Funding Sources

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### South Fork Nooksack River Watershed Planning Team

#### **Oliver Grah and Team, Nooksack Indian Tribe Natural Resources Department**

The Nooksack Natural Resources (NNR) Department works to protect and recover the treaty resources of the Nooksack Tribe by assessing, preserving and restoring salmon habitat, and by managing fish and shellfish resources for the long term in an ecologically sound, sustainable manner. The NNR Team includes Gary MacWilliams, Oliver Grah, Treva Coe, Mike Maudlin, Eric Stover, Jezra Beaulieu, and Lindsie Fratus.

#### **Gabe Epperson, Whatcom Land Trust**

Gabe is the Conservation Director of WLT, whose mission is to preserve and protect wildlife habitat, scenic, agricultural and open space lands in Whatcom County for future generations by securing interests in land and promoting land stewardship.

#### **Jason Hatch, Washington Water Trust**

Jason is with WWT, a neutral, nonregulatory, 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to improving and protecting stream flows and water quality throughout Washington State. They use voluntary, market-based transactions and cooperative partnerships to create balanced solutions so that fish, agriculture, business and wildlife can thrive.

#### **Holly O'Neil, Crossroads Consulting**

Holly is a resident of the South Fork and owns a small business that provides facilitation and training services for a wide range of agencies and non-profits. She is a co-coordinator of the Whatcom Farm-to-School Initiative, and serves on the Steering Committee of the Foothills Community Food Partnership.

#### **Ian Smith, Cascadia Farm and Forestry Services**

Ian is a resident of the South Fork and owns a small business located in the South Fork Nooksack River Valley, providing comprehensive habitat restoration services ranging from consulting, design, native plant installation and long-term maintenance.

### **Chris Elder, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services**

Chris is a resident of the South Fork and works as a Long Range Planner supporting the Wildlife Advisory Committee and staffing the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program; a voluntary program that compensates property owners for the value of their unexercised residential development potential and enacts an agricultural conservation easement to protect agricultural resource lands.

### **Vikki Jackson, NW Ecological Services**

Vikki is a former South Fork resident who runs an ecological consulting firm that provides biological assessments, biological supervision, environmental permitting, low impact and sustainable design, mitigation plans, monitoring, stream delineation and regulatory assessment, wetland delineation, research, and workshops.

### **Steve Klein, EPA**

Steve is a researcher with a specialty in climate change who works with the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA supports funding for high-quality research by the nation's leading scientists and engineers that will improve the scientific basis for decisions on national environmental issues.

### **Bert Webber, Professor Emeritus, Western Washington University**

Bert is a marine biologist who teaches at WWU, is known as the person to coin the term *Salish Sea* in 1988, which is now officially recognized in both Canada and the US to describe the entire area of *Georgia Strait, Puget Sound, and Strait of Juan de Fuca*. Webber is also known for his work with the Whatcom Community Foundation, to launch the "Next Steps" grant and loan program for supporting Whatcom farmers to transition from small scale to commercial level agriculture.

### **Susan Dickerson Lange, PhD**

Susan is with Natural Systems Design and has a professional background in environmental consulting, teaching, and community development. Her research focuses on how forest change and climate change combine to modify snow accumulation and melting in forested mountain watersheds, and related effects on streams and ecosystems.

## **Funding Sources**

Grants to support research, public engagement, and planning in this time period were offered by:

### **Whatcom Community Foundation**

- Grant to support engagement of partners in watershed planning with focus on forests
  - Identify resources and tools
  - Outreach to community and forestland owners to engage in dialogue and planning

### **BIA Competitive Climate Change Adaptation Grant FY2015**

- Grant to develop of a Watershed Conservation Plan
  - Research glacier ablation and sediment baseline monitoring.
  - Research on sediment modeling with climate change variable
  - Research on stream temperature modeling with climate change variable
  - Contract with UW and WWU to model impact of climate change on glacier behavior and river basin hydrology.
  - Conduct public outreach and stakeholder engagement

### **EPA Competitive Wetlands Grant**

- Grant to support the wetlands component of a Watershed Conservation Plan
  - Update draft of Quality Assurance Project Plan.
  - Conduct review of relevant data on wetland occurrence and status
  - Conduct field assessments of accessible parcels
  - Prepare a wetlands assessment including the occurrence and distribution of wetlands and restoration opportunities

### **NEP-Ecology Competitive Riparian Protection Grant**

- Grant to support reach-scale riparian protection and restoration planning, as a component of a Watershed Conservation Plan; subsequent funding for implementation.
  - Conduct Public outreach and stakeholder engagement
  - Conduct assessment of riparian areas for baseline conditions
  - Conduct assessment of flood control system
  - Conduct water rights assessment and characterization
  - Engage landowners to determine interest
  - Explore land/conservation easement acquisition and restoration potential
  - Prepare a Reach-Scale assessment and plan

**BIA Competitive Climate Change Adaptation Grant FY2016**

- Establish baselines for glaciers, hydrology, stream temperature, etc.
- Develop and implement a stream macro invertebrate sampling program
- Conduct Beaver habitat assessment
- Collaborate and share data with UW and WWU
- Develop life cycle models for Nooksack salmonid populations
- Conduct additional public outreach and stakeholder engagement to support watershed planning

**Watershed Group Members**

Amy Margolis	Jamie Huson
Anna Martin	Jane Talton Rogers
Bernard Strachilla	Jeff Margolis
Bill Baroch	Jerry Peterson
Brandon Larsen	Jim Abernathy
Brett Boulton	John LaMonte
Carol Delahoyde	John Stephens
Charlie Burleigh	Kelly DeKriek
Cheryl Costomiris	Lawson Curtis
Chris Elder	LeRoy Harkness
Chris Hatch	Lawson Curtis
Cindy Fabbri	Matt Thuney
Dan Cox	Oliver Grah
Dominic Mocerri	Rand Jack
Doug Couvelier	Ross Cline Junior
Elvin Kahlsbeek	Sean D'Agnolo
Emily Pederson	Stephen Bailey
Eric Davis	Steve Powers
Gabe Epperson	Tom Smith
Galen Smith	Theresa Sygitowicz
Gordon Bakke	Tricia Stevens
Harry Patz	Val Lloyd
Ian Smith	Facilitators: Erin Suda and Lesley Rigg