

Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS) Executive Committee Meeting SUMMARY



Date: Friday April 8, 2016
Time: 2:00-4:00 PM

Location: Puget Sound Regional Council
Suite 500 (Board Room)
1011 Western Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104

Executive Committee Meeting Summary

Participants 16 members in attendance (See Attachment A).

Welcome Ron Sims was out ill, so Ikuno Masterson welcomed the group, and introduced the agenda. This is the second to last meeting of the Executive Committee.

ROSS Roundup **Nancy Rottle** provided an update on ROSS activities since the last meeting in February. She also reflected on the original mission created in 2012 as documented in the Preliminary Comprehensive Strategy. The ROSS's vision is and has always been to create a robust, resilient, and accessible open space network within the region to help mitigate against and adapt to climate change, maintain biodiversity, increase social equity and human health, and create economic opportunities.

Nancy summarized some of the ROSS Team accomplishments over the course of the past 4 or so years :

1. Recently helped PSRC submit a proposal to the US Endowment for Forestry & Communities to help fund one full time staffer to work on environmental issues on a regional scale.
2. Completed three Watershed Open Space Strategies (WOSS), each with unique methodologies and formats, suited for particular physical and community conditions within the watershed.
 - a. The *Puyallup-White* WOSS was completed in 2014. A follow-up report on resource lands conversion within the Green-Y has been prepared focusing on regulatory challenges associated with maintaining working farms and forests. It is currently out for expert review.
 - b. The *Green-Duwamish* WOSS phase 1 baseline conditions and public outreach was completed by ROSS in 2015, and King County is now taking the lead to finish the work focusing on stormwater and open space.
 - c. The *Snohomish* WOSS is currently being finalized by ROSS staff. The WOSS primarily looks at ecosystem services and how they can be used to inform a plan. Found that local parks actually create more revenue than Stevens Pass and other State Parks.
3. TPL online ecosystem assessment tool is moving forward and scheduled to be completed in October of 2016, with a potential beta product ready next month.
4. Completed five regional challenge papers that are being summarized by Tracy Stanton now. Section 1 of these documents, identifying how they can

be addressed through open space actions, are posted on the ROSS website at <http://regionalopenspacestrategy.org/ross-reports>.

5. A Sketch Spatial Regional Open Space Strategy is being refined by John Owen and Sarah Titcomb based on expert input over the life of the ROSS. The goal is to show this sketch through a final video about the ROSS.
6. Ikuno is working on the transition of the ROSS to a future organization through the governance and finance work task.

She thanked all the members of the Executive Committee for their guidance and support and wanted us to be thinking about a final celebration as our last meeting.

Steps to Realize a Regional Strategy

Ikuno discussed the status of the strategy. [*For reference on slides, see longer powerpoint.*] In the February meeting, PSRC established that the Central Puget Sound is growing at a rapid pace [*slide 2*]. It brings opportunities as well as challenges – the reason why we are at this table – to make sure we don't lose the quality of life. The ROSS emphasizes that the region needs a strategy in place to ensure we don't lose why we came here in the first place. ROSS's goal is to create a strategy, not a plan [*slide 4*]. A strategy pulls together the different interests and stakeholders to create a common goal. If everyone working in open spaces in the region could align under one conductor and one song sheet, we could create some beautiful music.

The ROSS approach is to [*slide 5*]:

1. Build a regional open space system;
2. Advance the most important actions;
3. Expand analytical tools;
4. Improve regional decision making
5. Build a regional community

These actions would help move the region towards a collective vision that could address the regional challenges in the Puget Sound created by impending growth. These actions could enable the region to make a collective impact leveraged above what is possible on an individual level.

It is also important to realize that if regional growth is the issue, then solutions need to be tied to how we manage growth. This can begin to occur through our regional growth strategy within PSRC's Vision 2040. Up to this point, the strategy has not connected open spaces to that growth [*slide 12*].

Regional Sketch Plan

John Owen briefly discussed the progress on the Sketch Regional Open Space Strategy. The sketch is designed to help visualize what a regional open space system might look like spatially and to start identifying the most important actions. The goal is to stitch together the work from the local level and scale that up to the region. A mock sketch is in the process of being created for others to discuss and build upon. What we have found by layering information to address our key regional challenges is that the river corridors that connect the Puget Sound to the mountains, are really where major attention should be focused [*slides 16-27*].

Discussion

Steve Whitney – Will you have layers within this regional plan for social equity, access to parks?

John – Yes.

ROSS Strategy Continued

Steve W – A few people have come to me recently about climate resilience and the role that the forest service plays in maintaining carbon sinks. Are we addressing the forests as more than just green swaths that will always be there?

John – Yes, and our focus is currently on the approach. How the forest service could manage these lands to receive the most benefit, for instance.

Tracy Stanton – Additionally, the TPL tool will focus in particular on these “green swaths” and the co-benefits they provide to urban and rural areas.

Steve W – I also wonder about the restoration side of things. Perhaps Jamie has maps that show where the restoration dollars are being funneled?

Jamie Kingsbury – We have a water assessment conditions report that highlights the best and worst watersheds in the region in terms of impairment. This helps create priorities for restoration. There is also the Northwest Forest Plan that identifies the health of forests and where old plantations existed. (She can provide both to John.)

Ikuno – We also need to include the tribes in these discussions as they are very concerned with the needs of forests to maintain water supply and quality, hydrologic functions, hazard mitigation.

Jamie - noted tribes are also concerned about the above-ground resources they have used for food, shelter, navigation, and cultural traditions.

Ikuno then continued the discussion of the ROSS approach to further development of the strategy. The Sketch Spatial Plan is the first step in illustrating where regional efforts should be focused geographically. Also important to this process is the expansion of analytical tools. There is currently no common regional environmental database. The region needs to start thinking about that – who, what, where it should be maintained. The ROSS is taking steps to help provide a decision support tool through the creation of the TPL online ecosystem valuation tool. Additionally, the work of Earth Economics helps decision makers start to think about natural capital in terms of dollars and cents. (See Open Space Valuation for Central Puget Sound on the website at <http://regionalopenspacestrategy.org/ross-reports>.)

Disclaimer: These are findings and ideas by ROSS staff, not put forth by any of our partners. These initial ideas are open for discussion.

A major finding of the ROSS team is that there is a disconnect between land use planning and air, land, and water protection efforts.

- **Josh Baldi** – Can you provide an example of where this disconnect doesn’t exist?
- **Christie True** – We did pass a growth management act.
- **Josh** – Yes the GMA is important, but I think of it as sticking our fingers in the dikes. Is there something we’re missing that could fundamentally change the pressures?
- **Nancy** – The key is to visualize the urban growth and protected areas. In Denmark they have the land use hand plan that has stuck because people could visualize it.
- **Tracy** – In terms of a model of connecting land use with environmental issues, we can look to the Santa Clara Open Space Authority for guidance. They convinced the business community of the value of open spaces, and were able to pass a large bond to fund open space protection.
- **Ken Konigsmark** – There is a successful example in the region – the Mountains to Sound Greenway. There was a vision, a plan and an

understanding that regulations and incentives were not going to accomplish what was envisioned. So there was a commitment to raise enough money to acquire land as it became available – parcel by parcel.

- **Michael Hubner** – All these examples – Mountains to Sound Greenway, Denmark, Santa Clara, GMA, etc. – show the importance of having a map.
- **Ken** – Also of note is that there has been a steady drumbeat from developers to remove or relax the GMA, so this is not something we should take for granted.
- **Ikuno** - The Central Puget Sound Region is often showcased as an example of how to do this type of planning, but even we need to do a better job and it may be that we need to make structural changes to formalize the connections. It may also be time to go back and refine how we look at the GMA - to figure out how we can bring some of the green back into the urban grey. If we are deliberate in providing green space within our urban areas, perhaps people would not be so defensive about increasing densities.

Funding

Ikuno continued that the region does a great job with transportation planning and funding. Using that structural model we see that there are very few federal and state agency funders [*slide 36*]. Conservation dollars on the other hand, come from a wide variety of federal and state sources towards a number of different governments and NGOs [*slide 37*]. What if there was a way to streamline, and get more private, federal, and state dollars consolidated into an organization that could then disperse dollars based on an agreed set of priorities for the region [*slide 38*]? PSP has activated their authority to establish a foundation, but we understand it is not yet operational. A foundation could be more flexible and nimble than a governmental entity, responding to opportunities as they become available. Of course it would need to be carefully constructed. And using the successful transportation prioritization process, PSRC could serve as a valuable pilot project for developing regional open space priorities. Guidance from PSP and PSRC would be provided to local governments and WRIAs to develop local priorities that are brought into the local government's comprehensive plan. The local priorities could then be vetted through the PSRC regional process. Funding would then be dispersed based on those regional priorities and other criteria developed by the foundation. This would reduce the inefficiencies associated with responding to RFPs. The intent of this proposal is not to eliminate all fund disbursement methods, but to provide a model for channeling large amounts and for new money if and when it might come available, such as the potential with the Heck/Kilmer Puget SOS initiative (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3630/titles>) .

Discussion

Steve W – To have a common agenda by government entities driven by dollars, we would also need alignment in policies, correct? How could these be folded into policies and actions?

Ikuno – We have Multi-county Planning Policies that already direct Countywide Planning Policies in VISION 2040. These then guide the development of local comprehensive plans. These guidance policies could be beefed up to ensure WRIA and open space planning are integrated into goals, policies, and capital facility plans.

Nancy – PSRC also reviews the comprehensive plans of each city in the region. If policies within these plans also concerned open spaces, that could also be a way to fold it all together.

Michael – To clarify, PSRC has legal authority to review and comment on the transportation elements of comprehensive plans. While we do review and comment on entire documents, our legal authority as a RTO only covers transportation. The review of the other elements is based on a voluntary relationships between PSRC and our partners. This voluntary relationship could be extended to open spaces, but we would not have any legal authority. Our authority is derived from the legislature, and therefore to expand it beyond a voluntary agreement, there would need to be legislative change.

Steve Starlund – Concerning the potential non-profit foundation, the structure will be essential, although we do already have one that we could build upon. We all come together regularly here, and this could be extended similar to the model created by Mountains to Sound Greenway where stakeholders provided money and staff towards the common goal. This worked because they were not creating a new agency to funnel money, they created a collective of already established agencies. *[Ikuno note – there might have been confusion between the foundation, the box on the left side of slide 38 and the alliance, which is the box on right side of slide 38.]*

Ken –Mountains to Sound was also successful because they had a charismatic leader that was willing to dedicate himself fulltime to the effort. Also of note is that there are often limitations on where federal dollars can go. Sometimes they can only go to other governmental agencies, so creating a non-profit to funnel money for the region could preclude some of these federal dollars.

Josh – The concept is interesting, but needs more work. One suggestion is to not identify the entities specifically, so as to make the process less political. I am also struck by the grey vs green infrastructure comparison and the idea that what works for grey should work for green. These things are very different. For instance, locals know more details about green infrastructure that they may not with grey infrastructure. Things are simpler because locals cannot design engineering specs for roads, there is less up for debate. Although PSRC could be the cross over – they could maybe sponsor something or a forum.

Nancy – We selected the PSP because they are authorized to create a non-profit, but this has not be actualized yet.

Steve W – If we can't activate all these funding streams, we could at least do a better job at aligning priorities.

Tracy – The state revolving funds for wastewater were never used for green projects until local governments began applying for funds for green projects. They pushed the envelope, and now these funds can be used for green infrastructure as well as grey. Perhaps it's time to push TIGER funding within transportation in the same way, to think creatively.

Ikuno – To clarify, PSRC is not pushing this effort, the ROSS is pushing PSRC in this direction based on the goals and policies in VISION 2040. Also, the goal of this non-profit is not necessarily to change the way all funds are distributed. Hopefully we could funnel some dollars, but we could also just create a framework that is ready for new dollars. Like the potential Puget SOS Initiative that is being promoted to get millions of new to dollars to Puget Sound, similar in scale to the Chesapeake. This non-profit could be a way of showing them the region is ready.

Tracy – Messaging is also very important. We should help shape the foundation discussion around the ROSS model of co-benefits, regional challenges, and collective approaches.

John – Regardless of the diagram, I would like to ask the group if we are on the right track. Can we agree on three general things we need to deliver?

- 1) spatial vision and priorities , supported by the analytical work that identifies where the benefits are located;
- 2) Some form of governmental entity that would allow us to better align policies and would be responsible to allocate some funds, update priorities, etc.; and
- 3) A non-authority entity that would provide support and a forum for communication and advocacy.

Matt Chadsey – We also need to consider the need for additional funding sources, perhaps bonds. We need sustained funding sources.

Steve W – I would suggest that item number 2 to create a common agenda should actually come first. We need to agree on the priorities before we can create a graphic.

Steve S – On the topic of funding, in every grant that I apply for, there is always a percentage that goes toward administrative costs. Part of the job these administrative costs are supposed to do is create priorities. So perhaps I could write in .1 percent of my admin costs to go towards a ROSS like entity who creates priorities.

Community Alliance

Ikuno continued. The last part of this new model is to create a regional community because there are tons of organizations out there and through a common communication mechanism we could better understand the priorities and actions of each [slide 41]. This alliance could function something like the Intertwine, down in Portland Vancouver area.

In the end we are trying to change the way we think about the region. To have a collective impact. To do this we need to be more coordinated. How do we do this?

- **Michael** – The US Forestry grant is still up in the air, but if we get the grant, that money will help us make headway on all three of John’s points. Support of these efforts was given by John and Steve W.
- **Steve W** – Even if the ROSS ends tomorrow, the work of the ROSS team has influenced the region. PSP is discussing health and social equity more so than even a few years ago. TNC is pushing a stormwater agenda, and TPL is creating an online tool.
- **Ken** – A note on Ikuno’s worksheet, the PSRC staff should probably be called regional planning and not environmental to avoid some controversy.
- **Matt** – It would also be helpful to have a better idea of the specific vision for this staffer and what the ideal would be. 5 staffers and one leader?

Ikuno – Thank you for the feedback, please continue to email or call me. As for the final celebration – we will discuss options and reach out to find a good time and location.

Steve W – Beyond a celebration for the executive committee, we should also do something to roll out all of the ROSS deliverables with media and a party of some sort.

Everyone agreed on the need for more publicity and the meeting concluded at 4pm.



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Attachment A – Attendance (Alphabetical order by last name)

In Person:

- Josh Baldi – Department of Ecology
- Matt Chadsey – Earth Economics
- Kate Delavan – American Farmland Trust
- Michael Hubner – Puget Sound Regional Council
- Jamie Kingsbury – Mt. Baker National Forest
- Ken Konigsmark – Independent
- Paul Kundtz – Trust for Public Land
- Ikuno Masterson – ROSS Staff
- John Owen – Makers / ROSS Staff
- Nancy Rottle – Green Futures Research & Design Lab
- Steve Starlund – Kitsap County
- Tracy Stanton – Independent
- Sarah Titcomb – ROSS Staff
- Christie True – King County
- Sean Watts – Seattle Parks Foundation
- Steve Whitney – Bullitt Foundation