



FINAL Conference Call MINUTES
PRCC Habitat Subcommittee
Friday, August 3, 2007
9:30 am – 10:30 am

PRCC Habitat Subcommittee Members

Chris Fisher, CCT
Carl Merkle, CTUIR
David Morgan, USFWS
Ben Lenz, GPUD
Bob Rose, YN
Dale Bambrick, NMFS
Chris Parsons, WDFW
Denny Rohr, Facilitator

Participants:

Julie Yount, GCPUD
Ben Lenz, GCPUD
David Morgan, NMFS
Denny Rohr, Facilitator
Dale Bambrick, NMFS
Chris Parsons, WDFW
Bob Rose, YN
Chris Fisher, CCT

Action Items:

- Lenz will discuss the Grant PUD internal funding process for payments on Habitat/NNI fund with Methow Conservancy so they are aware of the estimated timeline for disbursement of funds for the Hardesty property.
- Lenz will also discuss the funding process with the committee to clarify the requirements, timelines and internal Grant PUD procedures. Rohr will add this to the next agenda.
- Parsons will work with Rohr on drafting an annual planning document to outline the HSC goals and objectives.

Decision Summary:

- The committee agreed to fund the purchase by Methow Conservancy of a 16.94-acre parcel of land on the upper Twisp River from the Hardesty's in the amount of \$443,350.
- The committee agreed to postpone the August 13 meeting to September 26, at which time the Okanagan Nation will provide a presentation on the Okanagan River project.

I. Discussion of Hardesty Property Acquisition Proposal

Morgan distributed via email the final Project Specification sheet yesterday morning at 11:00. Rohr asked Morgan to review the information distributed since the last meeting. Parsons had not seen the information sent. Morgan indicated the price went down slightly to \$443,350. The subcontractor fee went down from \$12,000 to \$3,350. Debris removal went down from \$30,000 to \$7,000 due to changes in the specs.

More information was included in the proposal to cover the two scenarios on what the ultimate ownership of the property will be. One scenario included USFS purchasing the property in 2009, and the other suggests a sale to a private owner with the restriction that no permanent structure could be placed upon the property.

Morgan indicated that he did contact the Trust for Public Land to inquire as to their interest in purchasing the property, but was advised they would not be able get funding together within the next few months. Bambrick asked if the urgency was due to the current owner entering into another purchase. Morgan stated yes, they had originally set a deadline of August 1, and we are already overdue. The real estate agent is getting nervous that the funding through the MC is not going to come through.

Bambrick asked if the USFS will likely purchase the property for the amount spent by the HSC. Morgan stated he believed that they would not do so without obtaining another appraisal and evaluating current market value at the time the purchase is to be made. It is possible the price could go up.

Fisher stated that as he may be a negative vote, he wanted to outline his objections. His first concern was the summary that the HSC has \$4.7 million to spend. This is not, in his opinion a large amount of money if compared to, for example BPA funds being used for habitat projects. Another concern is the size of this property and the very limited amount of buildable land (one acre). It is a good piece of property from a habitat perspective, but with a very limited likelihood of being developed and having an overall detrimental result.

Morgan countered that actually, if looking at this particular parcel, if someone were to build on it, there is a high likelihood that the purchaser would bridge to the buildable site, riprap all along the full shoreline, completely block the floodplain, and negatively affect the full 16 acres. The opportunity to purchase a larger site with more buildable acres would very likely be completely out of the price range of the HSC. A key factor in this instance is the opportunity to recoup this money from resale to the USFS. This type of opportunity will not likely happen again.

Fisher stated the desire to restore habitat in ways that have a more direct impact, rather than spend large portions of money on a single small parcel. He does not believe this project will have a tangible impact on these listed species which would correlate to the high cost.

Bambrick stated that he did see this parcel as a rich opportunity for habitat restoration, but also would like to stress the need to have further discussion on future land acquisitions and the group's standing on a plan moving forward.

Lenz stated that originally the group was very interested in reconnection of side channels, and this particular parcel allows for that opportunity. More discussion should be held on pursuing such reconnection.

Rose stated he generally supports the purchase, but sees Fisher has some good points on habitat restoration efforts. He does also agree that the need for discussion on future land acquisition is necessary.

Parsons stated she agrees that the percentage of overall spending on this type of project should be a consideration, and an annual plan is necessary to determine what the group's goals are. Parsons stated she is supportive generally of this purchase because of its unique habitat value.

Rose asked to clarify the assumption that an answer is needed right away to deter having the property owners from publicly listing the parcel. Morgan stated yes, MC wants to have an answer today so that the property can be listed this afternoon if this group does not agree to the purchase.

Morgan would also encourage that the group have further discussion on the general decisions on further land acquisitions.

Fisher stated he would only vote yes because of the option for purchase then by the USFS. It is slated to be in the USFS budget in FY2009. Morgan indicated a answer to this respect is expected soon.

Parsons, Lenz, Fisher, Bambrick, Rose, Morgan voted yes to fund the purchase of the Hardesty property, 16.94 acre parcel on the Twisp River, in the amount of \$443,350. Morgan will call MC this afternoon to state this decision.

Morgan suggested having the MC contact Lenz to discuss the internal Grant PUD process for funding. Lenz stated he would be available Monday to have such a discussion. Lenz indicated that it would be beneficial for the full committee to review the internal process for spending from the Habitat/NNI Funds so that all will be clear on the process. Rohr will add this to the next agenda.

Parsons suggested a limit to how much will be spent on land purchases within the overall program. Parsons stated she would be happy to coordinate with Rohr in getting a general outline for an annual planning document for the group's review. Rohr welcomed any assistance she was willing to offer to begin this process.

The group thanked Morgan for his efforts in gathering information on this project and coordinating with the MC.

II. Discussion of Next Meeting (Denny)

Discussion was held regarding the next meeting scheduled for August 13, during which the ONA was to provide a presentation on the Okanagan River Initiative (ORI) project. Rohr and Fisher had recently discussed that the HCP was also going to have the ONA do a presentation on ORI on a date following the HCP meeting scheduled for September 13. The presentation would occur September 26. The idea is that the ONA was interested in presenting the project to both the HCP Tributary Committee and the HSC for potential joint funding.

The committee agreed to postpone the August 13 meeting, and meet again on September 26 when the ONA presentation will be held.