

JUNE 24TH, 2015

**STILLAGUAMISH WATERSHED COUNCIL
POLICIES FOR LETTERS OF SUPPORT/REJECT**

Background

The Stillaguamish Watershed Council (SWC) occasionally receives support letter requests from watershed stakeholders. Most often, the letters are requested in support of grant applications for restoration projects or programmatic initiatives taking place within or impacting the Stillaguamish Watershed. The highest volume of requests typically occurs in alignment with application deadlines of several state and federal grant programs and major land use code revisions. This policy is intended to provide clarity about approval criteria and an authorization process to be followed by Council members for Staff and Applicants seeking a support letter.

Historically decisions to provide or not provide a letter have been brought to the SWC for approval and authorization of the Chair/Co-Chairs to write a letter of support. Occasionally there have been examples where Chair/Co-Chairs have written letter for projects previously approved by the SWC but are applying under a new grant program. Examples of criteria used to justify or reject authorization include:

- 1) the consistency of the proposal with SWC priorities and Recovery;
- 2) in some cases, the adequacy of lead time for full SWC review of request;
- 3) adequacy of lead time for staff to prepare a letter;
- 4) adequacy of lead time to provide a chance for the Chair/Co-Chairs to review the letter; and
- 5) Project has been previously approved by SWC, but a new grant is being applied for;

Proposed policies

Policies applicable to all letters of support

- The SWC will not provide letters of support for proposals to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration, and Cooperative Watershed Management grants because the SWC and/or its staff participate directly in the evaluation of all proposals in those programs. Individual Stakeholder members of the SWC may provide letters of support clearly identifying the support is coming from the entity they represent on the SWC.
- A letter of support may be provided only to projects, programs or other activities that are clearly consistent with Salmon Recovery.
- A letter of support may be rejected if an element of the project is identified as preventing the long-term successful implementation, or is not consistent with Salmon Recovery.

- The SWC will provide an explanation to the project sponsor for any letter request that is not granted. If a letter is rejected, an applicant can appeal the objections and explain why their project should be supported. If the appeal is accepted and time allows, the SWC would then issue a letter.
- Letters that include pledges of significant SWC staff support or direct financial commitment must be approved by the SWC prior to submission unless consistent with a previously adopted budget and work plan
- Requests for a letter of support shall include a copy of or link to project details (proposal, supplemental project information), and if possible, will be submitted at least 2-weeks ahead of the required deadline for return of the letter
- If letters are requested outside of regularly scheduled meetings, the applicant can submit the request by email and the SWC can review and approve the request by email, when appropriate

Policies applicable to letters signed by the SWC Chair/Co-Chairs

- With the exception of staff-signed letters (see below), letters should be signed by the Chair/Co-Chairs.
- Letters that (in the opinion of staff or the Chair/Co-Chairs) may raise concerns for individual SWC member jurisdictions or partners or are otherwise potentially contentious should be circulated for review by the full SWC prior to asking for decision. The SWC may elect to forego a letter of support at its discretion.
- Copies of each letter shall be distributed to all SWC members or be available on the website.

Policies applicable to letters signed by staff without review by the SWC Chair/Co-Chairs

- A staff-signed letter may be provided only for projects that are clearly consistent with SWC priorities and are non-controversial;
- A staff-signed letter should be limited to situations when review and signature by the SWC Chair/Co-Chairs is deemed impractical;
- Staff-signed letters should be reviewed and signed by the Lead Entity Coordinator;
- Staff shall provide a copy of each such letter to the SWC, Chair/Co-Chairs, and made available on the website.