

Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process

Stakeholder Meeting #11

May 22, 2006 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Centennial Hall Maksoutoff Room

Summary: The Stakeholders hold a discussion about creating additional ground rules to keep the process safe for all participants. They do some work in their committees to set the agendas for the summer meetings. A continuation of a previous presentation on fish allocations is continued, and the discussion reveals some strong divergent opinions within the group.

In attendance: Wendy Alderson, Linda Behnken, Harvey Brandt, Chris Bryner, David Clarke, Raine Clarke, Ken Corson, Dan Dunn, Janet Eddy, Dorrie Farrell, Angela Filler, Chris Fondell, Peter Gorman, Judy Johnstone, Mike Litman, Mim McConnell, Liz McKenzie, Tina McNamee, Mary Beth Nelson, Richard Nelson, Michael Nurco, Judy Ozment, Lucy Phillips, Ken Rear, Scott Saline, Spencer Severson, Floyd Tomkins, Andrew Thoms, Mary Jo McNally.

Steering Committee members: Cleo Brylinsky, Julia Smith

Facilitators: Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher

The Steering Committee and facilitator are concerned by the number of Stakeholders present at 5:30 – there are only about 20. Cleo leads a discussion with the Stakeholders about attendance, asking if there should be a required minimum number of people in attendance for a meeting to proceed. There is a bit of discussion among the group, and comments are made that at the beginning of the process the responsibility was put upon the Stakeholders to make up for meetings that they miss. Someone mentions that for the most part, the work we're doing now is hearing presentations, which can be read at home. In the end, the Stakeholders agree that the meeting should proceed, and throughout the summer, for people who miss meetings, the responsibility remains on them to read the notes and handouts from the meetings they missed. A number of Stakeholders also arrive late, creating a larger group.

Matthew opens the meeting by leading the group in an exercise. He asks the Stakeholders "Why are you here?" He asks them to briefly write down their thoughts, and then tells them to find someone they haven't talked to very much before. The pairs share their answers with one another.

After several minutes of conversation, Matthew brings the group back together. He asks for a few volunteers to share their answers with the group.

- I have a deep concern, especially since mid-90s, about marginalizing of SE AK politically and economically, especially in relation to rail belt. Sitka's part of that, and tourism is part of that. Tourism is significant because it's headed uphill.
- To present the information I've gathered tonight; also to work toward plan for Sitka that balances concerns of community
- To learn about collaborative process in general.

Matthew says he wants to go from these individual reasons for being here to this idea or concept that we're operating under for the whole process. He re-reads the basic tenet of collaborative process:

If you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the community.

He then shares with the Stakeholders this paragraph from a memo David Chrislip (the process expert/mentor for this group) wrote to the Steering Committee:

It may be helpful to remember that the purpose of this process is to provide a constructive alternative to the usual adversarial approach to tourism concerns. If the steering committee and the stakeholders are not able to work through the concerns in a constructive way, it's a certainty the community will not be able to. That means creating a safe container where all sides of a concern can be looked at in as objective a manner as possible. That means trying not to prejudge the motives of others, being open to learning from other perspectives and suspending your preconceived notions about what should be done about the concerns. If the majority of the stakeholders - including the members of the steering committee - are not able to do this convincingly, the process is not likely to work. If it doesn't, I think everyone realizes what the alternative will be.

Cleo says she's noticed recently that some issues of concern to this group have been talked about in the community and outside of the process. She wanted to remind everyone to assume the best intentions about the others, and to ask clarifying questions of one another, especially of the person that you think might be bringing an issue up. She encourages Stakeholders to ask questions before jumping to conclusions, and that we all need to try to observe our own tendencies to react in ways we might have formerly reacted. Part of this process is learning new ways to approach one another, thinking about things, give ourselves a moment to reflect before reacting, and learn how to do things in a new way.

Matthew then directs the group's attention to the ground rules that the Stakeholders established at the beginning of the process. He reminded the group that we established ground rules with the idea that these rules would create the safe container to avoid the adversary. He reviews the ground rules, especially highlighting the following:

- Respect
 - For people and the process
 - Suspend judgment of people and ideas
- Fairness

- Encourage all participants to have a voice
- Equal time for speakers
- Listening
 - Listen to understand; suspend your replies until other finish speaking
- Openness
 - To other points of view and to the outcome
 - Come with a sense of inquiry; ask questions
- Assume the best intentions
- Timeliness – start on time, arrive on time, finish on time
- If you miss a meeting, do your homework (use the web, the library, one another to catch up on what you missed)
- Avoid being argumentative; don't take others' values personally
- Support and protect the process both in and outside the meetings

After reviewing the established rules, he asks the group if there are there any ground rules that should be changed or added to in order to assure that this process in this public arena will lead the group in constructive ways to make decisions. Stakeholders offer the following additions:

- Expect candor of everyone – to not withhold information that might effect decisions we might make in this room, even if it is difficult or controversial, or be untruthful.
- Don't share things that you don't know to be the truth – rumors, unverified stats, exaggerations – or try to pass off opinions as truth.

Someone asks if we have a process for dealing with issues, knowing how to identify and address concerns. Cleo mentions that when Stakeholders have concerns about the process, they can bring them to the Steering Committee, the issues can be dealt with in a public arena there and together we can decide how to handle the situation. She also mentions that at the last SC meeting they made a schedule of summer SC meetings – it's at noon on the Tuesday before the SH meeting, and at noon on the Tuesday after SH meetings. A Stakeholder asks if, when concerns are brought to the SC, if they'll let the whole SH group know that there are concerns, or that rules have been breached? He says it seems as though something might have happened to prompt this conversation today. Cleo says she can talk about it briefly now, but she doesn't want to get into "he said she said." She says she can report on what's happening with the transportation study. Stakeholder Andrew Thoms wrote a letter to Mr. Stein about the concerns that the Stakeholders have raised about transportation in Sitka. She says it was a very positive letter asking that the SH concerns be included in the study. Two SC members took that letter to Mr. Stein, he said the contract hasn't been finalized, the terms are still unwritten, and he hopes to include as many questions that can be included given the time and money parameters. Cleo says there is a SC meeting tomorrow at noon, where they will discuss the list of questions and concerns, and create a consolidated list to submit to Mr. Stein. She and Matthew wrap it up by saying what they're getting at is a hope

that before jumping to conclusions and going public with them, that Stakeholder concerns be addressed within this group. We're working with complicated issues.

A Stakeholder comments that she's puzzled about what's happening here today. "Was there some conflict that I've missed?"

Cleo says the transportation study hit some hot buttons in the Stakeholder group and the community overall. Matthew says that as facilitator, he's feeling some pressure to revisit these rules.

SH: "Has the concern in question been addressed?"

Andrew says he didn't send his letter directly to Stein, but went through the Steering Committee instead. Cleo and Matthew reemphasize that they're not necessarily talking about specific incidents, just wanted to remind everyone that when concerns do arise, to try to deal with them within the process.

Another Stakeholder suggests that maybe this is about Linda's letter to the editor last week. That was written outside the group, but made reference to the group.

This prompts another Stakeholder to suggest another new ground rule: Don't use this process to leverage any agenda in the political arena. We shouldn't be mentioning the SH group when we're trying to push an action or agenda by saying "we're doing this plan, therefore you should and shouldn't do this."

Someone else suggests we add a rule that says "don't make assumptions." Don't assume everyone is tuned in to everything that's going on in this community. If you're doing something that might effect the group, cc the Stakeholders on an email about it.

Someone asks for clarification on the rule made about using the process to leverage political agendas. The Stakeholder who suggested the rule offered the following example: When the Assembly was talking about the dock issue, many people used the fact that they're SH to further their point against the dock. He emphasized that this wasn't right, that wasn't a proper use of their role as Stakeholders.

Matthew asks the group: Does everyone agree that we should add this rule?

There was much discussion among the Stakeholders, eventually becoming heated. One person spoke in support of the rule, saying every board she's been on, only the group spokesperson could speak for the group; the same applies here, that no one person should speak on behalf of the whole group. Another Stakeholder went back to the example offered, saying that the people who testified before the Assembly weren't representing the group, they just spoke as individual members of the group, and some people identified themselves as members of the group who testified in favor of the dock – they weren't all opposed. This

Stakeholder stated that the SH who suggested the ground rule was exaggerating his point. Other Stakeholders became worked up about this topic, and Matthew calls a time out. He makes the observation that it seems the group has gone into rebuttal, which threatens to take us to a place the group doesn't want to be in at this point. One of the Stakeholders threatens to walk out. Matthew suggests that the group take a 5-minute break, not to avoid this discussion, but because he needs to think about how to proceed and deescalate what's happened.

The group takes a break.

After reconvening, Matthew separates the issue into two paths. The first was that someone had presented a guideline for the group to incorporate to keep the process safe: That ground rule is that no individual Stakeholder would politicize the process. On the merit of that principle alone, Matthew asks if there is anyone that would be uncomfortable adding that as a ground rule for the process? No one disagrees. The rule is added.

Matthew then identifies the second thing that started to happen – that Stakeholders began to argue about what they perceived to have happened. He tells the group this is okay, it's what happens. "We're passionate people," he says. "That's what drives us, you wouldn't show up on a sunny Monday if you weren't passionate about this topic. It's the passion that drives us here. What I heard happening was that this moved from a dialogue to a debate. What I most hope we can do is not enter that arena tonight. It is absolutely true that there are opinions, and there are perceptions." He concludes by saying that he hopes the group can move forward from this, and not get hung up here. He refers again to the conversation that began tonight's meeting, that this is an example of why he felt it was important to revisit the purpose for this process, and the ground rules that had been established, to deal with these conflicts within the group instead of stewing about them outside of the process. Kayla chimes in and says that every single individual in the room and those Stakeholders who couldn't be present are all important to the process, and that she feels honored to work with this group.

The Stakeholder who said that the other Stakeholder was exaggerating his point apologizes to that Stakeholder and the group for getting riled up, for interrupting someone else and being argumentative. Another Stakeholder adds, "If we're going to accept candor as a ground rule, we have to accept criticism of what we've said. I have to be honest enough that if I'm wrong, to say I'm wrong."

The Stakeholder who gave the example of the Assembly testimony also apologized for the way he reacted.

Someone said, "I feel a group hug coming on."

Matthew says he wants to acknowledge and appreciate what just happened here. He says it makes him feel so much better that this happens here instead of having SH going off after the meetings and spinning.

A SH who is relatively new to the process says that as he looks around the room, all the signs and everything he sees is about the process. “Is there a short definition of the goal of the SH group?” Much of the room begins to laugh (likely because of the controversy over the mission statement that was originally established). Another SH responds that the group’s current goal is to come to a common understanding of what’s currently happening now with regard to Sitka and its visitors.

Next, Matthew tells the SH he’d like to revisit the committee structure. The Steering Committee needs to get a better idea of when we can expect this phase to be over, and recalibrate the overall schedule accordingly. Cleo addresses the group and tells them this process is going to run out of money and time, and the SC will be talking about the budget and trying to get a work session with the Assembly to bring them up to date about where we are and tell them how much time we realistically need. She acknowledges that no one wants to hurry this along, nor do we want it to take years. But will need more time than the October deadline that is currently established.

- SH comment: I’m worried about going to assembly to tell them what we’ve accomplished, because I don’t think we’ve accomplished anything.
- SC comment: I think we’ve accomplished a lot
- Same SH: There were only 11 people at the public meeting that weren’t SH. Some of those people that were there are close to my concerns, and we didn’t show them that we’ve done anything. We alienated the Native community even more. I propose we have a fundraiser and start to carry our own weight with this process. We can’t sell anybody on it if we can’t believe it ourselves. I don’t feel like I could explain what all our hours have been about. Trying to gather facts, and now from what people said earlier, maybe some of them have been rumors or exaggerations? We don’t deserve to get any money from the city because we have nothing to show for it.
- Matthew encourages this SH to attend the SC meeting tomorrow, saying that’s the place to go with those concerns.

Matthew gives this recap of why and how the committees were formed: “When we first looked at all the needed information, the SC sat in stunned silence for a week. What emerged was that we have to start somewhere. We grouped the needed information by probable sources for where the data may be, like all the questions that maybe the City could answer, or questions for businesses, etc. From that, four committees were formed based on the sources, the idea being that those folks would all draw from a similar well of resources.”

Matthew continues: “I use do to a lot of experiential work with kids – I used to do an activity to help decision-making and problem-solving. There were two teams – each team has to solve the problem, and it inevitably became a race to who can solve it first. Then, for the second activity, there were new rules. They had a task to solve, and even though I never said they were still in teams, they still worked in teams. They never realized that they weren’t competing anymore and that they could use – in fact they *needed* – the other teams’ resources

to solve the problem. I have a fear that this has happened a little bit here, that the group has formed four teams, but they're not considering the resources that may be available across the room." Matthew sums up by encouraging the SH to cross the room and use resources available from other committees too.

Another reason for this committee structure was the idea that if a presenter could get the 10 people in his/her group to consensus on the presentation, that it was balanced and objective, then it would be easier to get whole group to consensus. The idea was to use groups to bounce ideas off of, work among committee members to flesh out and balance out the reports as much as possible. Odds would be better that it would pass the high standards this group has set for information by working within a group.

Matthew says he wanted to remind the SH of the reasoning for the committees as we go into the next piece. Our goal for the committees tonight is to get a better understanding of who's working on which topics, and have them commit to a summer meeting date to make their presentations. The SH are asked to break into their four committees and work through the following questions:

Make a list of which topics are being researched (or have at least been started) by the people at your table.

For stakeholders who are preparing a presentation for the group indicate if/when s/he could present at one of the summer meetings.

For these presentations, put the following information on a half-sheet:

- *Topic/ question being addressed*
- *The original category of concern the topic came from (called "original category" on the salmon-colored sheets)*
- *Who will be the presenter(s)*
- *Which meeting you plan to present at: June 19, July 17, August 14, Sept 11.*

Take these half sheets to the sticky wall.

If there are topics that require more work:

Sub-committees may want to re-evaluate the best ways to present the topics

- *could a content expert present on one or more of the topics?*
- *Are there any questions that could be presented collaboratively – with other Stakeholders?*

SH work in committees for 1/2 hour. At the end of that time, there is a partial list of presentation agendas for the next four SH meetings; other group facilitators promise to email the information to Kayla to compile. (This list will appear as a separate document.)

Presentation

Linda Behnken is prepared to continue the presentation that began at the May 1 meeting on the topic:

*What are the various trends and status of the visitor – charter/subsistence/sport/commercial fish allocation?
What is the effect of “visitor fishing” on fish allocations in Sitka area? (from Community category)*

On May 1, a panel of experts began the presentation on the first part of this question, but didn't include information about salmon and halibut fishing. Linda will present on salmon and halibut, also impact on visitor impact. She says one of the Stakeholders representing the charter fleet had some additional questions that she wanted to see answered in Linda's report, so Linda says she included those at the end.

Effect of visitor fishing –

How halibut quotas are set: IPHC (halibut commission) figures out the available biomass of halibut and then figures out what can be harvested on a sustainable annual basis. They deduct bycatch, wastage, subsistence estimates, sport needs, and charter harvest, and then what's left becomes the commercial quota. As any of the other areas grow, what's left for commercial changes.

In 1998, the north pacific fishery management council set upper bound on growth. One piece that was growing rapidly was charter; since then, their upper bound has been exceeded in last 6 years. It hasn't been managed effectively so far. There are other ideas about how to manage, such as having the ability to buy more quota as individuals or collectively as an industry. They're also looking at moratorium on charter fishing. Bob Chadwick presented at the last SH meeting on status and trends of resident vs. nonresident fishing in Area D. The resident harvest has decreased [see handout for details]; nonresident increased; there is a clear trend from resident to nonresident. Sitka charter had McDowell do a study on who are the people that come to charter – they found it to be primarily male, high income, west coast.

Key take-home points from Linda: [see handout]

Right now, the city does fund SCVB (visitor bureau) to bring more visitors into the town, therefore the city is promoting bringing more visitors in, having more visitors is driving the reallocation.

Tina's questions that Linda included:

Halibut bycatch numbers – area 2C, 340,000 lbs;

Wastage – info from commercial log book data – if it's too small or injured or dead, we're required to report.

What is expected of biomass over time – robust now, at historic highs, but likely trending down.

Commercial halibut catch in Sitka are over time – IHPC has that info, they made it available to Sitka LAMP, they're supposed to provide this on annual basis to Fish and Game, but they haven't. When I called them a month ago, they said they would, and recently they said they have given it to F&G, but I haven't gotten it out of F&G yet, but I will, and will bring to the SH.

Linda continues with a presentation on salmon status and trends:

Overview on Chinook and Coho; [see handout for details]

Nonresident catch increasing, resident decreasing

Commercial quotas have been going up; the troll allocation was reduced in 05-06, but still relatively high; with Coho they don't try to determine ahead of time.

70% of charter operators have addresses outside of Alaska.

Pacific Salmon Treaty – 1985 between Canada and US to protect stocks and divvy resources; at first only focused on commercial trolling, gradual erosion; expanded to include all groups; in 92 they “uncoupled” into own fisheries, done a lot to alleviate some tensions;

Split is 80% troll, 20% sport fleet;

Linda has reached the end of her presentation. Matthew asks the SH:

Does everyone understand what has been presented?

- SH: Do you have numbers to back up the statement about the rapid growth of charter?
 - LB: Do have numbers, not on top of head – in 98, 25% allowance, gone up to
- SH: The reason for the GHL was because of the growth of the charter fleet?
 - LB: Yes – can get those to you. All from IHPC.
- SH: Preferably in a chart. The figures I have don't say that.
 - LB: For 2C? That's what we're talking about.

Another SH mentions that people that aren't involved with fishing may not understand what GHL is, or what a 25% buffer means – those numbers may be confusing. She asks Linda explains that GHL means Guideline Harvest Level.

The SH asserts that this is a contentious issue, and the Stakeholders definitely need to hear another perspective on the same topic, specifically they need to hear from the sport side, since this presentation is being given by a longliner.

Linda goes on to explain more about GHL:

Allocations are set for halibut – when you have any one of those pieces deducted (sport, charter), it affects the overall. The commercial fishers asked the halibut council to come up with a way to allocate from one sector to another.

Of the options to reallocate that were on the table, the council arrives at using what's been done for Chinook – establishing GHL based on charter's historic catch prior to that date. Plus they set it upper limit 25% over that baseline as a buffer for potential growth. The charter operators made it clear that they book clients in advance, they need a traditional season of historic length, so this part of the regulation is handled differently for the charter fleet. It was also established that if the fleet goes over allowance, measures would kick in to slow down the harvest. But for 3 years in 2C, it went over the allowance, and nothing was done. Council is revisiting this issues, and creating new measures to low down the harvest, such as that skippers and crew can't retain fish when out with client; and setting an annual limit on # of fish a client can take home. These are not officially in place yet, but will be next year. This was never meant to be a long-term fix, but a bridge to a more permanent solution to allow quota to move back and forth between the two fleets; that's why the charter fleet went into individual quota system, now being reorganized; charter wants to limit boats because new boats influence the overall also.

SH question: Where does the data come from for charter boats?

Census at dock, try to meet representative sample where boats are landing fish, also statewide survey; log book recently reinstated.

Matthew again asks: *Does everyone understand what's been presented?*

Yes.

Linda did a good job with GHL.

Is there anything to strike from the report to accept it?

The income level of the fishermen is irrelevant.

Anyone disagree? No. That detail is struck.

Clarifying Q: on the key point about reallocation, it's not an allocation between resident and nonresident, it's just that nonresidents are catching more. Residents can still go catch what they want, right?

A: yes, but actual numbers show a trend down. It's not an allocation, residents can still catch what they want, it's the harvest numbers.

SH comment: I would strike the "reallocation" word to "gradual shift in harvest from halibut or salmon between resident or nonresident"

SH question: Is the idea with that also that effort is the constant? Or did residents just quit fishing?

A: If you look at annual statewide harvest – king salmon resident harvest has gone up; resident days for 1993: 31,000 resident angler days, in 2004, 27,000. Nonresident harvests have increased.

SH comment: Halibut sport days – recently set subsistence for halibut, can put out longline for subsistence,

A: But really only affected last year's numbers

SH comment: I'd like to strike the portion about the mission of SCVB being to bring visitors to Sitka – that's extraneous,

SH question: What is the mission of the SCVB?

A: Can't say exactly, but talked with Philip, and it's basically to bring visitors to Sitka

SH: But you're comparing it to fish allocations, that's unnecessary.

Matthew: Anyone opposed to striking the mission statement from the report?

Several hands go up. One person comments that we're nitpicking. "We're not here to debate this issue, and it's not going where it needs to go. Let's deal with it later, and leave this the way it is."

A SH says she wants to strike the parenthetical comment saying that most charter clients are wealthy males. Several others point out that that detail has already been struck.

The same SH says she also takes offense to the statement that the growth in the charter industry affects the commercial. She points out that all those areas have an impact, not just visitor impacts. "In every year we're talking about overages from charter fleet, we did not meet or exceed halibut left on the table that was not caught. You're blaming the visitors for the erosion of the commercial catch, but all other user groups have an effect on commercial catch." She's referring to the part in Linda's report about the growth in the reallocation of sport halibut from resident to nonresident. She comments that it's about effort level, not allocation. Another SH comments that that phrase has been changed already. The first SH says Linda is still blaming the visitor industry for harvest levels. A different SH comments that she feels there are less fish, and that residents don't have the time to put in the effort to try. Someone else rephrases and says the fact is that resident effort has gone down, and we don't know why exactly.

The group attempts to restate this phrase in Linda's report about resident vs. nonresident harvest to "growth in visitor industry is one factor that has impacted a gradual shift in harvest of halibut from resident to nonresident in Sitka area in sport-caught, and a gradual shift of commercial to charter.

Kayla will send out this rewritten statement for SH approval in Linda's report.

It's 8:30, and obvious that this issue is not closed. Matthew tells the group that for the next meeting, they should submit the questions they still want answers to. Those questions should be dealt with within the committee structure, and perhaps a new committee should be formed, including Linda and Tina or people that represent their interests. Linda offers to accept additional questions on this topic to her email: alfafish@ptialaska.net.

Matthew asks the group how they feel. There are some sighs and heavy feelings, but one SH says, "I feel great – we learned a lot about the process tonight, and about fish."

Next meeting is scheduled for June 19.