

Improving the Environment through Improved Landowner Incentives Puget Sound Action Team – PIE

Evaluation Report – 4/20/07

As the Washington Landowner Incentives Project nears completion, the following Evaluation Report is submitted analyzing performance of the key activities and objectives in accordance with the Evaluation Plan, provided at the outset of the project. (The original Evaluation Plan is attached.)

I. Objectives and evaluation:

Objective 1: Collaboration among groups:

Landowner, Broker, Funder Focus Meetings: The principle tools we used for facilitation this objective were three small but intensive “focus meetings” to which we invited key leaders representing the various major groups in or affected by incentives programs to brainstorm issues of importance to these objectives. These were:

- Initial Landowner/Broker Focus Group: November 6, 2006, in the conference room at 724 Columbia St. NW, Olympia, WA.
 - Nature of meeting: This meeting was primarily of representatives of landowners and of organizations and agencies that work with landowners to implement or broker incentives programs with conservation projects on the ground. The meeting focused mostly on how to make incentives programs more workable for the landowners who must use them if they are to be made more strategic.
 - Analysis: There were 18 attendees at this meeting representing at least 12 separate organizations and agencies. The meeting lasted about 4 hours and produced agreement on number of ideas for improving incentives programs (see notes from meeting, Appendix F-1).
- Initial Funder/Broker Focus Group: November 7, 2006, in the conference room at 724 Columbia St. NW, Olympia, WA.
 - Nature of meeting: This meeting was primarily of representatives of organizations and agencies that conduct programs and that fund conservation incentives programs and of those who implement or broker those programs with conservation projects on the ground. The meeting focused largely on how funders might better collaborate and how these programs can be made more strategic and/or effective.
 - Analysis: There were 17 attendees at the meeting representing at least 15 separate agencies and organizations. The meeting lasted about 4 hours and produced agreement on several ideas for improving coordination and strategic impact of incentives programs (see notes from meeting, Appendix F-2).
- Final Funder Focus Group: April 4, 2007, in the conference room at the Washington State Conservation Commission, Department of Ecology Bldg., Olympia, WA.
 - Nature of meeting: This meeting was primarily attended by managers of the most significant agencies that operate and fund direct financial conservation incentives programs in Washington. The focus was on what systems might be needed to enhance the effectiveness of incentives programs and to facilitate better collaboration among funders.
 - Analysis: There were 10 participants in this meeting representing at least 9 separate agencies and organizations. The meeting lasted about 3 ½ hours and produced agreement on several ideas for improving coordination and strategic effectiveness of incentives programs (see notes from meeting, Appendix F-3).

Washington Forum for Conservation Incentives: In addition to the Focus Group meetings described above, Project personnel also cosponsored, supported, and participated in planning and execution for the Washington Forum on Conservation Incentives – a statewide conference on incentives prime sponsored by the Washington Biodiversity Council and held January 5, 2007. (Cosponsors and registrant lists attached.) This event drew a very broad participation from across the state with registered attendance of over 150 and additional attendance the day of the event of about another 30 for a total attendance of about 180. It is estimated that well over 100 separate groups were represented at this event. During the afternoon, two rounds of break-out sessions were held (8 total) at which separate proposals and areas of focus were discussed by those especially interested. (AFT led the discussion on an Incentives Clearinghouse.) among several useful products of this event will be a set of “proceedings” that documents much of the discussion and the presentations that took place there (Biodiversity Council, in May 2007).

Analysis of objective: Our objective was that:

At least 20 representatives from groups that fund, implement or receive incentives will work together to make incentives more effective and responsive to emerging environmental priorities.

Without including the substantial collaborations that occurred at the Washington Forum for Conservation Incentives, but rather considering the three focus groups alone, we had 35 of the top incentives leaders in the state representing about 20 separate agencies and organizations in intensive brainstorming that produced a number of excellent, agreed suggestions for improvements to conservation incentives programs that will be reflected in the several recommendations in our report.

Objective 2: *Survey responses:*

Using mailing lists provided by Cascade Harvest Coalition (CHC), we sent by postal mail a letter and written survey form to 1,381 farm and forest landowners primarily resident in the Puget Sound region. (The sample letter and survey form are attached.) This was supplemented by further e-mail distribution of the survey to a broad e-list and by handing out survey forms at the various project presentations to landowner groups. We received 88 responses to this survey – a number sufficient, even considering the self-selection of returns, to provide meaningful information for this project. (Our summary of analysis of the survey responses is attached.)

Analysis of objective: Our objective was that:

At least 100 responses will be obtained from a survey sent to 1,000 landowners and to those who offer or promote incentives.

We distributed the survey to well over the 1,000 recipients referenced in this objective (perhaps over 1,500 all told) and fell 12 short of the goal of 100 final responses. We still, however, had sufficient responses to provide a good overall handle on what barriers seem to prevent much broader participation in these programs.

Objective 3: *Attendance and impact:*

We made 13 presentations to groups which highlighted this project. We did estimate attendance at each of these events and made an assessment of each group (based on prior knowledge, introductions, and other information) of the approximate number of individuals attending who also represent other groups related to agriculture, forestry, the environment, or others relevant to conservation incentives – significant because many of these will report back to their other groups with information about the project. There was significant interest expressed by those attending these presentations.

Analysis of objective – Our objective was that:

At least 80 people from 20 key groups will attend 12 presentations on making incentives more effective. At least 50% of attendees will report that the education helped them improve the effectiveness of incentives.

We greatly exceeded the number of people who attended these presentations (265 vs. the 80 planned) and the number of groups they represented (101 vs. the 20 planned – although, since these were multiple events, it should be mentioned that there was likely some limited overlap in the groups represented.) Because we were an invited presenter at each of these events, it was not realistically possible to distribute and collect written evaluations for our presentations, so not possible to statically assess the impact of the presentation. We did, however, receive many questions and noted a good deal of interest in this issue from attendees.

Objective 4: *Distribution of written information:*

We distributed a detailed letter describing the project with every survey we distributed (about 1,500) and distributed materials also to attendees at the presentations we made (260+ persons). Written materials were also distributed to the approximately 180 people who attended the Washington Forum on Conservation Incentives, and to the 35 attendees at our Landowner/Broker/Funder Focus Group meetings. As well as our summary description of the project and the letters that accompanied the survey, etc., we also prepared and distributed 5 detailed issue papers that explained the nature of the problem, identified potential solutions based on preliminary research, and aimed to highlight discussion of the issues.

Analysis of objective – our objective was that:

At least 500 individuals associated with watershed planning or implementation will receive written materials and recommendations on how to improve incentives.

In total, at least 1,980 persons (with some possible overlap) who have an immediate interest in incentives (watershed planners, farmers, forest landowners, incentive brokers, agency personnel, etc.) received some written materials about this project – with more detailed materials (issue papers, etc.) going to the people we met with in person at focus groups, the conference, etc. We believe there has also been some secondary distribution taking place, but have been unable to track this with certainty.

Objective 5: *Collaborative agreements:*

As the attendance lists for our focus meetings, for the Forum for Conservation Incentives, and for our initial orientation interviews make clear, the top managers of the major conservation incentives programs in Washington actively participated in and contributed their ideas for this project. The three focus meetings, in particular, produced obvious consensus on several ideas for improving these programs, including, at the third and final funders focus meeting, a very strong consensus that a continuing meetings process at the director level, with leadership from the Governor's Office, perhaps through the Governor's Natural Resources Cabinet, would be extremely valuable. All (State and Federal) committed to participate in such a process. Several other ideas were also aired and will be a part of the recommendations for this project.

Analysis of objective – our objective was that:

Collaborative agreements to maximize regional conservation goals will occur amongst at least 3 incentives programs.

No formal, documented, specific arrangements for mutual collaboration among incentives program funders have yet emerged from this process, but several specific proposals for change have consensus among the key funders/providers of programs in Washington with private organizations and agencies at the local, state, and federal level. Given the smallness of our focus group meetings and the direct conversations had there, it was clear that there was commitment, even enthusiasm for the changes that had been discussed. A mean score of 3.8 out of 5 was

reached in our written evaluations for the focus groups in agreement with the statement: “I am more likely to help work to strengthen incentives programs because of my participation in this event,” suggesting, also, an increase in commitment to change. Since the third of these focus groups included the key players and was held near the end of the project (4/4/07) we ascertained their actions and intent at this meeting rather than separately interviewing them later on.

Objective 6: Coordination with partners:

AFT coordinated closely, from the outset, with the Washington Biodiversity Council, which is also actively engaged in improving the strategic impact of incentives for the purpose of better targeting areas of opportunity for biodiversity. We cosponsored and collaborated closely in putting on the Washington Forum for Conservation Incentives. We sought, received, and used input from them in writing our issue papers, in structuring the survey, in conducting the focus groups, and will be taking their input in writing our recommendations for the final report. This entire project has been conducted with considerable cognizance of the needs of the Puget Sound Partnership. One of our 7 initial interviews of key players was Mike Shelby, a member of the Partnership team representing agriculture and Executive Director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association. We also made early, direct contact with Brad Ack of PSAT and the Puget Sound Partnership to make sure our efforts would be complimentary. And by including Dennis Canty, of Evergreen Funding Consultants as a major partner in the project, we also retained his continuing contacts with Jim Kramer of Puget Sound Partnership.

Analysis of objective – our objective was that:

American Farmland Trust will collaborate efforts with the Puget Sound Partnership and Biodiversity Council.

We believe the attention to partnership needs and coordination have fully met this objective.

II. Final Analysis

In our original evaluation plan, we said that:

We will know we have achieved these objectives if:

- a. We can see that we have assembled a sufficient number of key groups and that they are working together on the issues;*
- b. We have surveyed the farmers and have received a useful volume of responses in return for analysis;*
- c. We have engaged sufficient attendance at events and presentations to anticipate significant impact and those attending indicate a positive response to the information they receive;*
- d. We have made significant distribution of educational written materials to key individuals involved with these issues;*
- e. We learn of specific agreements or collaborations aimed at strategic targeting of spending;*
- f. We coordinate our efforts with key partners working on the same issues*

We believe that each of these outcomes has been either fully or substantially met and are proud to submit this final report of our accomplishments.

Respectfully submitted:

Don Stuart
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American Farmland Trust