

**Snoqualmie Watershed Forum**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**July 20, 2011**  
**Project Tour 5:00-7:00 pm / Meeting 7:00-9:00 pm**  
**Vincent Schoolhouse**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Charles Peterson	City of Snoqualmie Councilmember, Forum Vice-Chair
Jim Berger	City of Carnation Councilmember
Chris Garcia	City of North Bend Councilmember
Cindy Spiry	Snoqualmie Tribe
Kathy Lambert	King County Councilmember
Bill Knutsen	King Conservation District
David Burger	Stewardship Partners, Non-profit Representative
Derek Young	Citizen Representative - SVGA

**PROJECT TOUR**

The Forum held the annual Snoqualmie Watershed project tour in the Carnation area. Twenty-five participants took part in the tour which featured the following projects:

Chinook Bend Levee Removal Project: The property was donated to King County in 2000 by the Nestle Corporation. Since that time, the County has completed extensive riparian plantings on the site to begin to restore historically forested conditions. In 2009, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks completed phase 1 construction removing 1482 foot levee at the upstream end of the site. The project is expected to create 5 acres of off-channel habitat and 2000 feet of channel edge enhancement. Phase 1 also included construction of a new parking lot, restroom, interpretive signage and art installation. Dan Eastman, King County Ecologist, reviewed the Phase 1 features and physical changes on the site since 2009. He also described work to be done under Phase 2. Phase 2 will include removal of an additional 400 feet of levee at the downstream end of the property and should be completed by Fall 2011.

Lower Tolt River Floodplain Reconnection Project: In 2009, King County and the City of Seattle completed the Lower Tolt project. The project included reconnection of 48 acres of floodplain habitat to the Tolt River in a county park. The project is expected to create 12 acre of off-channel habitat and 2500 feet of restored edge habitat. New parking facilities, trails, picnic areas and interpretive signs were also installed. Dan Eastman and Perry Falcone presented the project features, site changes since project completion in 2009, and preliminary monitoring results. The project tour visited several sites including: the levee trail, floodplain wetlands, floodplain log jam structures, interpretive signage, campground log revetment, Tolt River outlet channel, and Tolt River levee removal site.

## MEETING PROCEEDINGS

### Introductions and Minutes

Councilmember Charles Peterson asked if there were changes to the May 18 meeting summary. The Forum approved the May 18 meeting summary in current form.

### Updates and Announcements

*King Conservation District (KCD) Grant Submission of Fall City River Waste Reduction Grant:* Perry Falcone updated the Forum on the status of the Fall City KCD grant to address the recreational waste issue along the river. Forum staff assisted Lee Moderow, Fall City Float Task Force, in drafting a KCD grant to implement an outreach strategy for river users and to install temporary sani-cans. The KCD Board did not approve the grant suggesting that other agencies such as King County Parks and Solid Waste were responsible for waste management in the area and that dealing with recreation related water quality issues was not KCD's focus. Since there are no other viable funding sources, the task force will continue to work locally to gather funds and increase outreach and awareness of the problem.

*Snoqualmie Restoration Strategy – Subcommittee Report:* Perry briefed the Forum on the status of the stalled Waterwheel Creek Restoration Project in Cherry Creek. There have been two meetings to attempt to resolve the current stalemate on the project.

- Bill Knutsen met with Drainage District #7 (DD #7) Commissioners on Monday June 6th. DD #7 commissioners requested three project changes including (1) keeping one of the three lateral ditches open to provide better drainage, (2) keeping one of the existing road access points to the pump station that the project would have abandoned, and (3) developing a contingency plan to deal with potential drainage issues that might arise after project implementation.
- Russell Link, project lead for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), convened a meeting between WDFW and DD #7 on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Russell confirmed Bill Knutsen's assessment of DD #7's position on the project. WDFW has also assigned a new facilitator to the project in order to move the process forward.

Perry will be working closely with WDFW, Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC) and DD#7 to explore various solutions to the stalemate currently holding up the project. One area that the Forum could be involved in is the development of a financial contingency plan to address any future drainage issues associated with the project. The groups are exploring various instruments (such as performance bonds or maintenance grants) and funding may be necessary. Though the Forum does not typically pre-approve grants for potential future maintenance needs, we could entertain funding a proposal to ensure this project moves forward.

In addition to these specific efforts related to the Waterwheel Creek project, a new Restoration Roundtable group has formed and held a meeting on June 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss Snoqualmie specific project implementation issues. The group, which consists of non-profit and government staff who implement habitat projects in the Snoqualmie Watershed, shared project implementation successes and challenges. The group plans to meet again to discuss the current progress toward the Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation Plan (Snohomish Plan) habitat goals and the status a Forum effort to review the effectiveness of riparian restoration actions in the watershed.

*North Fork Snoqualmie River Hydroelectric Project:* Janne Kaje provided an update to the Forum regarding a new preliminary permit application submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The applicant, Black Canyon Hydro, LLC proposes to build a run-of-river hydropower plant with 25 Megawatt rated capacity along the NF Snoqualmie. The proposed project includes water intake infrastructure (low-head dam) at an upstream location, a powerhouse with turbines at a downstream location, and a roughly 1.4 mile penstock (12 ft diameter pipe to convey water) to connect the intake to the powerhouse. An elevation change from one end of the penstock to the other of 440 ft creates the head to generate power. This means that approximately 2.5 miles of the river would be “dewatered”, i.e., the water travels through a pipe instead of along the river bed. Based on the project description, it should not have any impact on flooding and it is not intended in any way for flood control. Two of the properties identified in the pre-application as required for the project are covered by a King County conservation easement. That easement allows limited-scale hydroelectric projects, but initial review suggests that the proposed project may be inconsistent. All properties required for the project are privately owned.

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, King County filed a motion to intervene which means that King County will be party to any official FERC proceedings on the project. King County is joined by the Snoqualmie Tribe, Tulalip Tribes, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the City of Snoqualmie as interveners, as well as several organizations involved in whitewater river recreation. The proposed project location would impact flows in one of the premier whitewater reaches in western Washington. WDNR owns land adjacent to the project area and Snoqualmie has a spring-fed water supply system adjacent to the reach. Forum staff along with King County will continue to track this project. There are two other FERC pre-applications filed on tributaries to the NF Snoqualmie River that we will also be tracking.

### **Smith Island Restoration Project**

Craig Garric, Snohomish County Engineer, provided an overview of the Smith Island Restoration Project. The Snohomish estuary is the second largest estuary in Puget Sound (second only to the Skagit delta). The estuary is comprised of three major sloughs (Ebey, Steamboat and Union) and the mainstem Snohomish River. The estuary is an important area for juvenile salmon to feed prior to entering the marine environment and to enter a critical life process known as smoltification. The estuary is severely degraded with 44 miles of dikes, large amounts of large wood removed leading to only 15% of tidal marsh remaining. The Snohomish Plan calls for restoration of 1240 acres of tidal marsh by 2015. There are several current and planned projects in the estuary such as: the Qwuloolt, Blue Heron Slough, Spencer Island, Union Slough, Drainage District #6 and Riverfront restoration projects.

The Smith Island Restoration Project will create roughly 400 acres of tidal marsh habitat, restore approximately 2 miles of edge habitat, improve existing flood protection and enhance recreational opportunities. The project site is mostly owned by Snohomish County and also the City of Everett, and includes previous acquisitions funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and a donation from Williams Pipeline Corporation. The project will include removal of 4500 feet of dike and construction of an 8700 foot setback dike. The project is expected to cost \$14M (including funding from SRFB and mitigation funding) and will be constructed by 2014.

### *Questions from the Forum:*

- Forum members asked if there was concern about inundation of the Everett Wastewater Treatment Plant. Craig responded that the dike will be built higher than the 100-year flood levels.
- Members asked if land subsidence will affect habitat formation and vegetation. Craig responded that the project will be designed to promote deposition and aggradation, and will include installation of hummocks and large wood to provide more natural tide marsh topography. The land has subsided substantially since it was diked many decades ago because it has been starved of sediment from both tidal and riverine sources. Thus, it will take time for natural deposition to restore the site to a more natural elevation.
- Members asked for more information about the mitigation partners. Craig explained that the partners included Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Washington Department of Transportation.
- Members also asked if the agricultural land in the area was deemed unsuitable for farming. Craig responded that the land was very wet and has not been farmed for a long time. Maintaining existing or improved drainage and flood protection for an adjacent private tree nursery is a key project design element.

### **Regional Initiatives**

Yvette Lizée-Smith provided an update on regional initiatives happening in the watershed. The Watershed Investment District (WID) legislation is drafted and may go to the legislature as early as the 2012 session with outreach to key legislators as early as fall 2011. The WID is intended to be a local funding source that would fund salmon conservation plan actions that are currently underfunded by the state and federal governments. The WID governance structure and funding mechanisms were written into the draft legislation with maximum flexibility in order to accommodate various jurisdictions and regions in the state. The Forum provided the following comments:

### *Questions/Comments from the Forum:*

- Forum members asked if the governance structure representing numerous jurisdictions will be difficult to manage. Yvette explained that, for areas with more than 15 member governments, the legislation allows the options having all counties and cities on the board (if desired) or establishing a smaller representational board of 15 members with rotating seats.
- Members commented that the Snoqualmie Tribe is a voting member of the Forum and asked if Tribes could be voting members of the WID Board if they were a contributing partner. Yvette noted that, under the current legislation, tribes can only be appointed as non-voting members. She offered to bring the question of voting seats back to the WID drafting committee. The committee is compiling feedback on the legislation and plans to meet later this fall to review the comments and determine if any revisions are needed.
- Members asked if WID revenues could go to Tribes or non-profits. Yvette confirmed that funding could go to internal and external entities such as Tribes, non-profits and governments.

- Members asked if WID projects would be identified at the time of an authorization vote. Yvette responded that the WID projects and programs would be identified in the Watershed Funding Plan that would be put out to voters for approval. Yvette added that the definition of eligible programs and activities was left broad in the legislation to allow local customization.
- King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert questioned the governance language in Section 302 that explains that “members will include the elected county executive, or if the executive declines, one county legislative member.” She also requested clarification on whether the counties are intended to represent just the interests of unincorporated areas, or the regional interests of the entire geographic county. Yvette agreed to forward this issue to the WID drafting committee.

**Action:** Yvette will email the draft WID legislation to the Forum for review and asked to receive comments back by early August.

Yvette provided an update on the proposed Snohomish-Stillaguamish Local Integrating Organization (LIO). The LIO organizations will provide feedback to PSP on priorities and will coordinate action agenda implementation in the local area. Snohomish County is finalizing a draft proposal and should be distributing it for comment soon. Snohomish County would like to combine the Snohomish and Stillaguamish watersheds into one LIO in order to provide programmatic efficiencies. The proposal will include a governance structure, roles and responsibilities. Yvette asked if the Forum was supportive of the proposal to combine the Snohomish and Stillaguamish Basins. Members indicated they would like additional information on the LIO before making a decision. Forum members supported the idea of having the Snoqualmie Forum chair as a member on the LIO Steering Committee.

**Action:** Yvette will email the draft LIO proposal to the Forum when it is available.

### **2012 Snoqualmie Forum ILA Budget and KCD Grant**

Yvette summarized the proposed 2012 Forum budget and cost share as a status quo budget, adjusted for cost of living as required by the County, which acts as the service provider to the Forum. Based on discussions earlier this year, it is our understanding that all cities are currently pursuing a 10% cost-share contribution in their 2012 budgets. The Forum will be sending formal letters to the cities in August (reconfirming their 2012 cost-share amounts and 10% target) so city councils have enough time to consider the request as part of the scheduled budget process.

Yvette presented the Forum’s 2012 Snoqualmie Restoration and Protection Assistance Program KCD grant. The grant covers a portion of the Forum’s work program including: support for various high priority restoration and acquisition projects, project development and referral assistance to landowners, and implementation of a protection strategy for the Snoqualmie Watershed. Due to the expected 10% contribution from the valley cities, the grant amount decreased from \$110K in 2011 to \$99K in 2012.

Chris Garcia, City of North Bend Councilmember, asked if the grant amount could stay at \$110K and the Forum would just implement more projects. Yvette responded that the \$10K in savings will be left in the Forum’s KCD allocation to be spent on the Forum’s priorities regardless. Members asked if the grant reflected the Forum’s recent progress report work. Yvette responded that the individual projects reflect those priorities and the work on a protection strategy was

directly called for by the progress report. Members asked what other projects were identified for this funding other than the protection strategy. Yvette added that restoration on agriculture lands was considered important but too open ended.

**Decision:** The Forum approved the 2012 ILA Budget and the 2012 KCD Grant.

### **Public Comment**

Councilmember Kathy Lambert shared a few updates with the Forum. The King County Strategic Plan for Road Services (SPRS) report stated that rural spending on roads is decreasing and there are major road maintenance concerns. The current pace of rural road maintenance means that the full maintenance cycle will take several decades. The Flood District funding is receiving requests to fund a variety of new initiatives that were not envisioned when the District was formed (e.g., farmers markets, Green River levee certifications, Seattle's seawall) and these initiatives could delay important work in the Snoqualmie valley. In addition, FEMA recently denied King County's request for \$30M to cover Green River emergency measures. Lambert added that levee certification process may not be worthwhile since currently only Tukwila has certified levees.

### **Next Meeting & Project Tour**

The September 21 Forum meeting will be held at the Carnation City Hall, 7:00-9:00 PM.