

Snoqualmie Watershed Forum
MEETING SUMMARY
July 15, 2009
Project Tour 4:00-6:30
Meeting 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
Tolt – MacDonald Park, Carnation

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Charles Peterson	City of Snoqualmie Councilmember, Forum Chair
Elizabeth Walker	City of Duvall Councilmember, Forum Vice-Chair
Ross Loudenback	City of North Bend Councilmember
Mike Flowers	City of Carnation Councilmember
Cindy Spiry	Snoqualmie Tribe
Gary Roberts	Citizen Representative

PROJECT TOUR

The Forum held the annual Watershed Project tour in the Carnation area. Approximately 20 participants visited two large-scale salmon restoration projects in King County's Tolt MacDonald Park.

1. Kollin Higgins, King County Ecologist, led the hike to the Camp Gilead Off Channel Reconnection Project. The project, completed in 2008, removed approximately 200 feet of revetment, reconnecting approximately 4 acres of off-channel rearing habitat for salmon. Kollin also described the monitoring equipment used at the project site to monitor juvenile salmon use of the restored habitat. This project directly meets edge and off-channel habitat goals called for in the *Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation Plan* (Salmon Plan).
2. Clint Loper, King County Flood District Engineer, led a tour of the Lower Tolt Floodplain Restoration Project. The project will set back the levee along the Lower Tolt River (upstream from the confluence with the Snoqualmie River) and reconnect 48 acres of off-channel habitat to its original floodplain. Project elements that directly meet the Salmon Plan habitat goals include removal and set back of half a mile of armored levee, construction of 4 floodplain islands with large wood structures, excavation of a new outlet channel for the Tolt River, installation of a wood revetment along the campground, invasive weed control, and installation of native plants. The majority of construction is slated to be done in 2009.

Participants enjoyed visiting two of the largest restoration projects ever implemented in the Snoqualmie Watershed. There were various questions regarding the engineering, longevity, public involvement, overall costs and habitat benefits of these projects.

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Introductions and Minutes

- The Forum approved the Agenda.
- The Forum approved the May 20, 2009 meeting summary.

Updates and Announcements

- Yvette announced that the Snoqualmie Tribe received \$100,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct a riparian restoration project at King County's Fall City Park. The project includes removal of invasive vegetation, riparian restoration and development of an interpretive trail. The Tribe is working with King County Parks and the newly formed Fall City Metropolitan Parks District. They hope to begin the restoration project as early as the fall of 2009. As part of its technical support to jurisdictions, the Snoqualmie Forum funded development of a planting plan for the site in 2008. The planting plan fed into the EPA grant application.
- The King County Flood Control Zone District (FCZD) will be holding a meeting with shoreline landowners along the Middle Fork Snoqualmie on July 23 (6:30-8:30pm) to discuss flooding -- specifically along the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River between Mt. Si Bridge and the Three Forks Natural Area. This is the first of a series of meetings that the district will be holding with landowners. Future meetings may address other sections of the Middle Fork and the unincorporated area between Middle and South Fork Snoqualmie north of North Bend. Topics to be covered at this meeting include: geology and ecology of the Middle Fork; history of flooding and flood response; and potential options for floodplain projects.
- Janne described the current status of the Smith Island Restoration project, a centerpiece estuary project in the WRIA 7 plan, sponsored by Snohomish County. Earlier this year, as part of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, Snohomish County issued a Determination on Non-Significance (DNS) for the project. The Snoqualmie Forum submitted a strong letter of support for the project. In response to public comments, including concerns of adjacent agricultural landowners, Snohomish County has since withdrawn the DNS and is moving forward with a full EIS to evaluate options more thoroughly, including future dike alignment. This represents a potentially major delay for the project (despite years of planning, outreach, etc.). The comments submitted by our Forum in April will be considered as part of the EIS, so no further action is necessary at this time. However, it is possible that we may need to reiterate our support for the project and its importance to salmon recovery later in the process.
- Janne described the ongoing effort by King County to address the safety of recreational boaters and floaters in relation to large wood in County rivers. King County (and other entities) place large wood in rivers in order to restore river processes and to provide habitat benefits. Wood is often used for bank stabilization (flood control), habitat restoration, and as required mitigation for other adverse impacts. The county undertook a major initiative in late 2007 and early 2008 to define protocols for the consideration of recreational safety in the placement of large wood. Despite this already significant action, the County recently took

several additional steps on the large wood issue in response to continued concerns from vocal river safety advocates, e.g.:

- King County's Water Land Resources Division (WLRD) has convened a stakeholder committee to help advise the division on large wood management, including a review of the protocols for considering recreational safety.
- King County Council passed an ordinance on June 29 of this year (introduced only 2 weeks prior) instructing the county's Dept of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) to develop a public rule for consideration of recreational safety in wood placement. The ordinance identified safety as the primary consideration when balancing multiple goals/objectives.

Janne also noted that the county's efforts to address recreational safety (e.g., large wood removal and the current stakeholder involvement process) are funded almost exclusively by the flood district. As the division moves toward a public rule, staff will likely recommend that the Forum reiterate its support for large wood placement as a vital component of salmon recovery. Staff will provide a more thorough presentation on the large wood topic at an upcoming Forum meeting.

- Janne provided a brief update on the status of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road project and its associated plans to improve/pave the road along an 11-mile stretch from just outside North Bend to the campground at Taylor River. Note that this is not the same project as all of the repair work that is currently underway due to flood damage. This on-again, off-again project appears to be temporarily on-hold until the disagreements between three key agencies (FHWA, US Forest Service and King County) can be resolved. The project is being managed by the Federal Highway Administration's Western Lands Division (FHWA). To receive FHWA funds, the project Projects must meet FHWA guidelines (for paving surface, sight-lines, etc). King County technically owns the road, which is also substantially within US National Forest boundary. The Forest Service is opposed to FHWA-level improvements, as it would mean a much higher impact project in its boundaries (involving road widening, etc.). The County has its concerns as well since they would be responsible for road maintenance and asphalt will be much more expensive to maintain than alternatives (e.g., chip seal).

Forum-KCD Regular Round Update

Perry described a proposal to fund the City of Duvall's Coe Clemmons Restoration Project by shifting \$50,000 from the King County Snoqualmie River monitoring project. King County has indicated that this is acceptable as long as 1) the project received anticipated funding from the County's Surface Water Management funds, and 2) the project is reimbursed as part of next year's grant round. Moreover, Seattle City Light is likely to receive \$36,000 in funding for its Tolt River Riparian Restoration project from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. If so, Seattle would not need the \$36,000 grant previously recommended by the Forum under this year's KCD Regular round.

The Forum approved a two-part recommendation: 1) shift \$50,000 from King County's monitoring project to the Coe Clemmons project with funding set aside from next year's KCD round for reimbursement; and, 2) if Seattle receives \$36,000 for the Tolt Riparian project from

SRFB, the \$36,000 approved under our 2009 KCD grant round will be shifted to the King County monitoring project.

Forum- KCD Final Opportunity Fund Allocation

Perry provided an overview of the Opportunity Fund's purpose, areas of focus, schedule and criteria. In this year's round, specific geographic focus areas were identified although proposals were welcome from the entire watershed. Perry presented brief summaries of all projects that submitted full applications [see handout for details].

The project ranking sub-committee recommended that the Forum support funding for project #1 and projects #3-9 in the meeting handout for a total of \$179,814. Unfortunately, the #2 ranked project sponsored by the Stilly-Snohomish Fishery Enhancement Task Force failed to secure anticipated match funding and is unable to proceed.

The projects proposed for funding by the ranking committee were:

- NF Cherry Creek Floodplain Riparian Restoration -Wild Fish Conservancy (\$30,000)
- Raging River Off-Channel Habitat Restoration - The Tulalip Tribes (\$30,000)
- Upper Preston/Lake Creek Restoration - Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust (\$29,000)
- Haas Property - Riparian Restoration along Lake Creek – EarthCorps (\$25,293)
- Pickering Farm Stream Channel Restoration - Larry and Janetta Pickering, DVM (21,100)
- Riparian Restoration at Bar Property - Stewardship Partners (\$18,650)
- GtoG Griffin Creek Buffer Enhancement - Good to Grow (\$10,771)
- 2009-10 Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Education and Stewardship- Nature Vision (\$15,000)

The committee also recommended that Forum staff work with KCD's ranking committee to allocate the remaining \$20,186 – based on shared rankings. For the Opportunity Fund, joint approval by the Forum and KCD is required.

Decisions

- ⇒ The Forum approved the project ranking sub-committee funding recommendations listed above.
- ⇒ The Forum authorized staff to work with KCD to allocate the remaining \$20,186 to one of next four top ranked projects on the list.

KCD Assessment

Yvette explained that the KCD assessment is up for reauthorization in 2010. While conservation districts are established by State law, the assessment must be approved by the County Council. Currently, each property owner within the KCD's service area (which includes almost the entire County) is assessed an annual fee of approximately \$10 per parcel. Under the current assessment, 30% of funds go directly to support KCD's programs and administration, 20% are allocated to

individual jurisdictions, and 50% are allocated to the three watershed grant programs in WRIA's 7, 8 and 9. Under the current allocation formula, the Snoqualmie Watershed (WRIA 7) receives 20% of the watershed allocation share. WRIA 8 and WRIA 9 each receive 40%. This means that the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum's grant program receives roughly \$1 of every \$10 collected under the current assessment. In 2009, this amounted to approximately \$595K, in addition to a \$100K match from KCD to support the Opportunity Fund.

KCD's Draft Appropriation Plan for 2010-2014 is structured very differently than prior plans. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of changes in program emphasis and in the size of allocations. KCD has indicated that it requires a greater percentage of the assessment for its own internal administration and programs due to decreases in State funding and the fact that it is now fully staffed. In past years, the WRIsAs and jurisdictions (combined) received 70% of the total assessment. The new draft plan allocates 60% of the future assessment to "Partnership Grant Programs" – which includes the WRIA and jurisdiction programs, plus several other small grant programs. Based on these estimates, we can anticipate a 17% decrease to grant programs overall. Assuming a consistent reduction across programs, the Snoqualmie Forum's assessment allocation would decrease \$100-120K from current levels. Note that this projection is based on staff interpretation of KCD's draft plan which does not provide program specific allocations.

It is unclear if KCD would continue to support non-capital activities like monitoring, studies, and the Forum "outreach and project support" grants. Outreach is called out in the plan, so we assume KCD would continue to support outreach-related projects.

Yvette then introduced several different talking points that the Forum could choose to emphasize in its pending comment letter [see handout for details].

Vice-chair Walker commented that she serves on the KCD Advisory Committee as a representative for Duvall and for the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum. In her view, KCD considers the Snoqualmie Forum as a "model" for other forums in our timely allocation of funds and alignment with KCD priorities, particularly with respect to landowner-focused initiatives. She recommends that we highlight the positive relationship between the Forum and the KCD as well as the nexus in our programmatic priorities. She noted that some of the programmatic changes proposed by KCD may end up working in our favor.

Ross Loudenback noted his impression that several jurisdictions may "walk away" from the KCD if the allocation formulas change as a result of the new assessment. Most jurisdictions are reportedly pushing for "status quo" funding.

Vice-chair Walker noted that assuming a stance of "status quo" may not be sufficiently responsive to KCD's real needs related to their funding sources and administrative costs. Chair Peterson is concerned about losing ground if the Snoqualmie Forum allocation is decreased and generally supports an emphasis on status quo. However, he also suggested a strong emphasis on the quantity and quality of fish habitat in the Snoqualmie Watershed compared to other watersheds in the County.

Ross Loudenback noted that the Forum's letter in the previous reauthorization round (2006) contained very good points that are just as relevant today. Cindy Spiry suggested that the letter contain a few examples of Forum accomplishments that dovetail with KCD's stated priorities.

Recommendation: The Forum recommended that staff take the suggestions from the Forum and draft a comment letter for review. The letter should utilize points made in the 2006 letter; include examples of specific projects and initiatives that support KCD priorities; and encourage that funding levels to the Snoqualmie Watershed not be dropped from current levels.

2010 Snoqualmie Forum ILA Budget / Grant

Yvette presented the proposed 2010 budget for the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum [see handout 5a]. The proposed budget represents a stable level of staffing services provided by King County. Yvette also described the many services delivered by King County as part of administrative overhead – such as GIS services, web services, graphics and other vital areas. The total budget is \$451,345 with \$442,440 covered by the ILA cost-share. The cities’ combined portion of the cost share is \$100,133, with the remainder provided by the Snoqualmie Tribe (\$5,000) and King County (\$337,307). The City share has increased from \$86,500 in 2009 due to the 2009 recalculation of the cost-share formula, which is based on a combination of geographic area, population and assessed property value. As cities grow geographically through annexation and as development/population is concentrated primarily in incorporated areas, each city’s share of the cost-share is expected to increase.

Each year the Forum submits a grant to KCD to help pay for the cities’ share of the ILA budget (i.e., roughly \$100K in 2010). The grant application specifically identifies those elements of our work program that are consistent with KCD priorities and support capacity building in member jurisdictions. The 2010 Snoqualmie Project Support and Capacity Building program grant proposal is a continuing initiative managed and delivered by Forum staff. It aims to maximize regional success in implementing the Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation Plan (the “Salmon Plan”) and broader watershed management activities. Activities described in the grant proposal focus on project coordination, capacity building, and water resource education and outreach [see the grant proposal hand-out for details].

In 2010, specific areas of emphasis include: a mid-plan check-in to gauge progress toward the 10-year goals established in the salmon plan; fish passage project prioritization; ensuring that a continuous pipeline of high-quality projects in the Snoqualmie watershed are included in the broader WRIA 7 three-year work plan; facilitating a Snohomish Basin-wide project working group; prioritizing and supporting on-the-ground water quality actions; continued technical assistance to member cities; and facilitating coordination between cities, DOE and the county regarding requirements of the Shoreline Master Plan update process.

Forum Decisions

- ⇒ The Forum approved the 2010 Snoqualmie Watershed Forum ILA budget and cost-share.
- ⇒ The Forum approved the grant as written for submission to KCD.

Public Comment

Several members of the community spoke to the Forum about Puget Sound Energy’s Snoqualmie Falls project and the downstream effects of proposed changes that were recently approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Bob Seana remarked that since the completion of the “Snoqualmie 205 project” [a widening of the Snoqualmie River above the falls to reduce flooding in the City of Snoqualmie], the lower Valley has seen several of the highest floods on record, including the recent January 2009 event that was a flood of record. [The new PSE Snoqualmie Falls Hydroelectric project proposes to lower the crest of the existing dam by 2 ft. and widen the river channel above the falls by removing fill.] Mr. Seana expressed concern that no efforts were made by the County or by PSE to inform downstream landowners about the project or to measure and mitigate for downstream effects.

Chair Peterson noted that he lives in the City of Snoqualmie. Despite the 205 project, this past flood was the first in his memory to reach his home. He estimated that very high snowpack combined with a heavy rain event was in part responsible for the unique conditions that generated record flooding in many parts of the Snoqualmie watershed.

Janet Keller suggested that while the Forum does great things for fish, if it is to justify its existence it should care as much about the farmers in the valley as the fish, and take on the responsibility of informing landowners about flooding risks.

Rob Areth described how floods since 1990 have featured several “mother of all flood” events. He noted that using the 1990 flood as a baseline is obsolete.

Eric Haakenson acknowledged the value of the recent flood-farm taskforce in which he participated. He noted that there has never been a basin-wide hydrologic study to inform management in the basin. He encouraged the Forum to think creatively about what we might do to address what appears to be an increasing frequency and magnitude of flooding in the Snoqualmie that is putting farmers and other valley residents increasingly at risk.

Cindy Spiry of the Snoqualmie Tribe asked whether a hydrologic study was under way. Staff agreed to find out the current status of hydrologic studies by King County and to report back to the Forum.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be September 16, 2009 from 7-9 pm at the Rose Room in Duvall.