

**Snoqualmie Watershed Forum**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**March 16, 2011**  
**Meeting 7:00-9:00 pm**  
**Meadowbrook Interpretive Center, North Bend**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Elizabeth Walker	City of Duvall Councilmember, Forum Chair
Charles Peterson	City of Snoqualmie Councilmember, Forum Vice-Chair
Jim Berger	City of Carnation Councilmember
Chris Garcia	City of North Bend Councilmember
Kathy Lambert	King County Councilmember
David Burger	Stewardship Partners, Non-profit Representative
Kent Renno	Citizen Representative - Unincorporated King County
Allyson Schrier	Citizen Representative - Unincorporated King County
Derek Young	Citizen Representative – Snoqualmie Valley Governments Association
Bill Knutsen	King Conservation District Representative

**MEETING PROCEEDINGS**

**Introductions and Minutes**

- Councilmember Elizabeth Walker asked if there were changes to the February 9 meeting summary. Yvette Lizée-Smith (Watershed Coordinator) advised that Morgan Schneider of Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) had emailed a small clarifying edit to the notes for her presentation. The edit did not change the content of the minutes but specified that the original division of Puget Sound into seven action areas had been laid out in the PSP enabling legislation. Yvette will make the edit to the minutes. The Forum approved the meeting summary with Morgan’s requested change incorporated.

**Updates and Announcements**

- *Status of Past King Conservation District (KCD) Grants:* Perry Falcone (Snoqualmie Project Coordinator) advised that two projects from past KCD grant rounds will be returning unused funds to KCD. These funds will roll back into our funding pool for this year’s grant round. The two projects are:
  - 1) 2007 Wetland Creation and Enhancement Project: North Bend received a \$30,000 grant for this project in 2007. They were unable to secure the \$250,000 match to complete the project. Rather than hold back the funds, the city has decided to return the grant to KCD and may reapply in the future.
  - 2) 2009 Snoqualmie Outreach and Capacity Building Program: The Forum has \$15,000 in unused funds from our 2009 KCD grant that will roll back into the grant pool. Staff were unable to complete certain grant deliverables in 2009 (e.g. watershed summit and outreach coordination activities) since the Watershed Coordinator backfilled for the King County Regional Partnership Unit Supervisor during 5 months of 2009. The grant

balance was carried over to 2010, but time demands around the ILA renewal process impeded staff ability to complete these added deliverables last year. Rather than hold back the funds, staff have closed the 2009 grant and are returning the balance.

- *2011 KCD Regular Grant Round:* Perry gave the status of the 2011 Regular Grant Round that is currently underway. The Forum has \$503,000 to allocate in this year's round. We just completed the pre-application process and received 9 applications totaling \$505,850. The project review committee will rank the projects in April. The Forum will discuss the projects and decide on the funding recommendations on May 18. The Forum's grant recommendations will then be submitted to the KCD Board for final decision.
- *Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area Legislation:* Perry advised the Forum of legislation currently before the Federal Government that would expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. The proposal would protect an additional 22,000 acres of forest land in the Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie Sub-basins. It would also designate the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt Rivers as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Councilmember Lambert (King County) asked if the Wild and Scenic designation would require decommissioning of fire roads. She expressed concern that this could hinder abilities to access and control forest fires.  
**Action:** Staff were asked to investigate the road decommissioning question.
- *Snoqualmie River Temperature TMDL Study:* Janne Kaje (Snoqualmie Technical Specialist) advised that Washington Department of Ecology recently completed a Temperature Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Study in the Snoqualmie Watershed. The study found that water temperatures in the Snoqualmie Mainstem and Middle Fork are too high at certain times of year. Ecology has set up an advisory group to inform action recommendations to reduce water temperatures. Ecology will release their Temperature TMDL Report and action recommendations in May 2011 for a 30-day public comment period. Staff will keep the Forum informed of developments. Councilmember Garcia (North Bend) asked how high the water temperatures have been. Janne explained that during particularly warm summer weather every tributary and mainstem location monitored by Ecology exceeded state standards. The warmest single location was the Raging River mouth where daily max temperature averaged over 7 consecutive days topped out at 24.7C (76.5F) in July 2006.

### **Proposed 2011 Status Report Discussion Topics**

At the February 9 Forum meeting, Janne presented six possible topics for future Forum discussion stemming from the draft Snoqualmie Mid-Term Status Report. Janne asked Forum members to note in their handouts what topics they felt warranted a) further study, b) development of response alternatives or c) just occasional updates. He then collected the handouts to compile results. The six topics included:

- 1) Addressing insufficient progress toward restoration goals
- 2) Evaluating effectiveness of local regulations and their enforcement
- 3) Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of protection of rural and resource lands
- 4) Habitat restoration and protection in Snoqualmie Valley cities
- 5) Restoration and agriculture
- 6) Effectiveness of riparian planting and invasive weed removal projects

**More detailed descriptions of each topic and the compiled results are provided in Attachment A.**

Based on the February feedback, Janne advised that:

- Topic 1 “*Addressing insufficient progress toward restoration goals*” emerged as the top priority for future discussion. This is a large topic which will be the subject of an initial presentation by Perry and Janne under Item 3 of today’s agenda. Given the breadth of the topic it may eventually form the focus of multiple meetings.
- Topics 3-6 were fairly closely rated with #3 and #5 receiving slightly higher priority than topics #4 and #6. Janne suggested that all of these topics should be discussed at future meetings through 2011 and likely extending into 2012. For example:
  - A discussion on *Restoration and Agriculture* (topic 3) might be timely once the Snoqualmie at Fall City Reach Assessment is completed later this year. This is our next high priority reach for restoration as it is located in one of the two core spawning areas in our watershed. Most of this reach also falls within the Agricultural Production District, so dialogue and coordination with agricultural interests will be important as we begin identifying restoration opportunities.
  - Forum and city staff have discussed the possibility of having a presentation on *Habitat restoration and protection in Valley cities* (topic 4) in the Fall 2011. The Snoqualmie Watershed Status Report focused heavily on unincorporated areas, so this presentation would give the cities an opportunity to highlight the salmon recovery actions they are undertaking in their boundaries.
  - This year, Janne and Perry will be working with Jessica Saavedra (KCD Grant Program Lead) to evaluate the effectiveness of past projects (such as planting and invasive weed control efforts) funded under our past grant rounds. This information, once collected, would feed into a presentation on *Effectiveness of riparian planting and invasive weed removal projects* (topic 6).
- Topic #2 “*Evaluating effectiveness of local regulations and their enforcement*” received the least priority from the group as a whole – but not necessarily because it was deemed unimportant. Janne noted that not all Forum members completed the survey and not all respondents rated each of the six topics. Last month’s discussion was fairly hurried, so further refinement on the list of topics is expected and appropriate in the future. For the time being, however, staff recommend that we begin by focusing on the other five topics first.

Forum questions and comments:

- *Regarding #1 - How do we know if we’ve achieved a habitat goal?* Janne explained that the Snohomish Basin Salmon Conservation Plan is actually intended to be a 50-year recovery plan, but we set 10-year habitat targets or milestones within it to help guide our work. We are currently 5 years into the first 10-year plan and are falling far short on many of our habitat goals. Under Item 3 of today’s agenda, staff will give a more thorough overview of our basin restoration strategy and habitat goals. Janne also noted that the Snohomish Basin has been working to develop a Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan, but it is not yet in place. Barring the existence of a basin level monitoring plan at this time, the Snoqualmie

Forum staff decided to do a quick progress report last year (using available data) to get a rough assessment of how we are progressing on various elements of the Plan within the Snoqualmie portion of the basin. It is the “restoration” portion of this staff assessment that we will be reviewing in more detail under Agenda Item 3.

- *Regarding #2 – Has there been substantial tension between agriculture and fish interests?* The Snoqualmie Watershed Forum has had good relations with our agricultural partners and in fact local farmers have made significant contributions to our salmon recovery efforts (through actions like farm planning, manure management, livestock fencing, planting buffers, and seeking Salmon Safe certification). Our watershed has not had the same level of tension encountered in other areas, such as Skagit and Snohomish County. However, so far we have also attempted to focus our large restoration projects on public lands to minimize impacts on agricultural landowners. This was possible along the lower Snoqualmie mainstem (near Carnation) that has been the focus of our first series of large projects since the county and state public lands offered good restoration potential. As we begin actions in other priority reaches which are primarily under private ownership (like below the Raging River), we will need to work more closely with farmers and other landowners.
- *Regarding #6 – Has there been a lot of information-sharing on planting Best Management Practices (BMPs)?* Our implementation partners do communicate approaches informally, but so far most of the sharing has been ad hoc. Forum staff would like to be more proactive in determining what methods work best under what conditions – and sharing this information with project sponsors – so we can help guide the types of projects we want to receive under our KCD grant rounds. There were a number of comments on this topic.
  - Bill Knutsen (KCD Board) noted that, in an ideal situation, an evaluation of planting success would be best done across all King County watersheds. Janne responded that while we will be focusing on Snoqualmie-based projects, we will share the findings with our WRIA8 and WRIA9 counterparts.
  - Bill also highlighted the need to determine who is responsible when plantings and invasive weed control projects fail. In response it was suggested that the Forum consider developing a possible contingency fund (under our KCD allocation) to help address failed planting sites needing follow up work, along with policy dictating its use.
  - David Burger (Stewardship Partners) agreed that there have been a wide range of planting and maintenance methods used on projects. He noted that, to meet the guaranteed survival requirements, some mitigation projects need to monitor their plantings for 5 years before they get their retainer. These sites often show high survival as a result and might offer some additional Best Management Practices to learn from.
  - Councilmember Garcia asked for an example of why plantings fail. Janne explained that a variety of things can cause failure depending on the site and conditions. In one case on Patterson Creek, beavers ate the willow stakes. Other sites have been damaged by flooding. These are just two of a variety of possible causes.
- *Regarding #6 – Will the assessment of past planting projects look at water temperature improvements?* The assessment will simply evaluate the state of the plantings and noxious weed control sites themselves (level of survival, whether noxious weeds have returned, etc.).

For some project sites the assessment may identify opportunities for mid-course correction. So far we are not looking at secondary impacts such as water temperature improvements.

- *Are we funding projects on lakes?* Under the Opportunity Fund, the Forum has funded a couple of noxious weed control projects on Lake Marcel. Such projects would not rate as well under the Regular Round due to lack of use by target species like Chinook and Steelhead. David Burger added that Stewardship Partners has also done wetland projects.

**Decision:** The Forum was asked if they supported the prioritized list of future discussion topics put forward by Janne. The Forum approved proceeding with the proposed list.

### **Priority Topic 1 – Meeting Restoration Priorities**

Following on the previous topic, Perry Falcone and Janne Kaje gave a presentation on restoration in our watershed and our progress in meeting our 10-year habitat goals in the Salmon Plan. While their presentation focused on “habitat restoration” related progress, it is important to keep in mind that the broader salmon recovery strategy relies on additional actions like protection of intact habitat, landowner stewardship, harvest management, hatchery management, water quality and quantity improvements (among other things). So in short, this presentation focuses on only one element of our recovery strategy.

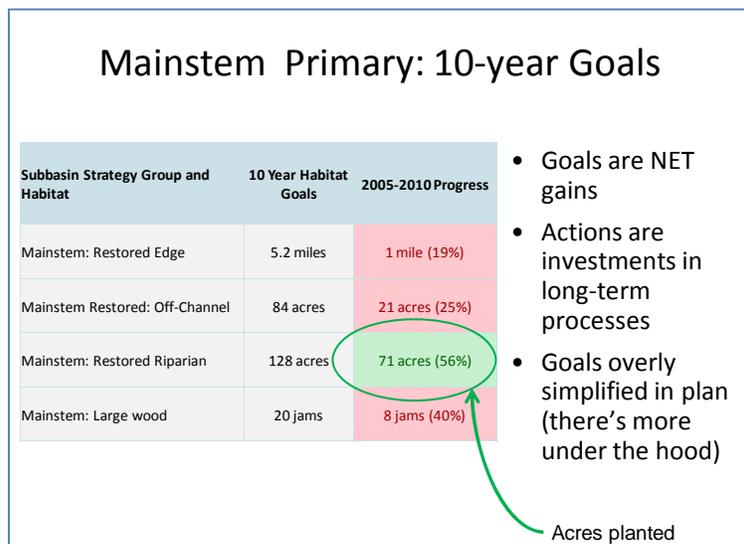
Perry opened with an overview of the restoration strategy to give background to new members. Key points included:

- The Snohomish Basin Salmon Conservation Plan (Salmon Plan) is a science based plan. It determined that a key limiting factor to Chinook survival in our basin was loss of juvenile rearing habitat. Thus, among other actions, our restoration strategy aims to increase the quantity and connectivity of rearing habitat along priority reaches used by juvenile Chinook. This includes:
  - Increasing off-channel habitat and channel complexity
  - Removing levees to reconnect rivers to their original floodplains
  - Improving the edge complexity and increasing riparian forests; and
  - Protecting spawning areas.
- Most of our large restoration projects seek to remove impediments to natural processes (by for example removing or setting back levees) so rivers can recreate habitat naturally. This approach is less costly than constructing new habitat using highly engineered techniques, but it means the habitat can take years to naturally develop. The advantage is more natural habitat formation that maintains itself, thus decreasing long-term costs.
- As part of our strategy we have relied heavily on pre-project and post-project monitoring so we can measure the change over time, test our assumptions, make corrections if needed, and enhance our knowledge.
- The Salmon Plan categorized all the WRIA7 sub-basins into “sub-basin strategy groups” based on their location, current and potential use by Chinook and bull trout, and habitat conditions. Each strategy group has associated actions recommendations and targets.

- For example, within King County, the “Mainstem Primary” strategy group consists of those sub-basins that coincide with the core Chinook spawning and associated juvenile rearing reaches in our watershed. They include the Lower Snoqualmie River (from Carnation downstream), the Raging, the Lower Tolt and the South Fork Skykomish Rivers. Most of our large restoration projects to date have been centered in these sub-basins, particularly along the three mile reach of the Snoqualmie River that runs between Lower Tolt confluence (at Tolt MacDonald Park) and Chinook Bend (near former Carnation Farm).
- Perry closed by reviewing some elements of the large restoration projects completed to date in our watershed. Projects presented included 1) the Lower Tolt Floodplain Restoration Project, 2) Chinook Bend Levee Removal and Riparian Restoration, 3) Camp Gilead Off-Channel Reconnection, and 4) Raging River Floodplain Reconnection Project.

Janne followed with a review of some of the challenges hindering our ability to meet our habitat goals. Key points included:

- Most of our restoration progress has been made in the “Mainstem Primary” sub-basins, but (per slide below) even in that strategy group our watershed is still far below where we should be at this mid-point in our 10-year plan. Reasons for slow progress on some of these goals include: few project sponsors with the capacity to do large restoration projects; high cost and associated difficulty cobbling together the required grants from shrinking state and federal sources; complex design and permitting; inadequate staff to identify, develop and fundraise for projects. As we exhaust restoration opportunities on public lands, we will also need to find opportunities for larger restoration projects on private lands which will require more collaborative planning, outreach and work across interests (such as agriculture and fish).



- The only mainstem primary action that is on target is Restored Riparian Habitat, but even this progress must be taken with caveats. These riparian acres have simply been planted. It will take years for them to function as a restored riparian forest and many obstacles (floods, beavers, poor maintenance, farm practices) can hinder their success in that timeframe. In addition, many of the planted riparian acres are not wide enough to be considered “intact” even when fully grown.

- Beyond the mainstem primary areas our watershed has shown no (aka zero) progress on most second tier 10-year goals which targeted sub-basins like the South Fork Tolt, Snoqualmie River between Snoqualmie Falls and Fall City, and Cherry Creek. The reasons for the shortfalls vary by location; for example, in Cherry Creek, project planning and design has been going on for many years but the local diking district has precluded restoration from taking place on state-owned lands. Other reasons include lack of public lands and lack of targeted effort to identify restoration opportunities in these basins. Ironically, many riparian acres have been planted in Ames, Harris, and Patterson Creeks, but these “Rural Secondary” locations do not have quantitative 10-year goals for planting.
- Lack of funding is a central challenge for all project types. Since the Salmon Plan was approved in 2005, our state and federal salmon recovery funding has significantly dropped, while permitting and capital costs have increased. As previously noted, the grant-based funding model poses a challenge for large multi-million dollar capital projects which need to compete for limited funds and cobble grants from many sources (each with their own match, schedules and reporting requirements). It can take years to assemble the needed grants to do a large project. In short, this type of funding model precludes effective capital planning.
- Some current and potential strategies to address these challenges include:
  - Investigating the development of new funding mechanisms for salmon recovery;
  - Investigating new or non-traditional funding sources such as mitigation funds;
  - Developing strategies to address the fish-farm challenges (including possible dialogue with the drainage district to address hurdles in Cherry Creek);
  - Working with state and local governments to help streamline permitting requirements;
  - Working with project sponsors to identify restoration opportunities and potential pilot sites in second tier sub-basins.

Forum questions and comments:

- Councilmember Lambert expressed concern that the use of cottonwoods in plantings might exacerbate allergies. She asked that staff investigate if this posed a public health problem.
- **Decision:** The Forum agreed to appoint a sub-group to discuss possible adjustments to the restoration strategy in order to address shortfalls and challenges. David Burger, Derek Young, Councilmember Jim Berger (Carnation), and Councilmember Elizabeth Walker volunteered to serve on the work group. Staff will arrange a meeting in April-May.
- Councilmember Walker invited audience input to help advise the work group discussions.
  - Deborah Oaks (Stewardship Partners) and Kevin Lee (Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Taskforce) both expressed their organizations’ interest in implementing small reach-scale restoration projects and well as larger capital restoration projects. Both their organizations are experienced in working with farmers and private landowners and could offer expertise in this area as we investigate future projects on private lands.
  - Scott Powell (Seattle City Light) noted that Seattle contributed \$2.5M to the Lower Tolt Floodplain Restoration project and had been a lead on that project with King County. The city has also implemented large wood installations and smaller restoration projects

along the Lower Tolt. They plan further projects along the Tolt as part of the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) licensing requirements.

- Jessica Saavedra (KCD) asked if the Forum would be considering changes to its grant criteria. Janne responded that the Forum might help direct actions by advising project sponsors that we are seeking projects in certain sub-basins like Cherry Creek.
- Perry stressed that the lack numerical targets for certain restoration or protection actions does not necessarily mean they are not important to recovery. Not all restoration actions are designed to meet these simplified goals directly. For example, extensive efforts to remove knotweed and other invasive vegetation are critical to the reestablishment of healthy riparian areas, but the plan itself does not specify numerical goals for invasive weed removal.

### **Update on Regional Processes**

To allow more time for the above restoration discussion, Yvette offered to significantly condense her regional updates. She asked that all members review the 3-page handout which summarized the items. Her condensed highlights included:

- *Cross-WRIA funding mechanism:* If anyone is interested in this topic they are invited to attend a cross-WRIA meeting on April 13 to input on the draft legislation. In addition, we are planning to discuss the draft legislation at our May 18 Forum meeting.
- *Puget Sound EcoNet:* We are investigating the EcoNet rural residential outreach grants for possible funding.
- *Snohomish Basin LIO:* A small task group (King County, Snohomish County and Tulalip Tribe) met to scope out the LIO function and possible structures. The group hopes to develop some optional structures to vet by partners and the Forums in May.
- *EPA grants to Puget Sound:* EPA is channeling funds to Puget Sound through various state agencies. Yvette is still researching the status of the 4 grant programs they are setting up related to 1) watersheds and stormwater 2) contaminants 3) toxics, and 4) marine and nearshore recovery. She hopes to assemble a summary table noting the eligible activities and 2011 available funds under each source, but so far many details are still being developed.

### **Public Comment**

- There was no public comment.
- Councilmember Garcia recommended that Meadowbrook Interpretive Center not be used for future meetings as the heater obstructed hearing, and the room was otherwise cold. Councilmember Peterson added that even in summer months, the room acoustics were poor making it difficult to hear presenters. He offered the use of Snoqualmie City Hall if no other venue is found in North Bend. Allyson Schrier mentioned that the Fall City Roadhouse had a meeting room upstairs if the Forum was seeking other meeting venues in the watershed.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be May 18, 2011, 6:30-9:00 pm at Preston Community Center.

**ATTACHMENT A - Salmon Plan Five-Year Status Report: Results of Forum Survey:** As a follow up to the Forum’s November 2010 presentation on the draft Snoqualmie Watershed Salmon Plan Five-Year Status Report, staff have identified a list of potential topics for future Forum meetings in 2011. The suggested topics are the product of discussions with Forum jurisdiction staff and the feedback received during the November meeting. At the February 9 meeting the Forum was asked to prioritize the suggested topics for subsequent follow up. The table below shows the draft priority order, so be discussed and confirmed at the March 16 meeting.

Topic & rationale	Forum Follow Up			Draft Priority Order
	Further Study	Develop Response Alternatives	None - Updates only	
<p><b>1. Addressing insufficient progress toward restoration goals</b></p> <p>The report showed that progress toward the 10-year habitat restoration milestones in the plan has fallen short of expectations in many geographic areas and for several project types. This is the result of many factors, most of all the lack of adequate state and federal funding for restoration. However, progress is also the product of other factors that can be influenced by the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum, such as ranking criteria within the KCD grant programs; adjacent landowner concerns; where and how we’re investing our time and resources to support project development with basin partners; and local permitting hurdles. These factors might be handled as a single large discussion topic, or multiple sub-topics.</p>	2	4	1	1
<p><b>2. Evaluating effectiveness of local regulations and their enforcement</b></p> <p>The draft status report presentation included a brief summary of a King County DDES study to assess compliance with regulations to protect the environment during the course of single-family home construction. A Forum member suggested that perhaps a similar analysis of city regulations and/or other state and county regulations would be a useful complement to this effort. Subsequent discussions with valley jurisdiction staff produced potential avenues for pursuing what is inherently a sensitive topic. Regulations and their enforcement differ substantially between jurisdictions. Initial ideas include: self-auditing by jurisdictions to assess compliance/enforcement; survey of responsible officials in each jurisdiction to understand similarities and differences in regulatory approach; and/or a possible workshop where responsible officials could share and possibly strategize on different approaches and best practices.</p>	2	1	3	6
<p><b>3. Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of protection of rural and resource lands</b></p> <p>The presentation outlined the different levels of land protection achieved throughout the rural portions of the watershed through ownership, regulations, and incentives. We saw that most forest lands in the upper watershed are protected from development through transfer of development rights, conservation easements and through regulatory requirements guiding forestry practices. Rural residential areas are primarily targeted with tools such as forest stewardship plans and current use taxation programs. And farmers are required to abide by regulations like the Livestock Ordinance and other requirements that often include developing and implementing farm plans. The report did not attempt to ascertain the level of compliance with the requirements associated with each of these tools and the quality of land protection that resulted from them. This might present an interesting topic for Forum discussion with the groups that deliver these various programs.</p>	3	3	0	2 (tie)

Topic & rationale	Forum Follow Up			Draft Priority Order
	Further Study	Develop Response Alternatives	None - Updates only	
<p><b>4. Habitat restoration and protection in Snoqualmie Valley cities</b></p> <p>The draft status report focused primarily on County programs for habitat protection (e.g., policies, regulations, incentives) but did not provide similar discussion of the status, progress and challenges within cities. Cities may benefit from learning about different approaches that could be utilized within the context of incorporated areas. Topics might include the integration of restoration objectives into public works projects; environmental incentive programs for cities.</p>	2	3	2	4 (tie)
<p><b>5. Restoration and agriculture</b></p> <p>The vast majority of the Snoqualmie River floodplain below the falls is within the Agricultural Production District, and a subset of properties within the APD are also enrolled in the Farmland Protection Program. As explained in the report, the APD is a land-use overlay that emphasizes agricultural use, but includes both private and public lands. For example, the Chinook Bend restoration site and the WDFW Stillwater Wildlife Area are within the APD. FPP is a property-specific designation that requires the vast majority of a property to remain in active agriculture in perpetuity and all non-farm development rights have been extinguished. The FPP is a voluntary program administered by King County. Many of the highest-priority restoration sites in the watershed are in agricultural areas. In recent years, tension between restoration needs and agricultural land use has risen in many Puget Sound watersheds. In some cases restoration projects have been strongly opposed by broader agricultural interests, despite the presence of a willing agricultural land owner. King County has established formal procedures to evaluate and minimize the effects of restoration projects on agricultural lands. The ability to implement large restoration efforts in the highest priority areas will hinge on our ability to develop collaborative solutions that recognize the needs of agriculture and salmon recovery in the Snoqualmie Watershed.</p>	3	3	0	2 (tie)
<p><b>6. Effectiveness of riparian planting and invasive weed removal projects</b></p> <p>Riparian planting and invasive plant removal projects represent a substantial fraction of the projects that are funded by the Forum through the KCD grant program [by number of projects if not by total dollar amount due to the size and cost of larger-scale restoration projects]. Are these projects effective in achieving their stated objectives? How can the Forum ensure that funded projects are applying best practices for the type of site and project in question? Are the current requirements for maintenance sufficient to ensure success?</p>	2	3	2	4 (tie)