

## WRIA 8 Update

March 15, 2012

- **King Conservation District 2012 Assessment Update – WRIA 8 2012 KCD Grant Round Canceled**  
On February 16, the Washington State Supreme Court announced its decision that the Mason County Ordinance imposing a per parcel special assessment does not comply with RCW 89.08.400(3), because it did not include a per acre assessment, and is therefore invalid. Based on this court decision, King County and King Conservation District (KCD) have determined that King County's Ordinance is similarly flawed, and that no 2012 assessment funds will be spent. Therefore, no 2012 assessment funds are available to support WRIA and jurisdictional grant programs or KCD staff and operations. As a result, WRIA 8 canceled the 2012 KCD grant round and will not be accepting grant applications. KCD is working with jurisdictional partners, King County, the WRIAs and partner NGOs to prevent disruption to KCD operations and grant programs until a new funding system can be developed and implemented. Both houses of the legislature have passed HB2567, which provides for a system of rates and charges rather than a special assessment as a possible future funding structure beginning in 2013. WRIA 8 partners need to be working with KCD and King County to ensure that a new funding structure will be in place to enable 2013 KCD funding.

In WRIA 8, the lack of KCD funds is a substantial blow to our Plan implementation efforts. In 2012, estimated KCD funding represented roughly two-thirds of the funding available. KCD funds are a critical source of matching funds for state and federal grants, such as Salmon Recovery Funding Board grants. Also, as the Salmon Recovery Council is well aware, KCD funding is the primary funding source for ongoing WRIA 8 fish in/fish out monitoring and outreach and education programs. Project sponsors for these programs are actively thinking about how to bridge the presumed one-year funding gap.

- **Results of Meeting Time Poll** – The results of the poll at the Feb. 16 WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council meeting about whether to continue to have meetings from 3-5:30PM or shorten the meetings to 3-5PM was complicated by write in votes for meeting from 2:30-5PM and several either/or responses. A slight majority voted for meeting from 3-5PM, but some expressed concern about having adequate time to discuss meaty agenda topics in a shorter meeting. We will continue to experiment with meeting from 3-5PM, but check in with members to see if this is working and that there is adequate time for meaningful discussion.
- **Ballard Locks Update** - During the annual WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Tour last October, Army Corps of Engineers staff explained that the Ballard Locks are at risk of failing and that the Locks dam safety rating was being reduced. In addition to the need for the Corps to make permanent fish passage improvements at the Locks, the Locks are over 100 years old and much of the operational machinery has not been replaced or updated. Although the Locks are the busiest lockage in the country, the criteria for funding improvements through the Corps budget are based on the tonnage of commercial goods shipped through the lockage. Therefore, the Locks consistently rank as a lower funding priority than other lockages around the country that transport more commercial goods. Since October of last year, Jean White and Jason Mulvihill - Kuntz have been communicating with staff from the federal congressional delegation to raise their awareness of the condition of the Locks, and to encourage them to request Corps briefings on the topic. As a result of our outreach, King County Executive's Office requested and received a Corps briefing on the Locks at the end of 2011, and Representative Jim McDermott received a Corps briefing at the end of January 2012, and plans to have another briefing in the coming

month where he and his staff plan to follow-up on the topic. Although the issue of the overall poor condition of the Locks is larger than the need to improve fish passage, we are hopeful that the clear need to update and improve the condition of the Locks will include the fish passage needs we have been advocating for. We continue to communicate with congressional staff and others on the topic and will keep the Salmon Recovery Council informed.

On March 14, Jean White attended a Corps briefing about the lowering of the dam safety rating of the Ballard Locks due to aging infrastructure, performance in a seismic event and high economic consequences of failure. The briefing was for federal Congressional staff and local elected officials to prepare them for a press release to the public on March 20. Corps staff emphasized that the Locks are not in immediate danger of failure and an interim plan to address potential issues are underway. 80% of the measures in the interim plan will be completed in 2012. It is not clear if this elevated attention regarding the aging infrastructure at the Ballard Locks will help in addressing the fish passage issues that WRIA 8 has long held as a priority.

- **Corps Vegetation Management on Levees Workshop** - Over the past two years, King County, Puget Sound Partnership and other partners have been working with the Corps of Engineers to find a constructive path to resolving a decades-long conflict over the management of vegetation on levees. The Corps has recently released and is seeking input on new policies that are intended to govern levee vegetation management for many years to come.

Puget Sound Partnership is hosting a workshop will provide an opportunity for the Corps to share information about these new policies and for interested and affected parties to ask questions and share their perspective. It will also include a facilitated discussion exploring the opportunities, constraints, and implications of these new policies. The workshop will take place on **Wednesday, April 4, 2012, from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, at the University of Washington – Tacoma Campus**. The Partnership will provide additional logistical and background information about the workshop on its website: [www.psp.wa.gov](http://www.psp.wa.gov).

- **Williams Pipeline Crossing of Cedar River** - In response to concerns raised by King County, WRIA 8 and others about Williams Northwest Pipeline selecting the Rainbow Bend Restoration Site as their preferred location to cross the Cedar River with a new Puget Sound Energy gas pipeline, they have evaluated other options and alignments for crossing the Cedar River. Their preferred crossing is now at their existing pipeline crossing location near the intersection of Jones Road and Highway 169. Although this is a preferable site to Rainbow Bend, it is a complex site for construction due to the area's topography and the proximity of Highway 169 and the Cedar River Trail. On Wednesday, March 14, Williams Northwest Pipeline held a meeting of permitting agencies and key stakeholders, including WRIA 8 and King County, to discuss the conceptual design for their preferred alignment, permitting requirements, project schedule, and to identify potential risks and other information they should consider. In order to cross the Cedar River, the project will involve open cut excavation of a trench to bury the new pipe and will likely involve having to close the river for up to 48 hours and close the Cedar River Trail for a period of time. Williams Northwest Pipeline plans to submit permit applications in May 2012 and expects to go to construction in August 2013. They have indicated their intent to continue to coordinate and communicate with stakeholders as the project moves forward. The WRIA 8 team will continue to track this issue.
- **Puget Sound Regional Update** - The **Puget Sound Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB)** will meet on April 6 to prioritize near-term strategies in the Puget Sound Action Agenda Update (AA

Update). Scott Stolnack, WRIA 8 Technical Coordinator, is participating in a subcommittee giving technical advice on how near term strategies related to terrestrial/freshwater habitat should be prioritized that will help the ECB with their task. The **Puget Sound Leadership Council** will review and finalize the AA Update at their meeting on April 26 (location to be determined). At the **Puget Sound Watershed Leads** meeting on March 8, we heard reassuring updates about how the salmon section of the AA Update is proposed be strengthened to include more meaningful, tangible near term actions and that it is likely that salmon protection and restoration will be one of three strategic priorities in the final AA Update.

### **WRIA 8 Committee Reports**

- **WRIA 8 Technical Committee** – Met on March 7. Discussed 2012 proposals for updates to Three-Year Work Program, recommended forwarding to SRC for approval; continued work on WRIA 8 project prioritization and scoring criteria for grant funding; received briefings on riparian land cover analysis project and Redmond stream typing project.
- **WRIA 8 Implementation Committee** – Met on Mar. 6. Committee discussed: the draft updated interlocal agreement cost-share for 2013 (mostly small changes for most jurisdictions); King Conservation District update; and the agenda for the Mar. 15 WRIA 8 SRC meeting. The group also agreed to a proposal to have the next step on the riparian strategy to be a workshop, Trees for Streams for community organizations and local governments in WRIA 8 working on streamside vegetation. Tentatively: May 1 at University of Washington Bothell campus. They also discussed a geographic information system exercise to identify streamside parcels at greatest risk of development to focus our efforts on areas in need of protection.
- **Green Shorelines** – The Green Shorelines blog now has nine posts and over 1300 views. Organized a session called “Bring Back the Beach” to be presented at the statewide conference of the Washington Chapter, American Association of Landscape Architects on March 29 in Lynnwood. This is a joint public-private session with presentations by WRIA 8, The Watershed Company, J. A. Brennan Associates, City of Seattle and the Governor’s Office of Regulatory Assistance. More than 250 people are registered for the conference.