

# WRIA 9 Watershed Ecosystem Forum Meeting Summary

Renton City Hall

February 11, 2016, 4:04–6:32 p.m.

<b>Members/Jurisdictional Staff Alternates Present</b>		
1.	Councilmember (CM) Marlla Mhoon, Meeting Chair	City of Covington
2.	CM Bill Peloza, Co-Chair	City of Auburn
3.	Brian Anderson	The Boeing Company
4.	Al Barrie	Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group (MSFEG)
5.	CM Kathryn Campbell	City of SeaTac
6.	Jay Covington	City of Renton
7.	Deputy Mayor Bob Edgar	City of Burien
8.	Matt Goehring	WA Dept. of Natural Resources
9.	Kathy Minsch	City of Seattle
10.	CM Erika Morgan	City of Black Diamond
11.	Joan Nolan	WA Dept. of Ecology
12.	CM Dana Ralph	City of Kent
13.	James Rasmussen	Green Duwamish Watershed Alliance
14.	Loren Reinhold	City of Des Moines
15.	CM Dennis Robertson, Management Committee Chair	City of Tukwila
16.	Chris Searcy	City of Enumclaw
17.	CM Kathleen Waters	City of Normandy Park
<b>Other Alternates Present</b>		
18.	Chris Andersen	City of Auburn
19.	Maiya Andrews	City of Burien
20.	Antonia Jindrich	MSFEG
21.	Mike Mactutis	City of Kent
22.	Ron Straka	City of Renton
<b>Other Attendees</b>		
23.	Joe Anderson	WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW)
24.	Sarah Gage	Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
25.	CM Peter Kwon	City of SeaTac
26.	Kjristine Lund	King County Flood Control District
27.	Tim O'Leary	King County
28.	Mike Perfetti	City of Tukwila
29.	Peter Topping	WDFW
30.	Jean White	King County
31.	Kollin Higgins	King County
32.	Bruce Wulkan	Puget Sound Partnership
33.	Karen Bergeron	WRIA 9 Habitat Project Coordinator
34.	Maureen Judge	WRIA 9 Communications Coordinator
35.	Elissa Ostergaard	WRIA 9 Habitat Plan Manager
36.	Doug Osterman	WRIA 9 Salmon Recovery Manager

Meeting Chair Marlla Mhoon opened the Watershed Ecosystem Forum (WEF) meeting, and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

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## 1. 2016-2017 Co-Chair Selection

*The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously re-elected as Co-Chairs Marlla Mhoon and Bill Peloza.*

## 2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

## 3. Approval of Meeting Summary

*The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously approved the meeting summary for the November 12, 2015 meeting.*

## 4. Lower Green River System-Wide Improvement Framework Status Report

Kjris Lund, Executive Director, King County Flood Control District (FCD), reported that we are taking the Lower Green River System-Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) in a new direction, and to create a Lower Green River Interim Corridor Plan and commit to a programmatic EIS. By way of background, Kjris said the intent of a U.S. Corps of Engineers (Corps) SWIF process is to assess and analyze the entire watershed of a river to allow for variances from national Corps standards, such as possibly allowing vegetation and mature trees on levees for inclusion in the PL 84-99 program, which pays 80% of the cost of repairs to damaged levees. During the Lower Green River SWIF process, however, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (MIT) filed a sixty-day intent to sue and, partly as a result, the Corps changed its mind and decided to “accept” rather than “approve” the SWIF, which essentially downgraded the Lower Green SWIF as no longer a federal action, preempting the need for an EIS or Section 7 consultation. She said the FCD Board of Supervisors, as a tandem decision to the Corps downgrade, decided to pare back the products of the Lower Green River SWIF (see below), and develop a corridor plan that is more in synch with our values and in line with the original purposes of the Lower Green River SWIF.

Kjris said the focus for the Interim SWIF will be on resolving the bare minimum of PL 84-99 deficiencies that the Corps directed us to address. Components of the Interim SWIF include:

- A Deficiency Action Plan to deal with near term actions (fence removal, flap gates), and ongoing programmatic or maintenance actions (animal burrows, unacceptable slopes);
- A Capital Plan to address 11 stability deficiencies on four levees and work on three early action capital projects (Lower Russell Road, Tukwila 205, Horseshoe Bend);
- A Vegetation Plan to work with natural resource agencies to provide and maintain shoreline habitat on levees; and
- Interim Risk Reduction Measures (IRRM) to figure out how to make the public aware of risks and inform them of programs on the ground.

Costs for the Interim SWIF include \$85,000-\$100,000 capital, \$780,000 per year levee maintenance and operation, and \$523,000 for IRRM costs.

Kjris explained that the Lower Green River Corridor Plan will build on the Interim SWIF and have an inclusive scope beyond PL 84-99 levees, including recreation and habitat. The FCD will do a programmatic EIS as part of the corridor planning process, evaluating alternatives and new ways of looking at options. She said permitting agencies will be working with us, and we will be able to get permits more easily because of looking at cumulative impacts and how they fit together. At their meeting on February 16 the Board of Supervisors will vote to submit the Interim SWIF to the Corps, commit to the Lower Green River Corridor Plan and the programmatic EIS, and appoint the Advisory Committee. Most members of the

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Advisory Committee formed for the Lower Green SWIF will be asked to serve again. She added that some Board members and staff are going to Washington DC to lobby the Corps to do Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

Discussion:

- Dennis Robertson asked if FCD is working with the City of Tukwila on the three levees mentioned as part of the Tukwila 205 project. Kjrj Lund said yes, Tukwila contracts with King County (KC), which has been working with their staff. She said we are not doing design work on those levees yet.
- Marlla Mhoon commented that SWIF has been a long process, and she asked if we still have Seattle District Commander Colonel Buck's support. Kjrj confirmed Col. Buck is still serving on the Advisory Committee, and he's happy to do so.
- Bill Pelozo inquired when FCD would like our letter of support. Kjrj explained that she has a letter drafted that she can provide to staff. She said we are "threading the needle" because we are under threat of a lawsuit.
- Marlla Mhoon asked if FCD has put a good pot of money into this effort. Kjrj responded that a resolution directs her to put together that budget and scope, and the Board will have to approve it. We will also need budget for the EIS.
- Mike Mactutis inquired if the technical committee will still be a part of the SWIF. Kjrj said the technical committee will be different than before, addressing technical issues. Most members will be from resource permitting agencies, while the Advisory Committee will focus on policy choices. She said Councilmember Mhoon is going to participate again, as is Holly Coccoli from the MIT.
- Kathryn Campbell asked for information on the criteria for picking the EIS firm. Kjrj said we did a RFQ two weeks ago, and had three excellent firms submit. We hired Parametrix, are going out to a RFP process for a big piece of the work, and expect the same three firms will submit: ICF, Herrera, and Parametrix.
- James Rasmussen expressed frustration with how long SWIF has dragged out and held things up. We should have moved forward on these projects with the Corps years ago. Many in this group see it the same way as the MIT when the process is characterized as not going far enough. Marlla Mhoon said every SWIF discussion included multiple benefits, and sometimes people didn't agree.

## 5. Strategy for WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan Update

Elissa Ostergaard, Habitat Plan Manager, reported that the Salmon Habitat Plan update process will include new science and information, identify and address gaps, update conservation hypotheses, identify programs, policies and projects, and work with Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) and NOAA on new requirements. Per the Plan update decision at the November WEF meeting, WRIA 9 Staff was directed to use:

- Existing staff and budget or grant funds (if available) to increase capacity (\$100K is available in the consultant budget, but technical, meeting facilitation capacity is needed);
- The WRIA 9 Implementation Technical Committee (ITC) and staff to synthesis new information and make recommendations;
- WEF meetings and two public workshops to provide input into policies, programs, actions (an extra WEF meeting is proposed for October 2016);
- A flexible schedule as we await PSP guidance coming in 2016 (pressures assessment, habitat goals and indicators, conceptual models and results chains, Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan may be required).

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Elissa explained that the ITC, which meets monthly, will use science to adaptively manage Plan implementation. The list of ITC members is included in the packet, membership remains open, and we have called for, and are getting, more participation from the cities and others. She said the proposed Plan Update schedule lists the topics that will be covered at 2016 WEF meetings: productivity (tonight's meeting), water quality (May), habitat goals (August, October and November), climate change (August) and scientific foundation (November). Yellow Bus Tours are planned for September 2016 and June 2017, there will be two public/stakeholder workshops in 2017 (January and July), and the Plan Update will be finalized in February 2018.

## Discussion:

- Bruce Wulkan, PSP, announced that workshops on common indicators will begin in the spring and there will be consultant help from PSP for developing habitat goals.
- James Rasmussen commented that guidance from PSP makes him shudder, and he asked where the common indicators are coming from. Bruce Wulkan responded that the language will be vetted by all participants, and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council will provide key common indicators. All WRIAs are monitoring different things in the Puget Sound area, and a roll-up will tell a better story.
- Elissa Ostergaard provided examples of common indicators: amount of trees on riverbanks, shoreline armoring, numbers of out-migrating fish, etc.
- James Rasmussen shared his concern that further vetting takes time away from projects getting done, citing T-117 as an example of a project that has not moved ahead because it is still going through a NOAA process. He asked what we can do to help promote projects. Elissa said partnerships, advice, talking to regulators, working behind the scenes all help.
- Marlla Mhoon said all outside projects contribute to overall habitat goals. She asked if PSP had weighed in on the planned methanol plant that would take a lot of water from the Green River. Bruce Wulkan said he didn't know but will check.

## 6. New Authorizing Requirements for Funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Karen Bergeron, Habitat Projects Coordinator, said as of October 2015 the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) is requiring that a new Application Authorization resolution be on file in order to receive these grants in the future. The authorization resolution will be signed by the WEF co-chairs, and Sarah Gage from the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office is here to answer questions. In the future this form will be part of the administration for project and capacity grants, and project sponsors will also have to have this form signed (City of Kent project Application Authorizations will have to be signed by the Kent City Council), so this has ramifications for other project sponsors as well.

***The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously approved the Application Authorization resolution for Salmon Recovery Funding Board funding.***

## 7. 2016-2025 Interlocal Agreement Approvals – City of Algona

Doug Osterman reported that 16 of 17 jurisdictions approved the 2016-2025 WRIA 9 Interlocal Agreement (ILA) in 2015, and it has been in effect since November 2015. The one exception is the City of Algona, which, because of when they finish their budget (mid-December), would not be able to comply with the December 1 budget deadline. He explained that Mayor Dave Hill did not want to sign on to something he couldn't deliver, so WRIA 9 is proposing writing them an agreement letter, and after Algona receives it, Mayor Hill will sign the ILA by March 1.

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***The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously approved the Interlocal Agreement exception letter to the City of Algona.***

## 8. WRIA 9 2016 Budget: Management Committee Request

Marlla Mhoon remarked that this is an information item, not a discussion item. The Management Committee (MC) is requesting from the WEF permission to make adjustments to the 2016 WRIA 9 work plan if necessary. She said, as all of you know, grants are very specific on the scope of work they cover. During routine last-quarter budget reporting it was discovered that some project expenses were not covered by grant funds and the time was charged to our reserve fund – the reserve we had held onto for updating the Salmon Habitat Plan. As soon as this accounting glitch was discovered, the current work was transferred to another grant that does cover the expenditures. KC is carefully working to identify charges and assess the damage to WRIA 9's reserve fund.

CM Mhoon reported that on February 3, 2016, the MC formed a subcommittee of Service Provider and MC members to work with the county on solutions to bring back to the MC at its April meeting and to the WEF at its May meeting. Subcommittee members are:

- MC:
  - Dennis Robertson, City of Tukwila, MC Chair
  - Jay Covington, City of Renton
  - Susan Saffery, City of Seattle
- Service Provider and WRIA 9:
  - Joan Lee, KC (In role of KC Service Provider)
  - Doug Osterman (in role as WRIA 9 Salmon Recovery Manager)

CM Mhoon said we have no further information at this point in time. What the MC is specifically requesting of the WEF is the ability to make necessary adjustments to the 2016 work plan in order to balance the 2016 budget.

Discussion:

- Dennis Robertson explained that if we wait to bring this back to the WEF without forming a subcommittee, we'd be half way through the year and the budget would be spent. The subcommittee will bring back an explanation, and steps to make sure this doesn't happen again. The subcommittee will make a recommendation to the full MC, probably in a few weeks, and KC is providing information as quickly and thoroughly as possible.
- Jay Covington added we will call a special WEF meeting if it is a big deal.

***The Watershed Ecosystem Forum unanimously approved the motion to authorize a Management Committee subcommittee to review the WRIA 9 budget and adjust the work plan if it becomes necessary.***

## 9. Habitat Plan Update Technical Brief #2: Freshwater Life History Diversity & Productivity of Green River Chinook Salmon

Joe Anderson, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), introduced co-author, Peter Topping, WDFW, and shared the list of people who have helped with the report. Funding for the study came from a WRIA 9 Cooperative Watershed Management (CWM) grant. The goal of the study was to evaluate long-term monitoring data sets on the Green River. The study asked three basic questions:

- What are life history patterns of Chinook on the Green River?

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- What are the limiting factors to productivity?
- What are the implications of these results for flows and how they reduce or benefit survival, river restoration, and for future research needs?

Joe reported that the fish trap, operating 24/7, January through July, is about 33 miles up the Green, just upstream of the Soos Creek. The trap is a five foot cylinder with a rotating baffle that samples fish as they go downriver, catching a portion of migrating salmon and steelhead, and using mark-recapture methods to estimate total abundance. 100,000-800,000 juveniles were sampled each year over the last 15 years. He said juvenile fish are moving downstream January-June in two distinct pulses, and there are more fish in the late February-March pulse than the second one mid-May through the end of June. All these fish are less than one-year-olds.

Joe said fry (<45mm) migrate earlier in the season than parr (>45mm). The total abundance of each changes between years; some years fry are more abundant, some years parr are more abundant, and we are looking at what flows affect this. With more adults, you see more fry heading downstream, but once you get over 2,000 adults, no additional parr come downstream. He said the Green only has so many rearing areas and so much food, and once you get above 3,000-4,000 adults there is no room to produce additional parr. Adults spawn October-December, embryos incubate October-January, and beginning in mid-January, fry emerge from the nests and go downstream. From April to June, fish that can find a spot to rear and grow stay in the Middle Green.

Joe explained that during incubation, salmon are vulnerable to peak flows. A female digs a salmon red 1-2 feet deep, and after she dies, eggs stay in the gravel for 2½ months. If the river goes up, it mobilizes gravels and the eggs get crushed. Maximum daily flows during egg incubation are in November-January. In years when the river has a major flood event, fewer juveniles are seen going downstream, and above 10,000 cfs we have the absolute lowest survival of fry. This shows up in the parr data, when you see fewer parr when fry experience peak flows above 7,000 cfs from mid-January to the end of March.

Joe said parr like to rear in side channels, not the main river. Side channels have shallow water and roots or trees to hide behind. There are more parr per adult spawners when parr experience wetter years with more days with high spring flows. The Corps has a program adding 5-15 tons of spawning gravel at Howard Hanson Dam (HHD), which has been successful, assuring that spawning habitat is good quality and available. This suggests rearing habitat is in short supply, and if there was more, we may have more parr. High flows mean less parr, but are also essential for river processes, and limiting high flows would mean simplifying habitat. Side channels really benefit the population, and are refugia for small fry and parr that use them for rearing. Creating new side channels either by restoration or habitat processes is likely to improve rearing habitat.

Joe went over the research needs, which include the lack of information below the Middle Green, and whether small fish survive in the marine environment or are doomed to be eaten in Puget Sound. WDFW has a laser that makes cross sections of salmon otoliths (ear bones), which due to minerals and water chemistry, have rings that grow like tree rings over the whole life of the fish. He said as a result we can dissect adult salmon otoliths, and observe daily growth increments and strontium to calcium ratios, which can tell when in its life history a salmon entered salt water.

Discussion:

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- Chris Searcy asked how accurate adult counts are. Joe Anderson explained they are generated by redd surveys, with some assumptions about fish per redd and how long redds last. This might be less accurate than juvenile estimate, but he said he still feels confident that the ratios are good.
- Marlla Mhoon asked when otolith research will be done. Joe said he is currently working on the budget and proposal with Kollin Higgins for otolith research.
- SeaTac CM Peter Kwon asked if returning salmon are recorded at the same time as migrants are going out. Joe said we can calculate the smolt/adult return rates, but it doesn't take into account harvest. It also doesn't let us calculate how fry and parr rates compare.
- Al Barrie asked if there has been a difference in productivity since the introduction of pink salmon in the Green River. Kollin Higgins responded that pinks were historically in the Green River and the population came back relatively recently, but there is not a strong "before" data set to measure productivity against the current situation. Al said we have pinks only every other year, and more steelhead following pink years
- Al Barrie noted that we used to fertilize the river with fish carcasses, which adds nutrients to the channel, and he asked if that's something we should do again. He also said debris isn't falling below HHD, and asked what we can do about that. Woody debris improves complexity, makes pools and deeper and shallower areas, and big pieces can hold up and cause other pieces to stay. Kollin Higgins said the Corps does add some logs to the river from the wood that gets into the reservoir.
- James Rasmussen commented that the presentation didn't talk about the need for a fish ladder to open up the upper watershed for spawning. Joe Anderson replied that opening up above HHD would also create a big increase in rearing habitat.
- Dennis Robertson inquired about putting a smolt trap in the Lower Green. Kollin Higgins explained we have talked about it at RM 18, but it is a significant investment and expensive to run, about \$120,000/year. He said we should consider it when the time is ripe, perhaps when fish passage at HHD happens. The ITC has been working on ideas with Joe Anderson, such as otolith sampling.
- Mike Mactutis inquired about flow regime and reservoir filling, and whether we see the same pattern of life history strategies on rivers with similar flows. Joe Anderson said we see this same general pattern of two main life history strategies on many other rivers in Puget Sound. Limited rearing habitat for parr is universal, because fish want to stay and get bigger but do not have enough space. The Skagit River has more habitat but 1.2M juveniles per year is the limit. Kollin Higgins noted the plan indicates we need a portfolio of different life history diversities to recover fish.
- Jean White said when we do the otolith work, are we expecting to find a better survival rate for parr. Joe Anderson said that is the conventional wisdom. At other rivers we have seen fry migrants contribute to adult returns, but we need to know the relative role they play, and what the importance of ocean conditions are to their survival.

(A videotape of the presentation is available online:

<http://www.govlink.org/watersheds/9/committees/archive/1602/JoeAnderson021116.mp4.>)

Elissa shared the Summary of Findings document, "Productivity and Life Diversity of Chinook in the Middle Green", and suggested that the funding for the fish trap should continue.

- James Rasmussen said the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council felt that common indicators were important for Puget Sound. If we find common indicators that all watersheds would monitor to make a compelling story in Washington DC, it would possibly result in more money.
- Marlla Mhoon asked about the common indicator information around being collected by KC, such as acres of estuary habitat, and acres of trees planted. Kollin Higgins pointed out that everyone looks at tree planting differently, and we need a common counting system.

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## 10. Public Comment

James Rasmussen reported that the upcoming Green/Duwamish Watershed Symposium is sold out. Hopefully it will be filmed and on YouTube. He also announced that an Urban Land Study that addresses climate change, storm surges, social equity and habitat issues was just released today, out of Janet Sholz's Office of Planning and Community Development. He said it is a fascinating read, dealing with the same issues we are talking about here, and he would get a copy to WRIA 9 staff to distribute.

Kathryn Campbell announced she adopted a baby Orca, "Windsong", through the Whale Center on Orcas Island. Windsong is a boy and a member of L Pod.

## 11. Wrap Up/Next Steps

The next WEF meeting is Thursday, May 12, Renton City Hall, 4-6:30 p.m.