

Snoqualmie Watershed Forum
MEETING SUMMARY
September 18, 2013
Meeting 7:00-9:00 pm
Snoqualmie Fire Station, Snoqualmie, WA

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jason Walker	City of Duvall Councilmember, Forum Chair
Bryan Holloway	City of Snoqualmie, Vice Chair
Erin Chamberlain	City of Carnation Councilmember
Ryan Kolodejchuk	City of North Bend Councilmember
Bill Knutsen	King Conservation District
Kent Renno	Citizen Representative
Micah Wait	Wild Fish Conservancy, Non-profit Representative
Charles Peterson	City of Snoqualmie (Alternate)
Jennifer McKeown	Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Non-profit Representative (alternate)

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Introductions and Minutes

- The Forum approved the July 17th meeting summary without changes.

Forum Updates and Announcements

Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)/Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) 2013 Grant Round: Due to the loss of staff at Snohomish County, Perry Falcone facilitated the 2013 SRFB/PSAR grant decision for the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum. On August 1st, The Forum met and approved six projects totaling \$2,492,387. Projects in the King County portion of WRIA 7 included the Tolt River Conservation project for \$300,000 and the Upper Carlson Floodplain Reconnection project for \$1,388,523.

Cooperative Watershed Management Grant: On September 9th, the Flood District Board of Supervisors approved all of the Cooperative Watershed Management grants submitted by the Snoqualmie Forum and WRIAs 8, 9, & 10. Reagan Dunn mentioned that there may be additional Flood District funding in the future and there would be discussion at that time of how that funding could be allocated.

Snohomish Basin Protection Plan: The project team, including Snohomish County, King County and the Tulalip Tribes, are close to finalizing the technical approach to the Snohomish Basin Protection Plan. On September 27th the steering committee will meet for the first time to discuss the overall goals of the project and the technical approach that will be used. Ultimately, the goal of this work is to have the Protection Plan adopted as an addendum to the Snohomish Basin Salmon Conservation Plan.

Snoqualmie Watershed Forestry Workgroup: On October 29th, the Snoqualmie Watershed team is hosting a forestry workgroup comprised of representatives from federal, state and local governments, tribes, non-profits, and private industry to begin discussions on how groups/individuals perceive forestry management and practices to be working, both to ensure sustainable forestry while conserving and enhancing critical habitat.

Farm, Flood, Fish (R-650): Since the July meeting and tour, the King County project team has conducted outreach to farmers in the Snoqualmie to identify preferred options for engaging the broader community and to identify potential advisory committee members. The Snoqualmie Forum will be represented on the committee by either Jason Walker or Bryan Holloway. The first meeting of the committee will likely take place in late October.

VIDEO - State of Salmon: Restoring a Washington Icon

Janne Kaje, Snoqualmie Watershed Coordinator, introduced a video produced by the State Recreation and Conservation Office, the same state agency that distributes funds through the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB). The video is part of a series of short clips designed to showcase the successes and challenges of salmon recovery work and features testimonials by government officials, scientists, tribes, fishermen and other salmon recovery partners. RCO is encouraging local watershed groups to produce similar videos to showcase local efforts. The Snoqualmie Watershed Forum could potentially join forces with the broader Snohomish Basin Forum to produce a film at the WRIA scale, or pursue a project independently for the Snoqualmie. No decisions needed at this time.

Snoqualmie at Fall City / Upper Carlson Project Presentation (Todd Hurley, King County)

[Note: For greater detail, copies of the presentation can be requested from Forum staff]. Todd Hurley, geomorphologist with King County's Water & Land Resources Division, gave a presentation on the Upper Carlson floodplain restoration project, located along the Snoqualmie River just downstream of Fall City. Todd thanked the Forum for its support of the specific project as well as the broader Snoqualmie at Fall City initiative of which Upper Carlson is the first project to go to construction, scheduled for summer 2014.

Todd summarized the unique dynamics and resulting restoration opportunities within this reach of the Snoqualmie, downstream of the confluence of the Raging River which delivers large amounts of gravel to the Snoqualmie. That gravel input makes this a historically active river channel, with strong erosive forces and changes in channel alignment. The dynamic nature of the reach – in the absence of levees and revetments - historically created very diverse habitat conditions for spawning and rearing salmon, including Chinook. One goal of King County's restoration efforts in this reach is to restore the dynamic processes to the river where possible, while minimizing impacts to farmland and improving the level of flood risk reduction in the area. Many of the same factors that make this a focal point for restoration also create unique challenges for flood risk management and provide high quality agricultural soils.

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board funded a reach-scale feasibility study that analyzed a roughly 5-mile stretch of the river. Comparison of historical aerial photos, interviews with landowners and intensive modeling of hydraulics in the reach have led to a detailed understanding of flood behavior in the reach and has helped to inform restoration opportunities. The feasibility study honed in on four major projects in the reach. The projects all involve removal and realignment of existing levees and revetments. The greatest ecological benefits will result from the linkage of the projects through the reach so that the value of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The Upper Carlson is the first project to be designed in detail and it has secured funding for construction. In addition to its substantial ecological benefits, the project will enhance the level of protection against erosion for adjacent farmland on the north side of the river. In addition, due to expected changes in gravel deposition patterns, the project may also relieve pressure on the opposite (south) bank in an area that has undergone serious erosion in recent years. The level of modeling performed for the project is more detailed than for any prior King County project. Landowners have

reported that the model's predictions of flood behavior match up very well with their own experiences during past events.

Questions from Forum and audience: Matt Baerwalde asked if in fact the current, relatively straight river channel was dug through the site at some point in the past. YES, while the alignment of the river has changed prior to construction of levees and revetments in the 1930's, there is photographic evidence that the current alignment is artificial. The channel was dug and then hemmed in by levees and revetments.

Jason Walker asked if the changes in channel bed elevation are expected to change groundwater elevation on surrounding agricultural lands. Todd acknowledged that the particular question had not been addressed by the modeling, but that it seemed very unlikely given the overall widening of the channel and what is known about the consistency of bed materials in the reach.

Bill Knutsen asked about the term "racked wood" and what it means in this project context. Todd explained that some of the engineered wood installations are designed so that they will accumulate additional wood over time that floats down the river.

New Riparian Planting Requirements

Perry Falcone provided a briefing on an emerging policy issue related to funding for buffer plantings. Riparian buffer plantings are an important part of restoring habitat to protect water quality and to provide a variety of ecological functions that help support salmon recovery. The Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Plan calls for riparian buffers plantings broadly across the basin. Some riparian buffers are protected through regulations, but many are planted through voluntary efforts of landowners, including many farmers in the Snoqualmie Valley.

In response to the Treaty Rights at Risk initiative by the member tribes of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, federal agencies have responded with new guidelines for federal grant programs that pay for riparian plantings. The guidelines also apply to state grants that operate with pass-through federal funds. Specifically, the new guidelines set minimum buffer widths for projects funded by federal dollars, and these buffers are substantially larger than those previously allowed by some grant programs. While the guidelines have not yet been published for WADOE grants, the buffers on fish bearing streams are likely to have a minimum width of 100-150 ft.

Forum staff believe that while the technical basis for the buffer guidance is sound and defensible, they may have a chilling effect on the willingness of private landowners to engage in voluntary actions to support salmon recovery and water quality.

Perry requested direction from the Forum on 1) whether to write a comment letter to state and federal agencies expressing our concern, or to simply track the issue; and 2) specific recommendations to include in a letter if one is to be prepared. Some of the options outlined by staff included a request for consideration of parcel size and the impacts of large buffers; opportunities to secure partial grant funding for buffers smaller than the minimum; buffer averaging across reaches; more flexibility for private lands

Matt Baerwalde, Snoqualmie Tribe, supported the idea of a letter. He suggested that a more detailed review of the implications should be made before the new guidelines are applied.

Larry Pickering (guest, Ag Commissioner) note that much narrower, dense buffers of 15 ft have been tested in Whatcom County on agricultural ditches and they seem to do well at shading and controlling field runoff.

Bill Knutsen (KCD) noted that he is aware of three farmers who have withdrawn from federal grant programs for riparian planting since the new requirements came into force, and that the Natural Resource Conservation Service was having trouble finding takers for grant funds under the new requirements.

Ryan Kolodejchuk (North Bend) suggested it may be better to wait and see the actual guidance and to see how it plays out before writing a letter.

Jason Walker (Duvall) suggested the addition of current watershed condition as a criterion for buffer width, so that watersheds that are relatively intact, such as the Snoqualmie, could have more flexibility.

Kent Renno (citizen representative) recommended that the Forum be proactive and send a letter sooner rather than later.

Staff suggested that prior to sending a letter, staff contact partners at Tulalip Tribes who are engaged in the watershed but also are partners in the Treaty Rights at Risk effort. Also, a review of the actual grant guidelines for the State grant programs are being issued soon and a review of the provisions is recommended. Staff will bring a final draft letter to the Forum for review prior to sending.

Local Integrating Organization Update

Forum staff Perry Falcone and Beth LeDoux have been participating in the Stilly-Snohomish Local Integrating Organization meetings to draft near term actions (NTAs) for the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda update. Ross Loudenback, Councilmember North Bend, has also served on the LIO Executive Committee as a representative of valley cities.

Perry described the emerging list of NTAs is not a capital project list per se, although some capital actions are included. The current list includes 25-30 NTA submitted by several partner organizations across the two watersheds, but the plan is to whittle the list down to 10-12 NTAs.

Perry also described the participation of local jurisdiction staff from Valley cities and the Snoqualmie Tribe in the process. Perry also agreed to send out the draft list of NTAs to the Forum.

[More details can be found on the LIO Update handout.]

Public Comment

Bill Knutsen commended King County, Stewart Reinbold from WDFW, American Farmland Trust and Stewardship Partners for their efforts to enable the dredging project at Ames Creek to improve field drainage. The project had been a long term priority for the King Conservation District and for local land owners.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at the North Bend Senior Center on November 20, beginning at 6:30 PM for the Forum's annual cider and cheese celebration.