



King County

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
January 17, 2007
Preston Community Center, Preston, Washington

Commissioners present: Alex Kamola (Chair), Julie Stangell (Vice Chair), Jim Franzel, Doug McClelland, Kevin Buckley, Lee Witter Kahn and Ron Baum (arrived later)

Commissioners absent: Doug Schindler, Leonard Guss and Dennis Dart

Ex officio member present: Marilyn Cope and Amy Grotta

Ex officio members absent: Randy Sandin

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Farm and Forest Programs Manager; Kristi McClelland, Forester; Bill Loeber, Forester and Linda Vane, Liaison for the Rural Forest Commission

Guests: DeeAnn Hansen, small forest landowner, and Matt Rourke, International Forestry Consultants

Meeting Summary

Action Items:

1. Meetings in 2007 will be held on the third Wednesday of every other month.
2. The Executive Committee will consider whether to recommend changing Chapter 2.41.030, section D of the County Code, which establishes the make up of the Rural Forest Commission (RFC), to include a non-voting ex officio position representing the USDA Forest Service along with certain technical corrections.
3. Staff will research whether state law could be changed to bring forest practices on parcels platted after 1960 under state jurisdiction rather than that of local governments.
4. Julie Stangell will arrange for an informational report regarding the experience of private forest managers working under the King County Shoreline Master Program.
5. Staff will compile the RFC's comments on the King County Comp Plan update and provide them to Paul Reitenbach, Manager for the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Motions:

Motion 1-17-07 That the minutes from the September 13, 2006, meeting be approved. The motion was moved, seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Motion 2-17-07 That the minutes from the November 9, 2006, meeting be approved with the following corrections: that on page 6, item No. 1 the word "charter" be changed to "bylaws" and that on the same page, item No. 4, the words "each month" be changed to read "every other month." The motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2007 Meeting Schedule

It was proposed at the November meeting that in 2007 the RFC meet on the third Wednesday of every other month. The commission approved the new meeting schedule by consensus.

Election of officers for 2007

Alex Kamola, RFC Chair

After some discussion, the RFC decided to conduct nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the commission via email before the next meeting. Linda reminded the commissioners that the members of the Executive Committee could also be selected at the next meeting. An Executive Committee, consisting of the Chair, the Vice Chair, two RFC members selected by the full commission, and the staff liaison, may act on behalf of the RFC when time constraints make it impossible for the full commission to act.

Staff Reports

Bill Loeber, King County Forester

Bill provided an update on King County's Natural Resource Lands Management, explaining that there are about 3,000 acres of working forest that are managed by the Forestry Program in conjunction with the County's Natural Resource Lands Program. So far the most significant forestry activities have been on Taylor Mountain, where 167 acres were harvested and replanted between 2004 and 2006, according to Bill. Tree survival surveys show that of survival rates of the planted trees are very good. Additional replanting is planned. Until 2006 Bill worked with volunteers to help with the management of the forest, but he has found that it is more cost effective to hire professionals. Volunteers will still be used in a limited capacity because of the educational and outreach value. A second timber harvest of about 70 acres has been sold and the Forestry Program has contracted out more of the work on timber sale management as time goes by. Generally the second harvest went well. Contractors were hired to apply herbicide for brush control, which was very much needed to keep brush from overwhelming the newly planted trees.

On another of the County-owned working forests, Ring Hill Forest, Bill completed the layout of a new harvest unit with the objectives of maximizing value while lowering impact on the surrounding neighborhood over time. The contract has been awarded and the prescription is being developed.

Linda Vane, Liaison for the RFC

Linda reminded the commission that Annual Financial Disclosure Statements are due April 1st. An electronic version of the form can be downloaded from the Internet [see <http://www.metrokc.gov/ethics/findiscbforms.aspx>]. Linda reported that the County will reimburse commissioners for travel expenses at the federal rate of 48.5 cents per mile.

Linda distributed copies of the "2006 Forestry Program Accomplishments Report," which is the internal annual report for the program. The report is offered for informational purposes because some of the commissioners had requested more information about Forestry Program activities and services.

Linda reported that the County is currently accepting applications for Forestry Opportunity Grants [see <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/forestry/forestryopp.htm>]. The program offers grants of up to \$10,000 for projects that help strengthen infrastructure for forestry, promote forest products-based businesses, encourage cooperative forest management across adjacent forest properties or promote sustainable forestry. Contact Linda Vane for more information.

Linda also reported on the Natural Resource Stewardship Network. Last year the program changed its focus to providing educational opportunities for youth in forestry. With matching funds from the King Conservation District, the County has awarded over \$110,000 in grants to projects that provide: forestry training and internships for at risk and immigrant youth, training in tree inventory and forest monitoring for young people and hands-on experience in the reforestation of degraded habitats.

Linda provided an update on County resources for forest landowners, explaining that during the past year the RFC has given the Forestry Program a lot of input on new ways that the County can improve infrastructure for forestry. Linda said that in response to these recommendations, the Forestry Program in 2007 will take some new directions in addition to pursuing its traditional coached planning classes, technical assistance and forest stewardship plan review. Among the new directions are:

- A redesign of the Forestry Program web page to focus on services for people who are managing forest lands.
- Expanded forest-related content at the 2007 Small Farm Expo. Linda and Amy Grotta have organized a series of workshops for forest landowners and forest-related attractions, such as a mobile sawmill demonstration. This free event will be held on March 24 in Enumclaw [<http://king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/SmallFarmExpo.html>].
- Expanded Fire Safety Planning for communities in forested areas.
- Two workshops through Washington State University (WSU) Extension for forestry consultants.
- An electronic bulletin board, also through WSU Extension, to help connect those who offer forestry services to those who need services.

Kristi McClelland, King County Forester

Kristi reported further on Community Fire Safety Planning and the Tolt River Highlands community, which was one of the first areas where the County facilitated community fire planning. The effort was very successful in encouraging landowners to join across landscapes to make forest practices more cost-effective and over 400 acres were commercially thinned in 2005 and 2006. Unfortunately the windstorm on December 15, 2007, caused severe damage to the remaining trees in some of the thinned stands. The arrangement and level of fuels on the ground is going to build a true fire hazard. A greater fear is that with so much wood down, that bark beetles will move into the area and any residual stand will be susceptible to beetles. In addition, the trees are stressed because the stand was left overstocked too long. Salvage and cleanup is complicated because the storm-damaged stands are in a groundwater recharge area, which means

Washington DNR requires very specific and expensive reporting before permit applications will be accepted and processed. King County staff are working with the community to find ways to address the forest health and fire safety concerns cost-effectively. The community may seek a Forestry Opportunity Grant from the County.

Amy Grotta, WSU King County Extension

Amy reported further on forestry workshops and the electronic bulletin board for forestry services. The two workshops planned for 2007 will be oriented toward improving efficiencies and opportunities for landowners on the ground, including an orientation to consultants, with information on regulations that are specific to this county and what services landowners in our area are looking for. The bulletin board is conceived of as an online place where landowners could recruit neighbors for cooperative timber harvests or where operators could post services offered. Amy said that WSU Extension and King County are currently working on resolving some technical issues related to hosting and screening postings on the Internet.

Amy also updated the commission on the coached forest stewardship planning classes [<http://king.wsu.edu/forestry/index.htm>], for which the demand continues to grow. She said that the winter class, which starts January 18th, is full and has a waiting list for entry. Registration for the spring class in Issaquah is well underway, with the class is already half full.

Doug M. commented that in listening to these staff reports, he was reminded that in the first four years of the RFC, the commissioners did not hear this kind of report. The staff now is really getting out to the landowners, doing projects and finding there is huge enthusiasm from the public. Doug M. encouraged the RFC to think about what they can do to get ahead of this machine that is now rolling forward quite well and figure out how to stay ahead. Doug M. said that the County's Forestry Program has made a big leap forward in the last two years and said that RFC Chair Alex Kamola deserves partial credit for that. The RFC should now ask if there are enough staff to work with the landowners that want services and if there are funding issues within the County that raise the question of how the County will pay for the staff. In the past the RFC focused on trying to get people excited about working forests. Now that people are excited, we may be looking at not enough staff to deliver services, or budget cuts, or we may have better ways to deliver that message. A few years ago we were arguing about forest certification and arguing about land use issues, now we are talking about real on the ground things. That is exciting, said Doug M.

Ron Baum said that in terms of keeping ahead, there are unstaffed ideas that will be even bigger in the future. He said that the RFC should put those things out there and work toward them. Alex Kamola encouraged all commission members, if they have ideas, to make sure they get on the agenda so that the commission can give them considered attention.

Kathy Creahan, Farm and Forest Programs Manager

Kathy provided an introduction to King County's Shoreline Master Program Update. She said that the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) has not been updated in 30 years. The public process to solicit input on the SMP Update will begin soon, so the Update Project Manager has been

invited to make a presentation to the March RFC meeting. Kathy said that the SMP issue that the RFC has talked about in the past concerns King County's requirement for a shoreline permit along with the State Forest Practice permit, which not all counties require. Julie Stangell agreed to arrange for an informational report by Hancock Timber regarding the experience of private forest managers who work under the current King County Shoreline Master Program.

Rural Forest Commission Bylaws Update

Linda Vane, Liaison to the RFC

The RFC discussed possible changes to the administrative rules of the commission and to King County Code Chapter 2.41, which governs the structure and functions of the RFC. Linda explained that the RFC can alter the administrative rules for itself, but that the County Council would make any ordinance changes. Jim Franzel proposed that a non-voting ex officio seat representing the Forest Service be added to the RFC ordinance. He explained that it is the policy of the Federal government that Forest Service employees not hold voting positions on any advisory bodies related to local government or non-profit organizations. He said that the Forest Service manages 25 percent of the land in King County and has always had someone on the RFC. Jim said that he works for the Forest Service, but serves on the RFC as a private individual. Other changes and corrections were discussed. Lee Kahn questioned why WSU Extension is not listed with a non-voting ex officio seat, even though they are represented by Amy Grotta. Kathy explained that at the time the ordinance was adopted, WSU Extension was within Human Services, so that department was listed. Kathy agreed that WSU Extension is now part of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks so a correction is needed.

Action: The commission concluded that the RFC Executive Committee would make a decision on this before the next meeting and would communicate any recommendations for changes or corrections to the ordinance to the Staff Liaison.

2008 King County Comprehensive Plan Update

Paul Reitenbach, Manager for the Comprehensive Plan Update, King County

Paul Reitenbach provided a short presentation on the King County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) and the update process. Paul explained that the Comp Plan is the guiding policy document for land use planning in unincorporated King County. It can be amended once a year, but substantive changes are allowed only every four years. 2008 is the year for substantive changes. As part of the scoping phase of the update, Paul asked for the RFC's recommendations on issues to be addressed, adding that at this time the County is not thinking of making any significant changes that would affect forestry or agriculture.

Doug M. said that in the past there were major changes in terms of clearing limits on home sites, and he wondered if those changes have been working the way King County wanted them to, *i.e.*, to encourage keeping land in active forestry. Doug M. said the RFC has not been aware of any problems out there. Paul responded that more monitoring may be needed to see if it is true that current land use regulations are working the way the County hoped they would.

Doug M said that he understood that the Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC) is advocating for changes in state law to allow clustered development in rural areas, state-wide. The idea is to have larger parts of the rural area undeveloped and more areas intensely developed by clustering small houses on small lots, using rural-to-rural Transfer of Development Rights as a mechanism. Doug M. said that some are supportive of this idea as a means of building affordable, small lot development in the rural area as opposed to expensive large lots. Doug M. asked if the Comp Plan Update is looking at allowing such “Rural Villages” as advocated by the CLC. What it means to RFC is that if a landowner has 500 acres and they do a cluster development with small lots there will be a large area undeveloped, and the question is does that become open space without management or how do we make sure this becomes working forest, said Doug.

Paul replied that King County regulations already allow rural clustering under the “4 to 1” program, but the County is looking at ways to improve it and offer more incentives to make it more attractive. He said that the issue of affordable housing in the rural area has been a topic of ongoing debate for years. The County has always said that the rural cities and their expansion areas are the places where policy new affordable housing should be encouraged. There has not been a County policy directing us to look at the rural area as place to locate affordable housing.

Ron Baum asked about traffic concurrency and how it would be affected. Paul replied that in connection with the Rural Villages concept, a large part of the rural area is in the red zone right now. (The red zone allows no division of lots because roads are too crowded.) Paul asked rhetorically if the County were to encourage a receiving area under the Transfer of Development Rights program, would it have to be outside the red zone or would it get an exception to traffic concurrency? The concurrency program itself is on the list of things to look at, said Paul, adding that the intent is to make it simpler and more viable. Paul said that much of the rural area is essentially a no-build area because of traffic concurrency, so the Comp Plan process will have to look at that.

Lee Kahn said that as a private forest owner, she believes that participation in a Transfer of Development Rights program to support the development of Rural Villages as proposed by the CLC should be voluntary rather than imposed.

Alex Kamola said that he “wants to keep people out of the woods,” meaning that he wants to discourage new development in forested areas. He continued, saying that there are two ways for King County to accomplish that, either regulate or buy land. Alex said that he realizes there is pressure coming from the development industry and wants King County to resist pressure to allow the creep of urban zoning or land use rule changes into rural areas.

Doug M. asked that if Paul sees major changes in the Comp Plan being proposed that he come back to the RFC as soon as possible so the commission can talk about it. There are a lot of folks in that effort who want to do good for forestry, but may not completely get what “good for forestry” is, according to Doug. This county has done more than any other by buying the development rights on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm and that is a huge thing that affects a lot of the

arguments that are out there. He recommended that the RFC members should read the CLC's *Cascade Agenda* and visit the web site.

Lee Kahn said that there is a lot of close-in, relative flat land that owners want to develop. She recalled that in the 1980s when the Snoqualmie Valley Plan was fairly well along, Weyerhaeuser decided that they wanted to develop Snoqualmie Ridge. That certainly affected the planning process according to Lee. She said that there is quite a bit of that that could be lurking out there that we should be aware of.

Amy Grotta commented that on page 2 of the Paul's Topical Areas list, the line that reads "Add a policy in support of technical assistance for rural stewardship plans," should include Forest Stewardship Plans. She pointed out that earlier in this meeting it was said that the demand for assistance in completing these plans has increased and is outstripping the County's ability to meet demand with existing staff levels.

Alex asked Matt Rourke, a consulting forester, about the blow downs in the Tolt River Highlands and if the County's permitting processes are working. Matt said that things are going to work, but they are dealing with a situation that doesn't happen every day so it is taking time. He went on to say that landowners have needed a high level of support from their logging contractors and King County staff to negotiate the complex permitting process, make required forest stewardship plan amendments (the regulatory function of such plans is increasing) and have their plans and permit applications reviewed and approved by the County in a timely fashion. Alex commented that King County has encouraged forest landowners to write forest stewardship plans and manage their forests, so the County has a responsibility to assist, not to present barriers to those who are trying to implement their plans and undertake forest practices. Alex said that the County should provide the support, staffing and resources "necessary to facilitate the management of forested parcels in the rural zone in such a way that management is not delayed or sidestepped by onerous regulation." Alex said this is by his own experience as a forester. Alex said that he was not sure if permitting fits with the Comp Plan, but it does have to do with whether or not the forests are managed properly, which ties in with the people who live out there and whether they are getting the support they need from the County.

Paul encouraged everyone to the Comp Plan Update visit web site, read comp plan and send in comments [<http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/compplan/2008/index.htm>]. He said he would be happy to come and meet with the RFC again. The public review draft of the Comp Plan Update will be published in September 2007.

Actions: For submittal to Paul, Linda will compile the RFC's comments in a separate document and Kathy will encapsulate Alex's comments in policy statement format.

Other business:

Jim Franzel provided updates on the USDA Forest Service:

- The federal Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, which involves a lot of money for King County, has not yet been reauthorized by Congress. There

is going to be another proposal from the White House, but they are not saying what it is other than that it will be a one-year continuation.

- The Forest Service has a new Chief starting in February, as Mr. Bosworth is retiring. Abigail Kimble, who has worked in Alaska and Montana as a Forest Supervisor, is replacing Mr. Bosworth.

Alex asked the staff to research and report back to the commission if Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) had accepted from Pierce County jurisdiction for Class IV-General Forest Practices Permits.

Alex also asked staff to research whether state law could be changed to bring forest practices on parcels platted after 1960 under state jurisdiction rather than that of local governments.

Suggestions for future agendas

1. Discuss the Comp Plan as it pertains to forests and forestry and lay the groundwork for commenting on the draft Comp Plan Update.
2. Look into new approaches for improving forestry infrastructure and economically viable forest industries.
3. Educational presentation on the Shoreline Master Program by Hancock Timber or Weyerhaeuser.
4. Elections

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, March 21, 2007.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

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