

Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting
Wednesday, November 19, 2008
Marymoor Park Art Barn, Redmond, Washington

Commissioners present: Julie Stangell, Doug McClelland, Matt Rourke and Ron Baum

Commissioners absent: Alex Kamola, Lee Kahn, Doug Schindler and Kevin Buckley

Ex officio members present: Jim Franzel, Brandy Reed and Amy Grotta

Ex officio members absent: Marilyn Cope

Staff: Julia Larson, Harry Reinert, Joelyn Higgins and Linda Vane

Guests: Sandy Miller, Wabash Farms; John Chaney, Partnership for Rural King County and Jeffrey Possinger, King Conservation District.

Meeting Summary:

1. Plans are underway to create a task force early in 2009 to develop recommendations for County strategies and County priorities related to forests and forestry.
2. To facilitate future discussion of issues related to code, staff will develop a reference table of permits and processes related to forestry.

Minutes:

Motion 1-1108 That the minutes from the September 17, 2008 meeting be approved. Passed.

Chair Julie Stangell called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

Staff Report

Linda Vane reported that the Puget Sound Partnership Draft Action Agenda is available online for public comment until November 20 [<http://www.psp.wa.gov/>]. The Draft Action Agenda includes recommendations supporting technical assistance and education for small lot forest owners and policies that support stewardship of working forests.

Linda distributed copies of the prioritized list of potential projects for the Rural Economic Strategies, which was developed at the September 17, 2008 meeting.

Funding of Services for Small Forest Landowners

Julie Stangell, Chair

Rural Forest Commission (RFC) Chair Julie Stangell reported on communications with Executive Sims and County Council members related to the County's Forestry Program. Julie said that the key points conveyed to elected officials were the need to identify stable funding sources for the long and short terms and to give forest-related services a higher priority in the Water and Land Resources Division business plan. Julie said that the commission had developed a list of potential dedicated funding sources for the Forestry Program. This list will be conveyed to County elected officials. Among the proposals are instituting a rural services fee or directing harvest excise taxes from State Department of Natural Resource lands and private timber harvests to the Forestry Program. The guiding principle underlying the proposals is that revenues derived from forestry should help pay for services that conserve and enhance forests.

Julie said that the RFC should convey their expectations to the County, namely that “boots on the ground” are needed to work with landowners. These services [including forestry technical assistance and WSU forest plan classes] are unique to the County’s Forestry Program and offer a positive experience to rural residents.

Julie said that there will be a task force early in 2009 to develop recommendations for County strategies and County priorities related to forests and forestry. The good news is that in meeting with the Executive and Council members, commissioners found that the value of conserving forests was generally understood, she said. A general discussion of potential funding sources for the Forestry Program followed Julie’s comments.

Brandy announced that the King Conservation District (KCD) has initiated a new cost share program to support the implementation of forest practices. The goal of the program is to improve forest health. Small forest landowners with an approved forest management plan are eligible. The KCD and the King County Forester offer technical assistance to landowners in connection with the cost share.

Report on the Tolt Watershed Management Plan

Brent Lackey, Major Watersheds Strategic Advisor, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)

Brent Lackey presented a report on the draft Tolt Watershed Management Plan and solicited comment from the RFC. Brent said that SPU took a triple bottom line approach of financial, social and environmental considerations in crafting the plan. Computer simulations were used to test alternative watershed management scenarios. One of SPU’s concerns was overly dense stands and high risk of wildfire. He said that habitat restoration became the preferred option when the preponderance of streams and associated restrictions on forest practices, steep slopes, logistics of roads, etc. were taken into consideration. Habitat restoration in the forest will include ecological and restoration thinnings, which will help reduce risk of wildfire among other benefits.

Brent requested that the RFC make comments on the draft plan during the public comment period. The draft plan can be downloaded from the SPU web site at http://www.seattle.gov/util/About_SPU/Water_System/Water_Sources_& Treatment/Tolt_River_Watershed/index.asp.

Status of Rural Forest Commission proposals for regulatory change related to forestry

Harry Reinert, Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES)

During 2007 and 2008 King County updated its Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) and Shoreline Master Program. During that time Harry Reinert and other DDES staff met periodically with the RFC to request input. At this meeting Harry reported back to the RFC on the outcomes of its recommendations to DDES related to forest practices and forest-based industries.

Harry said that for the 2008 Comp Plan update the RFC recommended that the P-suffix condition at the Preston Mill site be changed to allow sales of wood products milled at the site. This was adopted by the Council without any changes. Harry said that the Shoreline Master Program update process would soon be completed. In previous meetings the RFC had concerns about the

requirement for a conditional use permit when selective harvests are conducted within two hundred feet of shorelines of statewide significance, according to Harry. He reported that DDES had determined that this requirement is under state purview so DDES cannot do anything to simplify the process.

Harry said that among the changes in the SMP that are intended to support and encourage forest management is a new category of shoreline environment specifically for forestry.

The proposed Shoreline Master Program update, related code changes and maps are available at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/waterandland/shorelines/program-update/draft3-shoreline-master-program-plan.aspx>.

During the discussion of permitting issues, Julia Larson handed out the prioritized list of potential forestry-related economic development projects, which was developed at the September RFC meeting. Julia asked the RFC to determine if they want to recommend additional code changes for the Rural Economic Strategies update by March 2009. Matt suggested that staff find out if SEPA can be tailored for forest practices rather than development to keep the process simple and reduce costs.

Action: To facilitate future discussion of issues related to code, staff will develop a reference table of permits and processes related to forest practices.

Reclaimed Water Comprehensive Plan

Mark Buscher, Project Manager, Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD)

Mark Buscher reported on the County's Reclaimed Water Comprehensive Planning Process. He explained that although the use of reclaimed water is typically urban, it can be delivered to the rural area. The primary limitation on that is the cost of building pipes and pumps, said Mark. The new Brightwater Wastewater Treatment Plant will provide as much as 7 million gallons of reclaimed water a day. The County is developing a plan to treat as much of effluent as possible and make beneficial use of that reclaimed water. Mark asked the RFC to consider if there is any potential for reclaimed water use in relation to forests. Mark said the range of opinions on reclaimed water is vast, but it is not cheap. This latter creates constraints on how it can be used. The farther away from the city you use it the greater the environmental benefit and the greater the cost.

Sandy Miller said the only demand for forest would be in the summer. She asked about water rights: will people lose their water right if they use reclaimed water? Mark said no.

Doug M. told the commission about the relationship among Washington Department of Natural Resources, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust and King County in the Biosolids Application Program [<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/wastewater/Biosolids/projects/forest.aspx>].

Brandy Reed said that the King Conservation District uses reclaimed water and biosolids at their wetland plant nursery. She offered to provide the Rural Forest Commission with a tour. Julie asked about the means and cost of transporting the water and commented that Hancock Timber waters their logging roads a lot in the dry periods. She also suggested that WTD look at mining operations as potential customers. Ron Baum asked if reclaimed water can be put back in

streams. Mark replied that reclaimed water can be used to recharge aquifers but it costs are an issues because the higher you get in the watershed the better for streams, but the more costly it is.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, January 21, 2009.

Staff Liaison: Linda Vane, at 206-296-8042 or linda.vane@kingcounty.gov