



King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update
Citizen Committee Meeting
March 13, 2012



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' *Current Levee Vegetation Policy*

National Levee Vegetation Policy:

- All vegetation 2" DBH or greater must be removed
- Based on belief that vegetation compromises structural integrity and inspections needs
- Not science-based policy

Existing Seattle District Regional Variance:

- Allows trees and bushes up to 4" DBH in clumps at 30-foot centers
- Allows for 'engineering discretion'



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' *Proposed* National Levee Vegetation Variance Policy (“PGL”)



*Kent Shops-Narita Levee, Green River, Kent, WA
2010*

- One size fits all approach to all levees across the nation
- All regional variances would be repealed
- Variances applied to individual levee systems rather than by region –maybe by reach/river systems
- Complex and costly approval process effectively making variances nearly impossible to obtain

Why does the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers care about vegetation anyway?

- Ability to inspect for damages
- Emergency access
- Catalyst for piping and seepage
- Bank saturation and slumping
- Wind throw



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Inspection, Horseshoe Bend Levee, Green River, Kent, Washington

What are the impacts to local governments?

- “Pay to Play”
 - \$95–\$174M for King County alone
- Habitat impacts
 - Removal of at least 13,600 trees in King County alone
- Potential liability
 - ESA and CWA third party lawsuit?
 - Pending 60-day notices from NGOs
- Fiscal responsibility
 - What are the highest priority threats to the public safety?
- Public perception
 - Over 85,000 trees and other native vegetation planted by volunteers since ESA listings



Tukwila, WA, 2010

What do we want instead?



Create regional program and process that provides for:

1. Safe and effective levees
2. Functional habitat
3. Cost effective use of scarce public resources
4. Use adaptive management

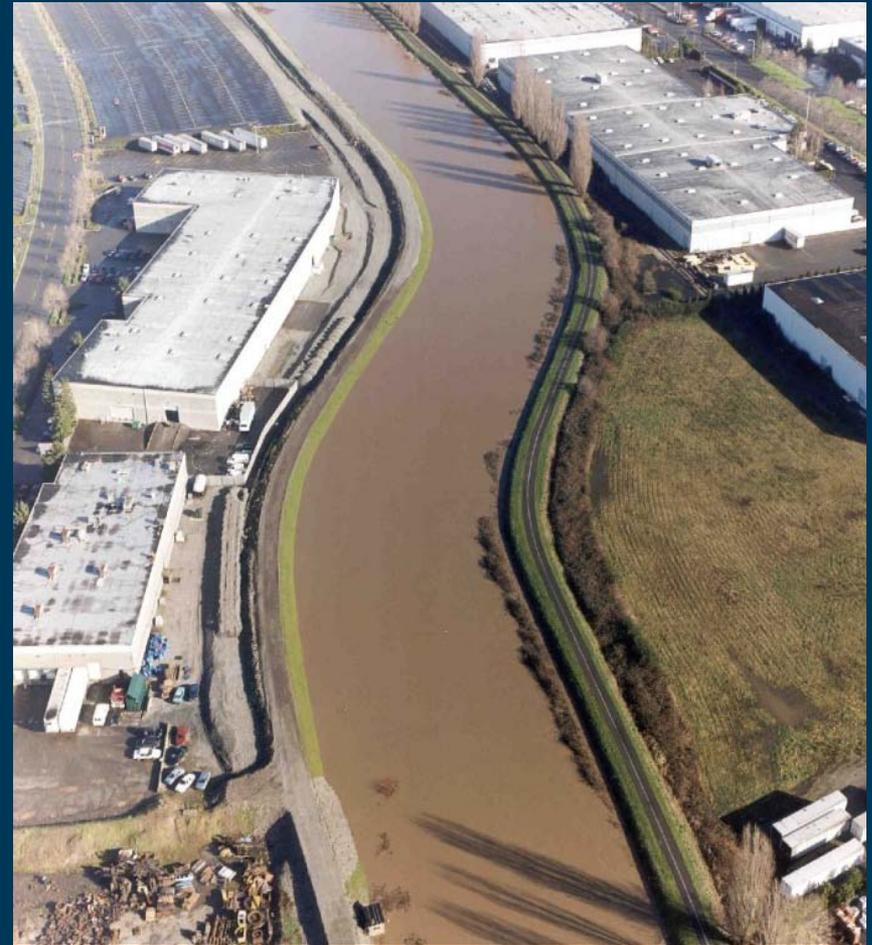
How do we get there and bring resolution to this issue (if possible)?

Track 1 – National Effort: Targeted outreach – “full court press” – to provide room in the Corps of Engineers’ proposed vegetation policy

Track 2 – Regional/Local Effort: Collaborating with Corps of Engineers, other stakeholder agencies and Native American Tribes to develop a functional and cost-effective regional variance program/template for local levee managers

System-Wide Improvement Framework ("SWIF")

- Prioritizes funding based on risk across the river system
- Variances developed within risk-based levee improvement strategy
- Collaborative, multi-stakeholder planning effort
- 2-yr extension in PL 84-99 eligibility while SWIF developed
- Seattle District Corps cost estimate is @ \$1.9M



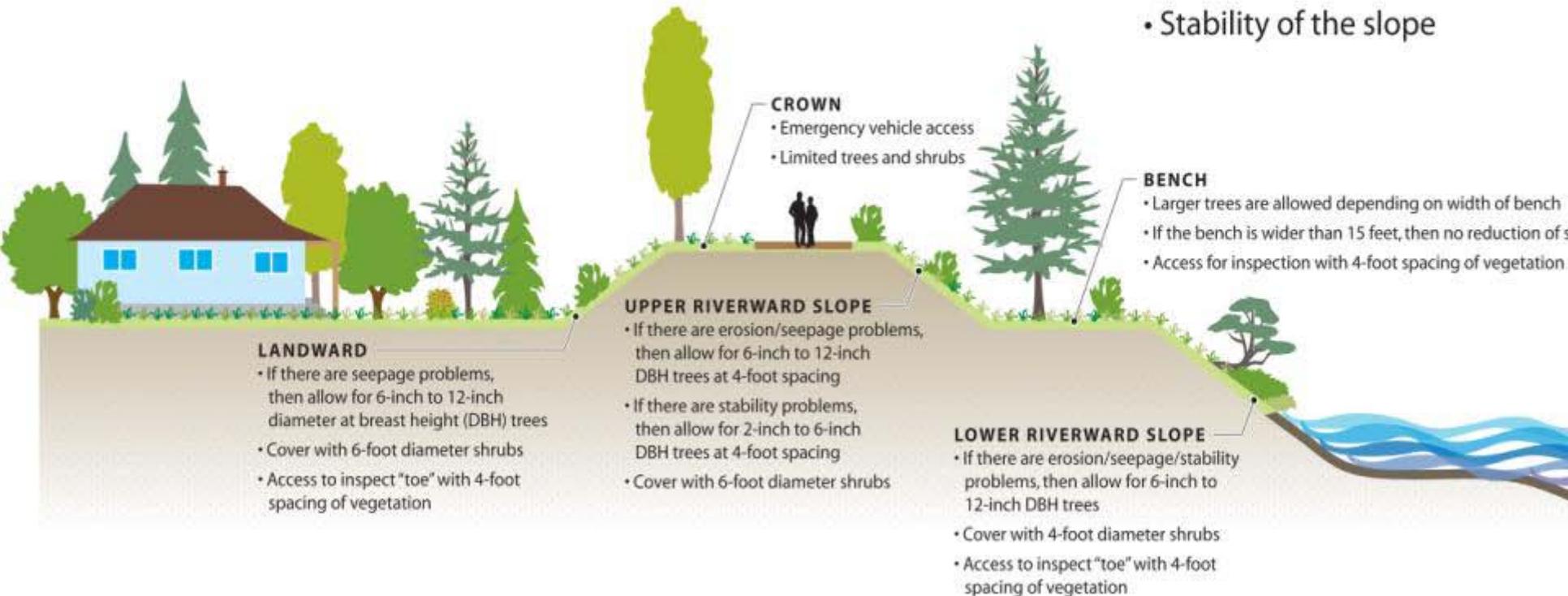
Levee Vegetation Management Proposal - July 8, 2011

LEVEE OPERATIONS

- Access for emergency vehicles and repairs
- Inspection by engineers for damages

LEVEE INTEGRITY*

- Conveyance of the river
- Seepage through the levee
- Erosion of the levee surface
- Stability of the slope

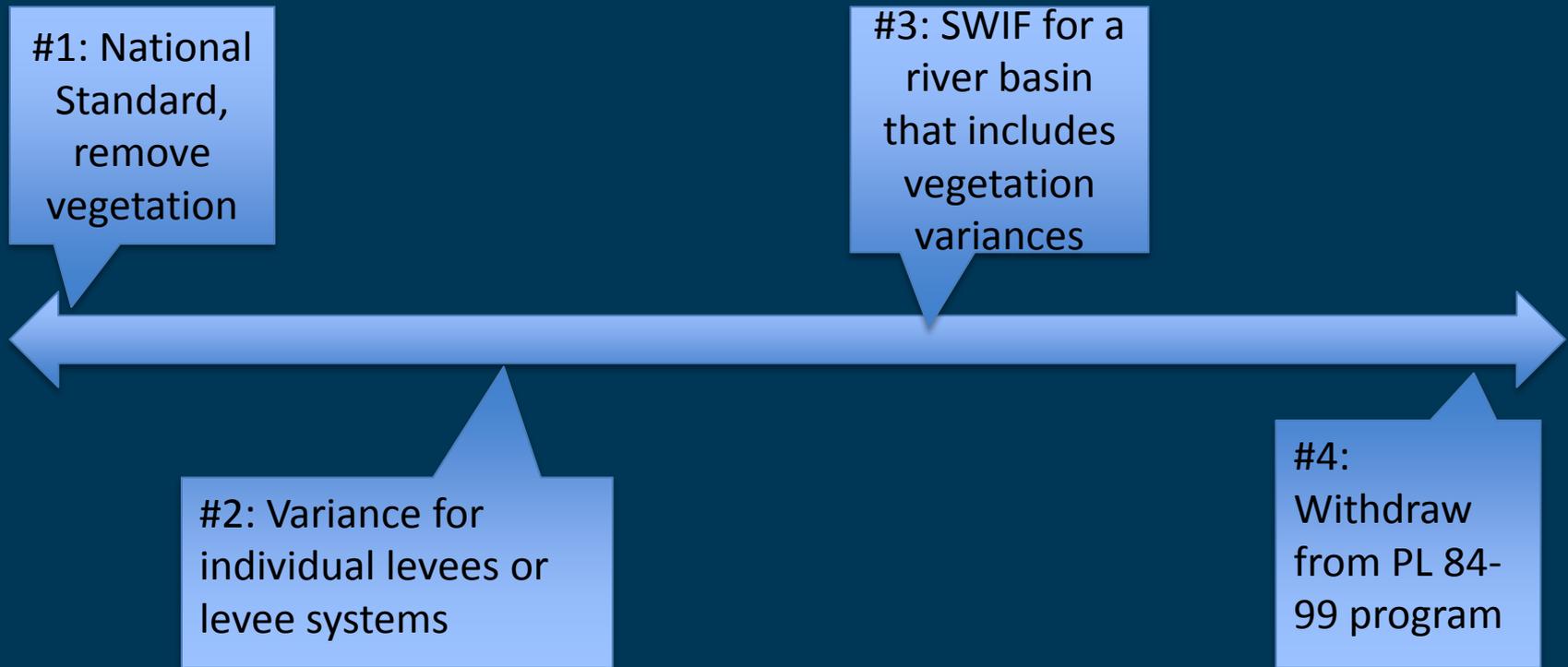


Seattle District Levee Vegetation Framework Project:

U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers, Seattle District; National Marine Fisheries Service; Puget Sound Partnership; King County; Washington State Department of Ecology; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Muckelshoot Indian Tribe; Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Federal Emergency Management Agency

*The fewer concerns with the integrity of the levees, the greater flexibility allowed.

How should the FCD engage with the Corps on Levee Vegetation Management and funding eligibility under PL 84-99?



Brian Murray

206-296-1906

brian.murray@kingcounty.gov

www.kingcounty.gov/flood

