



**King County**  
Rural Forest Commission

## **Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting Thursday, May 12, 2016, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair), Bernie McKinney, Green River Coalition (Vice Chair); Dick Ryon, forester; Andy Chittick, forest landowner/sawmill operator; Amy LaBarge, forest ecologist; Rex Thompson, forester; Grady Steere, Campbell Global; Monica Paulson Priebe, Green River College; Daryl Harper, small forest landowner; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources

Guests: Greg Wingard; Mike Lasecki, King Conservation District (KCD); Jarret Griesemer, KCD

King County Staff: Ivan Miller, Lauren Smith, David Kimmett, Richard Martin, Bill Loeber, Linda Vane

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

### **Motions**

Motion 1- 0516 That the minutes of the March 10, 2016 meeting be approved as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2- 0515 That the commission send a letter to Council in support of the proposed deletion of Comprehensive Plan Policy I-203.b. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Review of Proposed Reserve Silica Mine Reclamation Pilot Project**

Ivan Miller, Comprehensive Planning Manager, King County

Ivan shared information about a proposed residential development on the site of the former Reserve Silica Mine near Black Diamond for the purpose of sharing information as the Executive's Office prepared to respond to the proposal. The mine owners had proposed a demonstration project consistent with [King County Comprehensive Plan](#) (Comp Plan) Policy I-203.b, which was proposed and adopted by Council in the 2012 Comp Plan update. The Reserve Silica proposal featured rezoning of the property from Mining to Rural Area-10, a clustered residential development, open space, and a 211-acre forest management area.

Ivan provided a history of the Policy I-203.b. One of the unique features of the policy, explained Ivan, is that it would allow a new type of transfer of development rights from a Rural-zoned site to another Rural-zoned site. At present, King County Code does not have a provision for that particular type of transfer that Comp Plan Policy I-203.b calls for, although there are other Rural to Rural transfers allowed in some other circumstances, he said. He explained other features of the policy and of the proposed demonstration project. He said that reclamation of the mine site is already underway.

An extensive discussion ensued. Among the comments offered by Commission members were:

- The layout of the development would not be a good set up for commercial timber management.
- The site would be accessed by only one road, which would not be adequate for emergency response.

- The proposal was confusing. The 2012 analysis indicated that commercial forestry would not be economically viable on the site, but the 2016 proposal would set aside 211 acres for commercial forest management.
- The proposed project would push urban development past the Forest Production District line, which should not be allowed.
- There were competing objectives in this case. The development would provide homes for families in a scarce market. The landowner was trying to harmonize multiple objectives and do what they needed to do.
- The County should consider impacts on surrounding land such as infrastructure needs, law enforcement, hydrology, etc. in evaluating projects.
- Would Policy I-203.b. lead to residential development on other former mine sites in the Forest Production District?
- There was an extensive discussion of the benefits of having small lot private forests that are managed by the owners vs. the negative impacts of residential development on forestlands from the standpoints of fractionalized forest habitat and impacts on commercial forest management.
- Sand and gravel mines are needed, but landowners should include issues of long term costs in their business models.
- Landowners should have the right to propose demonstration projects to the County and have them considered.
- If I-203.b. were to be removed from the Comp Plan, the chance to propose mine reclamation demonstration projects on an annual basis would be eliminated, but landowners could still propose such projects every four years when the County accepts proposals for all other types of demonstration projects consistent with existing King County Code.
- Demonstration projects should be discussed in a public forum.

Action: The commission decided to send a letter to Council in support of the proposed deletion of Comprehensive Plan Policy I-203 b.

### **Changes related to Industrial Forestlands in King County**

Grady Steere, Forester, Campbell Global

Grady described structural changes timber companies have experienced in recent decades. He began with a report on Hancock Timber Management's sale of the Snoqualmie Tree Farm last year to Campbell Global in 2105. Like Hancock and a number of other timber companies in our area, Campbell Global is a Timber Investment Management Organization (TILMO), he explained. Grady said that typically, the TIMO does not own the land. TIMOs are investor group mechanism. They buy and manage land for their clients.

A change in the U.S. tax code in the 1990's encouraged investment companies to diversify their portfolios, explained Grady. More TIMOs and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT) began to invest in timberland on behalf of their clients. In TIMO operations, there is more distance between the timber harvest and the mill so there is a tax advantage. The traditional large, vertically integrated timber companies that controlled the source of wood and owned the mills began to disappear from King County.

Grady explained the financial benefits of long term investments in commercial timberlands.

A discussion ensued. Some of the comments were as follows:

- Would conversion of forestland to other uses become more likely with these structural changes? The concern was that that Snoqualmie Tree Farm could be broken up into smaller units, affecting the continuity of land management across large areas.
- There was discussion and agreement that although there is a lot of interest in the concept of ecosystem services, currently the financial value of the land would be in the trees themselves.
- Practices such as issuing permits on commercial timberland for recreation, might make some money from permits for the land management company but ultimately the value would be in the timber.
- Carbon credits have the potential to pay landowners to keep their land in forest but we would need a highly developed market for that to work.
- Water is a commodity of forestlands; however that ecosystem service and that resource are undervalued.
- There was a discussion of the potential for cross-laminated timber to create a market for trees from small lot private forests. Cross laminate timber uses small diameter trees, such as those that come on to the market when forests are thinned. Cross laminated timber could replace the use of steel and concrete in even large buildings. It is used more in Europe than in the U.S.

#### **Annual Report on the Forestry sections of SCAP and an update on the proposed King County Carbon Sequestration Project**

Richard Martin, Environmental Programs Managing Supervisor,  
Water & Land Resources Division

Richard reported on King County's [2015 King County Strategic Climate Action Plan](#) (SCAP), calling it one of the nation's most respected plans for dealing with climate change. The SCAP describes the County's response to potentially impending climate change, he said. One of the chapters concerns Forestry and Agriculture.

The Plan outlines several priorities that affect forest lands, according to Richard. These are protecting open space, identifying and protecting high priority non-developed land, and maximizing forest cover. Richard explored in detail the targets for objectives such as establishing a one-stop-shop website forest management resources modeled after the [Farm King County website](#) in 2016 and protecting the conservation values on the most environmentally significant properties by 2045. In reference to his slide presentation, Richard noted that the SCAP progress measures should be considered draft at this time and not distributed until approved by the Council. According the Richard, the mechanism that the County expects to use to protect such land most often would be that of conservation easements. A lively discussion on acquisition by use of conservation easement ensued.

Richard also reported on a concept for a forest-based carbon sequestration project that is under development by the County. He explained that he would be showing draft materials in his slide presentation, which could change as the concepts mature. The County owns and manages thousands of acres of forested land. The management of forests in the Parks system for improved forest health is highlighted in many of the County's policy and operational plans. The County is exploring the possibility of quantifying the value of enhanced forest management practices such as stand improvements to obtain credits for carbon offsets. Richard detailed the preliminary carbon sequestration estimates and possible approaches to monetizing carbon sequestration on County lands in the future. An open discussion followed the report.

[Link](#) to Richard Martin's slide presentation

[Link](#) to the *2015 Annual Report on the implementation of the 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan*

### **Staff and Agency Reports and Announcements**

*Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)* – Doug McClelland reported that DNR has a new logo and passed around an image of the new log. DNR has issued a new map of Trust Lands, which is available from DNR. According to Doug, the King County Sheriff recently approved cross-commissioning for DNR officers, which means that DNR officers will be able to issue parking tickets for illegal parking near DNR trailheads. This has become an issue, said Doug, because of the increasing popularity of public trails in the Cascades.

*Commission Administration* – Linda Vane solicited suggestions for future agendas from the commissioners.

### **Public Comment**

Greg Wingard spoke.

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

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on July 14, 2016, at the Preston Community Center.

Commission Liaison:

Linda Vane

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