

Meeting #4

Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood Advisory Committee
Snoqualmie Valley Senior Center, Great Room
January 22, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Tamie Kellogg

Committee Members Present: Ric Bautista, Lawrence Carlson, Siri Erickson-Brown, Jarvis Keller, Bobbi Lindemulder, Scott Powell, David Radabaugh, Lara Thomas, Heather Trim, Micah Wait, Daryl Williams, Josh Monaghan, [Matt Baerwalde for Cindy Spiry]

King County WLRD Staff Present: Claire Dyckman, Kollin Higgins, Janne Kaje, Sally King, Joan Lee, Rick Reinlasoder, John Taylor, Kathy Creahan, Andrea Plischke

Other Attendees: Josh Kubo, Alan Painter, Matt Canfield, Perry Falcone, Jeffrey McMorris, Erick Haakenson; Michael Blakely, Nancy Hutto

Prior to the meeting, there were field trips from 2:30 – 4:30.

- 1. Lower Tolt River Floodplain Reconnection Project**
- 2. Mason Elevated Barn**
- 3. Ames Creek Drainage Issues**

Part 1: Welcome, Introductions and Follow-up (Janne Kaje)

Janne: Introductions (Josh Monaghan, Bryan Holloway, and Cindy Spiry not present. Monaghan arrived partway through meeting. Matt Baerwalde present on behalf of Cindy Spiry)

Part 2: Presentation by Claire Dyckman - Snoqualmie Farming

[see presentation]

Question: Re zoning restrictions, why was 35-acre size lots picked as the minimum lot size in much of the APD?

Answer: Generally larger operations in the flood plain, and an effort to keep large farms from breaking up into many small ones which might encourage non-ag uses; Rick said that size fits well into zoning.

Question: re FPP 5% non-tillable surface: What is maximum acreage that can be given up and still stay within farmland preservation covenants – can a willing farmer have more than 5% of non-tillable surface, such as for plantings?

Answer: 5% is guideline for converting farmland into non-farm uses. However, the original program didn't take into account planting for buffers so we have tried to work out ways to accommodate beyond 5%.

Comment: Currently open space part of original FPP law is not being correctly applied/interpreted.

Response: We can discuss FPP and Open Space at a later date in more depth.

Question: How is current use tax being assessed for ag uses?

Claire: Under 20 acres, you have to meet certain income requirements per acre to qualify for the tax break, averaged over 3 years. If over 20 acres, you simply have to show that you're involved in commercial ag.

Comment: It's a problem for municipalities when there are many agricultural properties remaining within city limits (and do not generate city-level tax revenue).

Floodplain agriculture: Claire showed clay and concrete drain tiles that have largely been replaced by polyvinyl materials.

Bobbi L. addressed beef operations: Most importantly, each farm is different and they operate on different levels. Excess sediment [shown as an output of beef operations on the graphic] comes from the hills onto farms; manure stored in the lagoon is applied with a specific setback from the drainage ditches, so not outputting excess nutrients or sediment in Snoqualmie valley bottom farms. Driven by customers and held to a high environmental standard by them. The floods are a problem, especially for cows (Bobbi's farm will be switching to yearlings). Lots of pressure from outside on how farms are managed. Great group of people in Sno Valley but constrained.

Other farmer agreed with Bobby. Has an issue with greenhouse gas emission claim on graphic – says Valley farms do not emit them given the low numbers of livestock.

Bobbi: Due to small sizes of operations, we are not regulated as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Future of beef is great and there is tremendous support esp. for grass-fed, but land can hold only so much. People want local and humanely treated beef. She won't cram more animals onto her property to make more \$.

Bobbi re buffers - not how much land can we take for buffers, but how much \$ going to highest priority properties. No problem with buffer as long as it's a high fish-use, high priority area.

Re CREP: is WA leaving \$ on table every year? How much?

Jarvis addressed dairy models: Historical, old-fashioned with low impact but less production – this model would have a small number of cows and the majority of feed for the animals would be grown onsite. This model has diminished under the current dairy business model and milk pricing structure; more modern operation would have more animals and produce more – this model produces feed onsite (may have some grazing), but also brings in feed from offsite to allow for larger numbers of animals; 3rd model has higher production crops and brings in a larger portion of feed to allow for the maximum number of animals, based on agronomic application of the manure produced. This model has a reduced direct animal impact on the land, but requires lots of hauling (feed in, manure out). In theory needs to be one big area. Animals are always in the barn.

Lawrence: His main product is grass for cattle operations. Large corn farm means a lot of labor and organization. His main concern is field drainage issues which can postpone operations.

Comment: Dairy nutrient management act – causes limitations on dairies.

Comment: Wildlife can cause significant damage; bears frequently damage corn fields; agrees there is a need for buffers, but need to be limited in how much and where. Who'll maintain larger buffers? Over time they silt up or grow blackberries.

Comment: Cities have a similar problem with significant portions of lots not available for use, some sites 60% encumbered.

Q: How many cows per farm?

A: Jarvis has ~700, but it is the biggest remaining dairy in the valley. Most much smaller.

Q: Biodigesters?

Bobbi: Expensive but loves them. Can take in many different products to offset cost.

Siri addressed horticulture: wide range of models and outputs. Most farms growing for direct market. Inputs vary a lot depending on type of operation. Concerned with growing fertility of soil. Fairly typical to earn \$30k per acre that is in production, but can be much higher. Some crops can be grown more than once a year on same ground. Ability to get early start is important but depends on drainage of fields.

Erick H: Manure is a big issue historically. He has cows and main crop is manure to use as fertilizer on horticultural acres. In future will have to recycle nutrients and won't be able to squander manure. Important to get manure out of floodplain. Rotating cows is important. Manure can become fertilizer for next cash crop.

Lawrence: 200 acres grass – not organic, but hasn't used chemicals in 5 or 6 years; uses manure.

Michele: One of first people to use poultry as manure source and found it worked better than many expected.

BREAK & REFRESHMENTS

Claire Presentation: Challenges & Opportunities for Agriculture in the Snoqualmie Valley

Comment: Re irrigation needs - when gardening in the city, had to water a lot. In Snoq. may not need to water at all.

Q: Why is timeframe (i.e., permitting “fish window”) for ag work the way it is?

A: State law limits in-water work to those times that minimize but do not eliminate impacts to fish.

Comment: re flooding - big buffers catch a lot of wood coming down river. Also spent \$125k implementing farm plan but didn't get much in return, permit cost not reduced by much.

Comment: There should be a bigger permit fee discount if you have a farm plan.

Question: Couldn't farmers use a mitigation bank?

Kathy: The prices for mitigation banks can be too expensive for many ag landowners.

Claire: Most of Western WA agriculture is in historic wetlands which explains the prevalence of drainage issues.

BREAKOUT INTO GROUPS (Tamie)

1. Siri, Micah, Heather, Sally
 2. Lawrence, Rick B., Matt, Kollin, Claire
 3. Bobbie, Daryl, David, Rick R.
 4. Jarvis, Lara, Scott, Josh, Janne
 5. Guests with Tamie
- Share general drivers.
 - Review “flood” document and give feedback.
 - Priority areas?
 - Additional info needed?

Question about information from last meeting's breakout groups – where is it? (Janne responded that he has been extremely busy past two weeks so it wasn't done in time for tonight but will be done soon.)

Tamie's Group (visitors)

Priority areas:

- multi-benefit projects
- expand APD – should we add some land?
 - o KC is exploring opportunities for adding agricultural acreage.
 - o Where are best lands?
- Buffers – “strategic buffer implementation”
 - o Width? Are there beneficial uses for certain types of buffers?
- Drainage issues – bigger creeks are too big a project for single farmers to take on. Are CIP funds needed for large-scale drainage projects (i.e. Ag land restoration)? Improvements in current farmland can lead to improvements in productivity.
- Productivity metric should reflect productivity for fish and for ag land.

Additional information needed:

- What metrics/targets are we looking for to improve conditions? Is there a framework that can be used for the diversity of farms?

Where do we have common ground?

- We support farmers and fish and protecting people/property. There's a willingness to communicate and agree on some things.
- All 3 (fish, farms, floods) are important but in competition.
- On the ground, real examples usually result in common ground being found.

Kollin's Group:

Manure management a big issue. How big? Still not attaining standards for fecal coliform bacteria. Folks constrained by state regs – programmatic way to make state regs more flexible?

Janne's Group:

Community stability/predictability can be seen by activity at local dairy farm – is it growing or shrinking? Jarvis shared a saying in his family that you can tell the political stability of an area by the number of dairies. Dairies take many decades to build up but can be sold off very quickly.

Rick R's Group:

If land is taken out of production to accommodate other needs, make sure remainder are as productive as possible.

Siri's Group: came up with no solutions.

Sally: Flood 101 Topics to Explore Further slide - was anything missed?
-- Additional capital projects.

Phone call Thursday 1/30 @ 2pm for questions/clarification. A call-in number will be set up.

Janne: Next meeting will be 2/12. People showed interest in touring Siri's farm, but she will be at a conference so it will have to wait until a later meeting. Write-ups will be sent out soon. Think of Ag Opps & Challenges handout as a tool.