Meeting #5

Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood Advisory Committee
Snoqualmie Valley Senior Center, Great Room
February 12, 2014 at 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Tamie Kellogg

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

King County WLRD Staff Present: Kollin Higgins, Jean White, Rick Reinlasoder, Perry Falcone, Claire Dyckman, Sally King, Alan Painter, Janne Kaje, Joan Lee, Andrea Plischke

Other Attendees: Nancy Hutto, Jim Haack, Erick Haakenson, Ward Roney, Ralph Svrjcek, Jeff McMorris, Matt Baerwalde, Tamie Kellogg, Natasha Walker

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

Janne explained that a special opportunity exists now to help fish, farm and flood thrive. He mentioned County Executive's State of the County address and emphasis on economics of agriculture & how to make it thrive. Also, there are new funding possibilities to address multiple-benefit projects in floodplains. We are in position to get a lot of support at the county level. He also mentioned we have various tools to achieve these goals, and that will be our task moving forward.

Tamie reviewed revised timeline (handout). She mentioned that a public workshop could be held either before April 9 or after April 23. Daryl said it should be early enough in March so that public input really affects the outcome. Tamie suggested we do workshop by end of March and there was general agreement to that.

Review of materials (Janne) – email Janne if anything needs to be corrected.

Part 2: Defining Common Interests (Tamie)

Tamie asked pairs to discuss and suggest 3 big bold steps to get from reality to future (on graphic from first meeting). What are seeds of bold ideas that provide kernel of hope for all 3 Fs? [Tamie gave 5 minutes for pairs to brainstorm, then asked each person to share what the other had said.]

Janne for Lawrence: Make addressing drainage problems easier and faster; being able to get on the field for 4 months instead of 2 is worth trading something for.

David for Scott: How to address infrastructure in relationship to flooding.

Scott for David: Drainage.

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Bryan for Micah: Need more flexibility on ag land that is in FPP, so that restoration of wetlands or other areas in FPP can be done. FPP lands are also for open space.

Micah for Bryan: Focus on multi-objective outcomes, so when a project is being permitted impacts on all 3 Fs are considered.

Daryl for Jarvis: Drainage and flooding should be dealt with while protecting fish.

Jarvis for Daryl: Compromise is important [Lawrence seconded that].

Michaele for Lara: Buffers - how much is enough to help fish but not too much so it hurts ag?

Lara for Michaele: Need better drainage to help both farmers and fish.

Ric for Heather: Need to work with flooding, because it's going to occur. Need to be able to recover quickly (improved drainage can help with that).

Heather for Ric: 4 big bold steps are: 1) elevate infrastructure including roads, bridges, buildings; 2) allow room for flood waters, work with flooding, not against it; 3) allow enough space for habitat projects and then trade that off with some benefits to ag; 4) look upstream/upriver and address water quantity and quality issues.

Other comments/discussion?

Micah: Frequently flooded or high ecological value lands should be purchased and managed for protection/restoration and leased for ag where appropriate.

Lara: Duvall park could be converted to ag land, but when taking away need to also give back.

Michaele: Doesn't understand purchasing land that is frequently flooded.

Micah: The land won't need to make a profit for ag if owned by a public or non-profit entity.

Claire: Siri's bold idea – landowners should be allowed use any topsoil removed through restoration projects to elevate land or low spots elsewhere on their property (e.g., move topsoil from 2 acres where you are going to plant a buffer or set back a levee/revetment so that you can have higher, better drained land where you are cultivating).

Erick H: Wide buffers mean loss of income to farmers. Why can't there be financial compensation to farmer for the cost of the land if it provides benefit via buffers to protect salmon?

Part 3: Confirm and Prioritize Key Issues (Tamie and Janne)

Tamie asked members to prioritize issues on List A (handout) or to move them to List B.

Tamie described the process for this exercise: 1) quiet time to read list; 2) discuss with people at table – choose not more than 7 issues to put in "high," 7 in "medium" and 7 in "low" or move something to list B if not important enough (or take out entirely / add if something is missing; 3) whole group discussion.

Janne explained that bullet points aren't necessarily all going to be discussed separately – many of them have already been discussed.

Before members did their priority "post its", there was the following discussion of ag viability and how to measure success at least for ag:

Josh: Farmland acreage is missing from list.

Janne: Loss of farmland is a big issue and is implied – many of the issues listed are tied to it.

Josh: Are there metrics to measure success, e.g., definition of ag viability? Ag acreage is a top shelf metric. How about fish productivity?

Janne: What does agricultural viability look like? Acreage? Productivity? We don't have a good tool for that.

Tamie: Acreage is a component and we will get to discussion of success in meeting 9.

Daryl and Scott: if you increase ag productivity on some acres can't that compensate for losing some other acres to restoration?

Bobbi and Michaele: Depends on the crop.

Josh: Soils can be classified by their limitations; most of the versatile soils have already been lost in KC.

Based on priority exercise, results for top 5 priority issues:

1. Drainage

2. Riparian buffers
3. Large restoration/flood reduction projects
4. Impacts of large floods
5. Water quality

NOTE: Several other flood related topics received multiple votes in the high/medium categories. Staff will bundle some of those into a single "issue" discussion.

Discussion of list – a few members noted surprises as water quality and impact of large floods. Lara and Bobbi pointed out that issues mean different things to different people so important to define terms and issues.

Note that Janne sent full accounting for the prioritized items in a Feb 14 email.

Part 4: Issue Discussion: Riparian Buffers (Janne)

Framework for exercise: what are things we can make effective recommendations about that will make a difference? What can we suggest the County should do? These are 1st tier recommendations with direct impact. 2nd tier would be suggesting the County talk to an outside entity such as EPA.

Janne and Claire are working on another table with more detail about current regulations etc., but it's not finished yet.

Why buffers? 1) Regulatory protection; 2) Mitigation buffer planting; 3) Voluntary buffer plantings. What do we want to recommend to KC to influence buffer planting in the future? Also, what are the most significant "threats" in terms of the loss of agricultural land to plantings?

Bobbi: Most difficult things is that a lot of the land is in Farmland Preservation Program.

Scott: Mitigation buffers are usually related to wetlands or habitat, which leads to other regulations.

Janne acknowledged that there's a lot more to buffers.

Micah: FPP should hold open space as high as ag land.

Bobbi: There's an economic piece to it.

Cindy: FPP regulations are not clear – a landowner wanted a big buffer but was denied. She couldn't find out why.

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Janne: Attorneys typically help the county to develop and interpret covenants and other FPP-related decisions. Original language defines farmland as a type of open space, but the two have been separated in covenant language; suggested that Ted Sullivan or Joe Rochelle be invited to a meeting.

Heather: Wants to discuss quality of buffers, what species of trees is best to satisfy water quality and other concerns (not on main stem)? She researched available buffer information but doesn't feel it is clear.

Michaele: FPP regulations have been grappled with on Ag Comm. Some of the wording has been changed, but protected farmland is the goal, not open space.

Lara: Reviews quality and says it is different from case to case, there's no one-fit-all option.

Kollin: Wanted to get a grant to research buffers and do studies on width and many aspects of quality, but have not had internal King County dollars to match grant programs. There is some research on water quality, but hardly anything on functions different buffers widths and species composition provide.

Comment: There is some information available, especially with regards to width of buffers and water quality.

Handout was discussed. Question: Why is there a difference between trees and shrubs? Answer: Has to do with the GIS data.

Heather: Buffers part 2 should have a table generated by stakeholders – pros and cons of buffers, pros and cons of different approaches, so there is clarity about what the stakeholders think.

Broke into group discussions.

Micah's group: There is a large percentage of buffers on small streams. An alternative strategy would be to get rid of the ditches, combine flow into a single meandered stream and have just one buffer instead of many.

Janne's group: Opportunities and where do you find the best bang for the buck. How can we incorporate buffers to include other things, such as forest products, or edibles, or commercially viable plants?

Josh's group: Productive use of buffer for landowner? Maybe make shrub area higher functioning since it won't have as big an impact on ag. What would happen to drain tiles in a forested buffer?

Cindy's group: Discussed smaller streams and ranking of streams. The FPP has confusing things that need to be clarified.

General Audience Small Table Discussion

Primary Topics:

- Monetary compensation for larger buffers
- Drainage Tiles
    - Concerns about inadequate research on the impact of tile drainage
    - Concerns about loss of too much groundwater (which is beneficial to farmers)
- Beavers
    - High beaver populations causing impairment of drainage systems

Part 5: Committee Logistics

Tamie: Is there any feedback on the top 5 issues exercise?

Bobbi likes the small group discussions but feels the issues are so big that everyone could easily go off on different tracks.

Josh would like raw notes emailed and would like to see things from small groups synthesized.

Lawrence thought the size of the groups was good.

Daryl is concerned that there's not enough time to talk.

Tamie: The next meeting will be problem solving. Today was just a taste of one issue.

Janne: More materials will start coming electronically and frequently.

Meeting adjourned.