

Meeting #6

Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood Advisory Committee
Snoqualmie Valley Senior Center, Great Room
February 26, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Tamie Kellogg

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

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

Other Attendees: Ward Roney, Ralph Svrjcek, Matt Baerwalde, Tamie Kellogg, Cynthia Krass, Matt Canfield, Josh Kubo, Christine Jensen, Nancy Hutto, Erick Haakenson

The meeting was preceded by a field trip to Siri's farm. Thank you Siri!

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

- a. **Welcome**
- b. **Committee members introduce themselves**
- c. **Review agenda for this meeting**
- d. **Quick review – new materials packet for your binder**

On the Prioritization List, flooding issues will be bundled. Can we find some Big Ideas to build a recommendation package around? We need to agree on some meaningful actions.

Bobbie is concerned about what can be done in the limited time available. What is driving the timeline?

Janne explained that the timeline has to do with farmers getting busy in the spring. In addition, KC is willing to listen if the committee wants to hold extra meetings. Joan mentioned the KC biannual budget is being worked on now and will be submitted in April/May. In addition, the State DOE has a letter of intent in May which will describe funding opportunities that could be used to advance committee recommendations.

Part 2: Buffers (Janne and Tamie)

- a. **Overview of Suggestions/Opportunities from last meeting discussion of buffers (Janne)**

Janne invited committee members to fill out solution/opportunities template. Discussed examples provided in packet. They are brief descriptions of a solution. Buffers and drainage example

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(combining drainage courses into 'neturalized' meandering channel) -Wilf Fish Conservancy has had success with this approach in Cherry Valley .

Bobbi: Great concept but what % of properties in APD would it work on? How many landowners would be affected?

Heather says issues should be discussed openly in large groups.

Janne discussed a second example: recommended maximum buffers. Committee could potentially come up with recommendations on size so that King County grants don't specify a size do not require buffers so large that they don't work for many landowners. In addition, the county could be asked to push back on EPA and DOE grants that require large buffers (some of this is already taking place).

Some of the other great ideas were not written up, but can be if someone takes the initiative to fill out the template.

Heather likes combining waterways but wants to know if it's legal (yes) and suggested that a pilot program be done, but in the whole valley not just piece by piece. Also, would it work?

Bobbi: Everyone wants land drained and it needs to be a coordinated solution. Buffer issue is huge and probably won't be solved any time soon. The future may bring changes which makes it more difficult. It will also come down to economics, so a workable buffer is key.

Tamie asked Jarvis to talk about combining waterways for better drainage.

Jarvis: People have to agree beforehand. Not every ditch is applicable. Re-grading to provide a positive slope may have to be done to direct water effectively to new waterway.

Jamie was asked to discuss project in Cherry Valley. Said 3 ditches were combined and so far there has been a big improvement on drainage in Cherry Valley, in adjacent farms as well, and the fish habitat is better.

Bobbi: Are they tiled?

Jamie: Tiles throughout valley. Don't know where they are all located.

Josh: What was the biggest barrier?

Jamie: This was a demonstration project and we got a lot of data from it. It's a model that could work well. Biggest challenge - convincing the drainage district that it would work.

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Bobbi: How would it work on private land?

Jamie: Need right situation. Can work with landowners to coordinate.

Bobbi: Ditches would have to be attached to main stem, wouldn't they? Wants to see a large scale, coordinated effort.

Siri: Was there a lot of grading involved?

Jamie: Yes there was.

Siri: In field adjacent?

Jamie: Yes.

David: When was the permit done?

Jamie: Summer 2012.

David: How do we go about telling and documenting the story of this success?

Question: Could surrounding landowners use the ditch?

Answer: The reconfigured channel drains other private properties upstream of the project property.

Jamie: Flood waters in Cherry valley drain more quickly, both on and off the state land where the project was done.

Lara: Drainage districts need to be part of this. It should be a high priority.

Janne: King County used to have more. Is it the seed of a big idea? In terms of how to pay, how to coordinate, etc.

Lara: Until we have coordinated drainage program, doesn't make sense to have one landowner going through ADAP when someone downstream doesn't do anything. Also the flood control district issue component is important.

Siri: It's about water management, not just drainage and irrigation.

Bobbi: And it's site specific.

Josh: Can we look at things at a higher level? Does it promote benefit for all three?

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Tamie: Are consolidated channels worth discussing further?

Response was yes.

b. Existing mechanisms or “dials” that we can shift or change related to buffers (Janne)

Janne discussed handout related to buffers.

Bobbi: A 25ft buffer is actually 50ft because it's also 25ft on the other side. The public usually doesn't understand that. Also, how are Skagit and Snohomish dealing with buffers?

Lara: Is one side more important? Does the buffer have to be done on both sides?

Janne: We are looking at it on a broad scale. For example, would we recommend that small streams on farms should be limited to 25' voluntary buffers?

Josh M is concerned about losing agricultural land through policy.

Janne asked Claire to explain how farmers in King County are allowed to clear portions of existing buffers.

Claire: If a farm plan indicates an agricultural practice, the county would be okay with cutting trees down. More than 4" in diameter may not be allowed to come down.

Bobbi: CREP contract means once trees are planted, they can't be cut down at end of contract.

Janne: Should this be a recommendation? That people can cut down trees despite the size of the trees?

Kathy: DNR does regulate forest practice, but since it would be a conversion back to agricultural land, it would fall under King County regulations, but the code needs to be made clearer.

Tamie pointed out that this is a problem/issue that can be written up.

Question: What is CREP?

Answer (Josh M): Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. A landowner can have a buffer installed and work is paid for by a federal program, and the farmer is paid rent for the duration of the contract. The Farm bill treats it as a habitat crop.

Ralph: Hopes that if a buffer is put in, it's kept there because it can take 10+ years for them to be effective in terms of fish and water quality.

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Siri pointed out the tradeoff of individual economic benefit vs. longterm public good (retaining ag soil).

c. **Big Bold Ideas for buffers and further solution conversations from last meeting (Tamie)**

- “Food Forest”
 - Multifunctional, noninvasive
- Economic return/incentive
 - CREP, flexibility
- Type of buffer/width
 - Suggestion - Not all ditches should require a buffer.
- Flash graze buffers – doesn’t have to be a no-touch buffer
 - Does grass qualify as a buffer? [Grass provides some limited water quality benefits by filtering sediment and via nutrient uptake].
- Biggest need for wider buffer is wood recruitment and water quality.
 - Customized, science-based approach could be used in Snoq. Valley.
 - We need more research. Desire is to work on long-term benefits.
- Mitigation value of voluntary buffer projects – there should be a transferable benefit.
- Sub-basin strategies.
- Permanent buffer status?
- Different name for buffer, more comprehensive and less negative terminology.
- Functional assessment, maybe similar to wetlands rating system.

Janne invited people to fill out template and send it in, or call and tell us so we can capture people’s ideas.

Duvall did science-based documentation for buffers. Received EPA grant to continue work. It’s prescriptive and performance-based.

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Part 3: Drainage (a primer on the Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program - ADAP)

a. Introduction (Kollin Higgins)

Prior to 1990, few rules governing drainage maintenance. Sensitive Areas Ordinance changed that. No drainage maintenance allowed until rules were written, which took 8 years. There wasn't a clear, legal way to conduct drainage maintenance, until 1998. In 1998 ADAP came into being.

b. Presentation (Brian Sleight)

Federal, state and local agencies are involved and have requirements. They came up with a set of BMPs to make permitting easier. Farm plan (KCD) + ADAP BMPs = permit

Program Needs:

- Alluvial fans
- New tile construction
- Better planting process – right now we have a cost share program, but should be done in-house
- Loaning equipment – would help cut costs
- Promotion – plan to do a mailing in next month or so

Question: Where does funding come from?

Answer: SWM fee = \$120,000 /yr. First come, first serve.

Question: What percentage of farms in Snoq. Valley are taking advantage?

Answer: Don't know the exact number, but it's a small percent.

Question: Do you know where sediment is coming from?

Answer: A lot is alluvial. Away from the valley walls, don't really know, but probably flooding and organic material. ADAP looks for the hardened bottom (historical bed) and does not excavate below that point. .

Bobbi: The deposition of sediment is probably alluvial fan. Bobbi is taking advantage of ADAP and wants to help sell the program, if it goes well for their farm.

c. Small Group Discussion (Tamie and Janne)

Ralph spoke about tiles and encouraged people to think about water quality and water temperature.

Lara is very thankful for the presentation and hopes ADAP continues to be funded enough to make suggested improvements. More money is probably needed for drain tile projects.

Bobbi pointed out that most drain tiles in the valley were placed in the 70's. Also, the flood control district should help with funding ADAP. The permit process takes too long. How can it be sped up?

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Josh M. pointed out 3 key factors:

- Hydrologic impact of drain tiles
- Who is responsible?
- Landowner – cost share program for drainage maintenance?

Heather: It's a sediment management issue. Is there a way to deal with the sediment so it doesn't have to be dug out all the time? ("sediment source control")

Lawrence: The process is still cumbersome. There is a need for an advocate who can help the farmer go through the process. He referred to his knowledge of a neighbor's attempt to go through the process.

Brian: We want to get more people enrolled.

John T: There has been enormous internal discussion at WLRD. There are some things we can do in the short term, but we really do want to know what "apps" farmers are looking for [referring to the cell phone analogy in the presentation]. We recognize all the needs, and we'll work hard to make the program work better.

Part 4: Next Meeting (Tamie and Janne)

The public workshop will be held in late March or early April.

The current vision of the workshop is that it will have two components: an open house and a panel discussion. Advisory members should attend and have a big part; maybe have 2 or 3 panels discussing different issues with site-specific examples. We will have a conference call to discuss the workshop in more detail, but people can also give input via email.

Bobbi: At the next meeting we need to talk about a strategic plan for the conclusion of the meetings. (Also, conversation has been great; best task force she's been on.)

Tamie said the timeline will be updated and sent out.

Josh: What's the purpose of the workshop?

Tamie: To get input from the general public.

Josh: Can we just invite the public to one of these meetings?

Siri favors a separate public meeting so the FFF meetings can focus on net impact and what can farmers do for fish?

Daryl: We should not invite the public to our regular meeting but there should be a public meeting.

Siri: Only four people on the committee are private landowners. What about the rest? How will the perspectives of other landowners get captured?

Tamie encouraged people to join the conference call. The next meeting on 3/12 will highlight:

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- Large habitat restoration projects (Snoqualmie at Fall City example)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.