

DRAFT Solution/Opportunity Template

Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood Solution/Opportunity

Prepared by: *Janne Kaje*

Origin/Submitted By: *Staff suggestion. Follow up to 2/12/2014 committee discussion and buffer “impact” tables.*

Short Title: *Identify recommended maximum buffers applicable to waterways on privately owned agricultural land in APD.*

Issue: *Buffers – impacts on agricultural acreage in APD.*

Brief Description and Scope:

Recommend buffer widths based on stream size or fish use that support salmon recovery but reduce long-term loss of productive ag land to buffers at the APD-scale. This is primarily a policy recommendation for King County. This is not a prescriptive recommendation for what happens on an individual property.

Background/describe the problem this suggestion/opportunity will address:

The Salmon Recovery Plan and supporting science recommends buffers on the order of 150 ft. on salmon bearing streams to provide the full suite of functions and processes to support recovery. Given the dense stream network in Snoqualmie floodplain, full implementation of this approach could take substantial acreage out of ag production. Site-specific examples show more than 50% on some farms within 150-ft buffer. Smaller buffers do provide substantial benefits, though not all ecological functions. Recent, new requirements by some state and federal granting agencies to apply minimum buffers widths of 100+ ft for voluntary plantings in ag areas, including on very small streams if salmonids are known or likely to be present. [Note that King County and Snoqualmie Watershed Forum have already expressed serious concerns with granting agencies over large buffer requirements for voluntary actions on private ag lands.]

Committee has explored effects of different buffer widths on ag acreage. Data are available to inform recommendations.

To make progress on buffer planting on private lands while also supporting viable agriculture, smaller buffers on smaller streams should be encouraged by King County via expenditure of KC dollars and by influencing state and federal agencies and tribes to support a locally derived buffer recommendation that supports multiple objectives. Absent availability of funds for smaller buffers, willingness of private ag landowners to support salmon recovery through voluntary action will likely diminish.

Describe how this Suggestion/Opportunity provides benefits to Farm Fish and Flood:

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(+ fish) Potential improvement in stream temperature and other water quality benefits on small streams due to increased willingness of landowners to participate in voluntary action.

(+fish) Support from ag community and King County for larger buffers on mainstem river and large tributaries with high salmonid use.

(- fish) Long-term recommendation may mean that small streams not likely to produce maximum habitat benefit for salmonids in foreseeable future as not all ecological functions provided by smaller buffers.

(+ farm) Assurance that King County will not directly push for large buffers on small streams in ag areas. This protects ag land base in long-term.

(+farm) Potential access to grant funds for smaller buffers that provide benefits to ag, such as shading out reed canary grass

PROS (Committee generated):

CONS (Committee generated):

What action(s) required for implementation of this suggestion/opportunity?

Committee needs to agree on recommended maximum buffer widths for different stream sizes on privately owned ag land. King County could support this through changes to prioritization of county grant funds (or KC Flood Control District grant funds) to explicitly support the proposed approach. King County (Executive? Council?) would need to urge state and federal granting agencies to support locally derived multi-objective buffer approach. Explicit support from both tribes highly preferred.

Near or long term recommendation:

Near term. Policy changes for King County funds could be implemented in time for Spring 2015 Cooperative Watershed Management round. Policy changes at State and Federal level unknown, but potentially in time for next biennium grant programs (Fall 2015).

Preliminary cost estimate or description of cost components:

N/A. Primarily policy change.

Committee Recommendation: