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# Good Neighbor Workshops Report with Recommendations

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August 2020



**King County**

Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
Water and Land Resources Division

**Science and Technical Support Section**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Citation**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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King County manages over 28,000 acres of parks and natural lands, and beavers live in streams and other water bodies across the region. Beaver ponds provide numerous benefits, including groundwater recharge, increased soil moisture, salmon rearing habitat, increased biodiversity including birds and mammals, and filtering of pollutants such as pesticides. Water from beaver ponds can present challenges when it inundates private property, farmland, or infrastructure, and sometimes the activities of beavers on County land affect adjoining properties. Some tools exist to facilitate the coexistence of beavers and people, though more are needed.

In 2019, the King County Beaver Working Group (consisting of staff from several groups within King County government whose work is impacted by beaver activity) sponsored two public workshops to engage with residents on how King County can be a good neighbor where beavers are concerned. The first workshop was held at the Preston Community Center on Saturday, September 7, and the second workshop was at the Maple Valley Public Library on Tuesday, October 29.

The four goals of the workshops were:

1. For King County staff and residents to engage with and learn from one another.
2. For King County staff to learn residents' perspectives on what it means to be a good neighbor where beavers are concerned.
3. For King County staff to receive input from residents that will inform potential changes in County policies regarding beavers.
4. To generate new ideas for how King County government and residents can co-exist with beavers.

The County solicited broad participation in the workshops by mailing over 3,000 post card invitations to residents on properties adjacent to County-owned land that have a stream or water body present. The first workshop was attended by 15 people, and the second workshop was attended by 30 people.

Attendees included people who live adjacent to County property and those who do not but learned of the workshops by word-of-mouth. Many people attended because they wanted to engage on how the County can be a good neighbor, and some people attended because they had a very specific concern or question regarding beavers. The second workshop focused somewhat heavily on beaver issues regarding lakes (primarily Spring Lake), because there were several residents of Spring Lake and Lake Desire present.

A series of "Liberating Structures" were used at the workshops in order to engage with all attendees. Liberating Structures are unconventional meeting activities used to foster lively participation and productive, inclusive engagement in groups of any size.

Themes heard during the workshops include:

1. Residents desire more educational outreach and presentations on beavers.
2. Residents would like clear and transparent policies on when the County should step in to provide assistance with beaver-related issues and when it shouldn't.
3. Many residents support the conservation and creation of beaver habitat.
4. The King County website is difficult to navigate, and it can be difficult to find the right person to help with a beaver issue.
5. King County staff are often hard to reach/inaccessible, and often there is no follow-up to issues raised.
6. Residents who are trying to coexist with beavers on their property or on adjacent County property would appreciate options for financial assistance or incentives for device installation and other strategies for coexisting with beavers.
7. Collaboration and information sharing between King County and other cities, jurisdictions, and tribes would be appreciated because ideally it would result in the best possible outcomes when beaver issues arise.
8. Sometimes getting a permit takes very long, and finding ways to streamline the permit process for beaver and non-beaver issues was suggested.
9. There was substantial interest in beavers and beaver impacts at Spring Lake and Lake Desire.
10. Several people were willing to volunteer and partner to work towards solutions regarding co-existing with beavers.
11. There is an interest in more outreach and workshops on other work the County is doing in general.

These themes, comments, and observations from the workshops suggest the following recommendations for King County to consider (additional details are in the main body of the report). Implementation of these recommendations will depend upon program priorities as well as funding availability.

1. Hold additional workshops and presentations to provide general beaver-related education.
2. Create internal guidance on the level and type of assistance the County can provide to private landowners with beaver-related issues.
3. Add a "Who to Contact" page to the County's Beaver website.
4. Establish a point person or central contact as an overall Project Manager (PM) for beaver-related issues.
5. Examine new potential financial incentives to encourage residents to coexist with beavers.
6. Consider establishment of a "Regional Beaver Collaborative" as a way for King County to meet, share information, and partner with cities, Tribes, and other local groups on shared projects, concerns, and issues.

7. Establish new King County Code that specifically addresses permitting beaver-dam related activities such as pond leveler installation, dam notching, and dam removal.
8. Meet with residents of Spring Lake and Lake Desire to address specific beaver-related concerns.
9. Conduct workshops and outreach on projects and other work the County is doing.
10. Host a smaller workshop or meeting focused on brainstorming new tools/solutions for coexisting with beavers.
11. Conduct online or mail surveys to engage additional residents and obtain input from more neighbors of County lands and other residents.
12. When doing similar workshops in the future, consider these points:
  - Improve the geographic coverage by putting on at least three workshops.
  - Workshops should not be scheduled near holidays or on weekends, especially during the summer.
  - Host separate workshops that focus on known beaver issues involving several neighbors.
  - Include an educational segment at the outset to provide basic background information.

As for next steps, the Beaver Working Group will initiate the following actions:

1. Seek additional engagement opportunities with King County residents to gain more input that will inform the beaver program and beaver management protocols in King County (see Recommendation #11).
2. Refine internal response protocols and plan to have that work completed by fall 2020 (see Recommendation #2).
3. Consider potential code changes related to beaver dam management, possibly as part of the Comprehensive Drainage Plan (see Recommendation #7).
4. Revise the King County beaver website ([www.kingcounty.gov/beavers](http://www.kingcounty.gov/beavers)) to include a “Who to Contact” page as well as streamlining the information presented by fall 2020 (see Recommendation #3).

Other recommendations to come out of the workshops will be addressed during the 2021-2022 biennium as part of the County’s beaver program.

A “Good Neighbor” web page is maintained as part of the King County Beaver website to allow the sharing of information, such as this report, with workshop attendees, neighbors, and other interested parties. See

<https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/beavers/Good-Nighbor.aspx>

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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King County manages over 28,000 acres of parks and natural lands, and beavers live in streams and other water bodies across the region. Beaver ponds provide numerous benefits, including groundwater recharge, increased soil moisture, salmon rearing habitat, increased biodiversity including birds and mammals, and filtering of pollutants such as pesticides. Water from beaver ponds can present challenges when it inundates private property, farmland, or infrastructure, and sometimes the activities of beavers on County land affect adjoining properties. Some tools exist to facilitate the coexistence of beavers and people, though more are needed.

In 2019, the King County Beaver Working Group<sup>1</sup> held two public workshops to engage with residents on how King County, the government agency, can be a good neighbor where beavers are concerned. Over 3,000 post card invitations (Appendix A) were mailed to residents on properties adjacent to County-owned land that had a stream or water body present.

Two workshops were held:

1. The first workshop was held at the Preston Community Center on Saturday, September 7, 2019, 9 AM to 1 PM.
2. The second workshop was held at the Maple Valley Public Library on Tuesday, October 29, 2019, 5:00 PM to approximately 8:30 PM.

This report documents the purpose of the workshops, who participated, how they were planned and implemented, and what we heard from the participants. The report concludes with a set of recommendations based on input received at the workshops.

A “Good Neighbor” web page is maintained as part of the King County Beaver website to allow the sharing of information, such as this report, with workshop attendees, neighbors, and other interested parties. The link for the website is <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/beavers/Good-Neighbor.aspx>.

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<sup>1</sup> The King County Beaver Working Group is composed of an internal group of King County staff whose jobs sometimes involve beavers, beaver activity, and problem-solving beaver activity. The overarching goal of the King County Beaver Working Group is to find the best solutions for coexisting with beavers.

## **2.0 PURPOSE AND GOALS**

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The primary purpose of these workshops was for the County to learn from our residents what it means to them for the County to be a good neighbor, specifically when beavers are present on County properties.

The four goals of the workshops were:

1. For King County staff and residents to engage with and learn from one another.
2. For King County staff to learn residents' perspectives on what it means to be a good neighbor where beavers are concerned.
3. For King County staff to receive input from residents that will inform potential changes in County policies regarding beavers.
4. Generate new ideas for how King County government and residents can co-exist with beavers.

## **3.0 PLANNING TEAM**

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The planning team and roles were as follows:

1. Nathan Brown (Ecological Restoration and Engineering Services) led the planning of the workshops with his expertise in Liberating Structures. He also ran both workshops.
2. Jen Vanderhoof, (Science and Technical Support Section) participated as the lead of the Beaver Working Group and a technical expert on beavers. She was involved in all aspects of planning and preparation and follow-up, she participated in both workshops, and she wrote this report.
3. Eric Beach (Ag Regulations & Permitting), Brandon Duncan (Engineer, then in Stormwater Services), and Brian Sleight (Engineer, Stormwater Services) participated as technical experts as well as staff who are often called on to respond to beaver-related flooding. All three are members of the County's Beaver Working Group. All three attended all planning and follow-up meetings, participated in both workshops, and reviewed workshop notes and this report.
4. Megan Moore (Rural and Regional Services) attended some planning meetings, took notes during both workshops, and helped with refreshments.
5. Amiee Mccrea (Finance and Administration) attended some planning meetings, provided administrative support during the workshops (checked people in, kept supplies handy, took notes on flip charts, etc.), and also handled refreshments.

## **4.0 ATTENDEES**

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As mentioned above, over 3,000 post card invitations (Appendix A) were mailed to residents on properties adjacent to County-owned land that had a stream or water body present. Additionally, some post card recipients shared the invitation with others who were not neighbors.

The first workshop at the Preston Community Center on Saturday, September 7, 2019, was attended by 15 people in addition to the planning team. Not all attendees stayed for the entire workshop. Several people who would have liked to attend let us know they were not available because of other commitments (it was a late-summer Saturday, so many people were out of town). Attendees included people who live adjacent to County property and those who don't. Some people attended because they had a very specific concern or question, not because they wanted to participate in engagement on how the County can be a good neighbor.

The second workshop at the Maple Valley Public Library on Tuesday, October 29, 2019, was attended by 30 people in addition to the planning team. This Tuesday-evening workshop in the fall was well-attended by a variety of participants: some attendees live near County-owned lands with beavers, whereas others wanted to learn more or provide input on potential beaver policies. Of the 30 attendees, four were from King County (two from WLR Division and two from Parks Division). These staff attended to engage with members of the public and learn more about how residents are affected by beavers and what sorts of policies they would like to see put in place. There were residents of Spring Lake and Lake Desire present, so issues regarding lakes (primarily Spring Lake) were focused on heavily throughout the evening.

## 5.0 WORKSHOP FORMAT

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In both venues, a sign-in table was set up at the door. When people signed in, they were given a packet of handouts (see Section 5.1) and asked to put on a name tag. Chairs were put in a circle to begin with. Chairs were frequently moved around as needed to complete various activities (see Section 5.2). A slide deck that corresponded with activities (Appendix B) was projected onto a screen, and some of content was also printed and hung as posters around the room.

### 5.1 Handouts

Participants all received a packet on entry. The packet contained information for them to take home as well as worksheets to be used during the workshop. Contents of the packet included:

1. Beaver Management Decision Flow Chart (available online)
2. Beaver and Beaver Management in King County Fact Sheet
3. Beaver-related Laws, Policies, and Practices summary (available online)
4. Beaver management tools matrix (available online)
5. Workshop Objectives and Assumptions (see slides #3 and #4 of Appendix B)
6. A Stormwater Services Drainage Complaint form (available through web portal)
7. Workshop-activity worksheets (i.e., 4-Quadrants “Journal” and “What, So What, Now What?” worksheets; see slide #15 and slides #25–31, respectively, of Appendix B)
8. Comment Form

### 5.2 Liberating Structures

Because the workshops were intended to provide a lot of engagement between everyone as opposed to lectures/single-person presentations, Liberating Structures were chosen as the means of facilitating conversations. Liberating Structures are unconventional activities used to enhance relational coordination and trust. They foster lively participation in groups of any size and include everyone. The full menu of Liberating Structures may be found here: <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/lis/>. Nathan Brown has taken trainings in Liberating Structures. He helped design and run the workshops. These activities are designed to be flexible and responsive, so Nathan occasionally modified an activity based on what was happening at the time.

The workshop plan was modified after the first workshop because the team was able to see what worked well and what could be improved. The summary below is representative of the workshop plan for both workshops, but some activities were abbreviated while others were expanded across the two workshops. In the first workshop, a break was held earlier than expected, prior to the Fishbowl exercise, in order to regroup after a lively report-out of the “9 Whys” activity. In the second workshop, the Fishbowl exercise ran long so there was no break.

The outline of the workshop is presented below. A more detailed version is available on request and includes time allotments and prompts for slides, moving chairs, working flip charts, etc. The slide deck is in Appendix B.

- 1) Welcome and setting the stage
  - a) Jen welcomes, explains reason for this meeting.
  - b) Nathan goes over workshop objectives (which are also on a poster):
    - i) Engage with and learn from one another.
    - ii) Learn what it means to our neighbors for the County to be a good neighbor where beavers are concerned.
    - iii) Generate new ideas for means of co-existence.
    - iv) Generate input that will inform County policies regarding beavers.
  - c) Nathan explains process, expected outcomes – what to expect and how the workshop will go. Goes over assumptions (which are also on a poster and printed in the packet):
    - i) There are no top-down answers; we all have a stake.
    - ii) Today is an opportunity for everyone to engage and participate on an even playing field.
    - iii) Neighbors should have a voice in how the County’s beaver policies and programs are designed.
    - iv) We all have a stake in the outcomes; a collaborative approach is best.
    - v) Today’s activities are designed to lift up the best ideas; the best ideas will emerge when all voices have been heard.
    - vi) King County honors concerns from the community.
    - vii) All interactions are mutually respectful and mindful of each other’s time.
- 2) Tap deep well of curiosity and talent in the room by focusing on the problem you want to solve. “[Impromptu Networking](#)”
  - a) Pair up. 1 min per person to answer questions.  
3 mins/round
  - b) 3 rounds, 3 different pairs. (9 mins) Mingling.
    - i) Hi, who are you?
    - ii) Why did you come here today?
    - iii) Have you experienced impacts from beavers on County lands? If so, what, if anything, would you like to have help with?
  - c) Debrief/report out (5-10 mins):
    - i) What did you notice?
    - ii) Any similarities, did anything surprise you?

- 3) Establish Meeting Group Purpose/quickly ascertain what is important in your work today. "[9 Whys](#)"
  - a) Pair up and interview one another. Nathan and Brian will demo. Let folks know they'll have to describe what they heard from their partner.
    - i) What do you want to happen as result of this meeting? Ask "Why?" 9-times, dig deep:
    - ii) Why is this outcome important to you? 2 mins, then reverse roles. 4 mins per pair.
  - b) Each pair then get with another pair to share experience and insights (5 min/pair).
  - c) 2x2s debrief. (5 mins) Ask:
    - i) Where do we have common ground; differences?
  - d) Quads report out. This will help shape our discussion for the day. (15 mins)
- 4) Field Experts Share Knowledge and Experience. "[Fishbowl](#)" 3-4 experts + 2 neighbors. See Figure 1.
  - a) Topics:
    - i) Beaver benefits
    - ii) Available tools (posters showing some examples)
    - iii) Known constraints
    - iv) Regulations (King County's and WDFW)
  - b) Audience can write questions on note cards and pass up to have them asked.

## **BREAK**

- 1) Journaling.
- 2) 5 mins to fill out worksheet. Quadrants are for answers to these questions:
- 3) Top left: How is the County being a good neighbor?
- 4) Top right: How is the County not being a good neighbor?
- 5) Bottom left: What do you think the County can do to eliminate or mitigate the negatives?
- 6) Bottom right: What impacts will you tolerate? What are you willing to commit to?
- 7) Discussion and consolidation:
  - a) Groups of 4-6 (max of 6) gather around a large flipchart page and write what jumped out at them.
  - b) Write Commonalities and Differences on butcher paper.
- 8) Spread innovations out and up. Generate an uncensored set of bold ideas. "[15% Solutions](#)"

- a) Jen to provide reminders of breadth and depth, and constraints, for the various types of actions to be considered for Round 1.
  - b) Use notecards and answer one of the following questions.
    - i) Keeping in mind the current regulatory, funding, and other constraints, what could the County do to be a good neighbor?
    - ii) Imagine there are fewer boundaries/limits. If the County had no limits, what could the County do to be a good neighbor?
- 9) Rapidly generate group's most powerful actionable ideas. "[25/10 Crowd Sourcing](#)"
- a) Using cards from the previous exercise, mingle, trading cards the whole time! Stop when the music stops.
  - b) Rate the card you have 1-5 (1=low to 5=high).
    - i) Do 5 scoring rotations
    - ii) Tally scores after 5<sup>th</sup> round.
  - c) Debrief with group.
    - i) Go over the ~5 cards with the most votes.
    - ii) Which recommendations can you see yourself supporting? Why?
    - iii) After, Nathan will ask if anyone has any burning issues that didn't get on the flip-chart list. Give us the cards and we'll put in a separate pile.
- 10) Time to Reflect on our shared experience to help build further understanding and spur coordinated actions while avoiding unproductive conflict. "[What, So What, Now What?](#)" Write answers to questions on the back of the Journal Handout.
- a) **What?** (These are the facts)
    - (1) What did you observe or learn today?
  - b) **So What?** (Ideas, thoughts, opinions that came up today)
    - (1) What patterns or conclusions are emerging?
  - c) Now What?
    - i) What actions talked about today make sense to you?
    - ii) Did your questions and concerns get shared?
  - d) Then share with large group. 10 mins
- 11) Closing: Jen
- a) Next Steps (with process and policies)





**Figure 1.** Fishbowl exercise in progress during the workshop at the Maple Valley Library.

## 6.0 SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

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This section presents highlights and common messages of what we heard at the workshops. For highly detailed meeting notes, see Appendix C for the Preston workshop meeting notes, and see Appendix D for the Maple Valley meeting notes.

At both workshops, participants most appreciated the “Fishbowl” exercise, which allowed the audience members to ask specific questions and for some of the questions identified in earlier activities to be addressed. Questions were often thought-provoking. Responses turned into lively discussions. The Fishbowl also fostered conversations among County staff, which the audience could also learn from. The other activities, including “15% Solutions/25-10 Crowd Sourcing” and “What? So What? Now What?” were most helpful to County staff because they provided insight into the concerns and ideas of the community.

People at both workshops were concerned about salmon, salmon populations, and how beavers and salmon interrelate. People had questions about fish passage around beaver dams as well as beaver impacts of restoration projects. These questions highlight a need for more education and outreach on the topic of salmon and beavers.

Although the focus of the workshops was to find out how neighbors to County lands viewed being a good neighbor, in reality the majority of attendees were not neighbors to County lands and had either more general questions (wanted to learn more about beavers) or very specific concerns (a question about a specific situation near them). The feedback, therefore, is more broad in scope than what it means for the County to be a good neighbor. Additionally, the majority of attendees who do live near County lands were residents of Spring Lake and Lake Desire.

### 6.1 Common Themes

The following items are some of the primary messages we heard along with some parenthetical explanatory or otherwise related notes. These themes are not presented in any particular order and so do not imply a prioritization.

1. Residents desire more educational outreach and presentations on beavers. Attendees often remarked they thought there would be some general information presented about beavers (it’s part of why some people attended). People also very often asked questions about how salmon and beavers co-exist, how salmon get past beaver dams, and similar questions. Providing this information plus general information on beavers would help residents have a much greater understanding of the ecological processes at play and why beavers are an important component of the landscape. *(The need and desire for more outreach and education came up at both workshops.)*
2. Residents would like clear and transparent policies on when the County should step in to provide assistance with beaver-related issues and when it shouldn’t. They

would like streamlined information and processes. *(A strategy with policies such as this is under development and expected to be completed in 2020.)*

3. Many residents support the conservation and creation of beaver habitat. (Many of the attendees at both workshops were there to support the conservation of beavers and the habitat they create, though some people wanted the beavers to remain on County lands. One family expressed the desire to have beavers relocated onto their property.)
4. The King County website is difficult to navigate, and it can be difficult to find the right person to help with a particular beaver issue. *(The feedback on ease of navigating the website seemed broader than just beaver-related issues. Regarding beaver issues, the current County beaver website is not set up as a forum to address beaver issues. A new page or site would need to be developed to provide information on who to contact for various needs.)*
5. King County staff are often hard to reach/inaccessible, and often there is no follow-up to issues raised. Suggestions were made for establishing a policy for short response times for responding to calls from County residents as well as ensuring resources are available for County staff to address landowner concerns. *(The themes of improved transparency and responsiveness came up at both workshops.)*
6. Residents who are trying to coexist with beavers on their property or on adjacent County property would appreciate options for financial assistance or incentives for device installation and other strategies for coexisting with beavers. *(Different ideas for financial incentives came up at both workshops.)*
7. Collaboration and information sharing between King County and other cities, jurisdictions, and tribes would be appreciated because ideally it would result in the best possible outcomes when beaver issues arise. *(One person who raised this issue lives at Lake Sawyer and had concerns about a culvert being plugged and the City of Black Diamond and the County not working together on resolution, and beavers were lethally trapped in a situation where that might have been avoided.)*
8. Sometimes getting a permit takes very long, and finding ways to streamline the permit process for beaver and non-beaver issues was suggested. *(Some work on new beaver-specific code is under development to make getting related permits easier, though the comments were beyond just beaver-related needs.)*
9. There was substantial interest in beavers and beaver impacts at Spring Lake and Lake Desire. (Several people at the second workshop had ideas for establishing beaver management plans, helping determine appropriate lake water levels, and testing some of the other ideas that came up during the workshop.)
10. Several people were willing to volunteer and partner to work towards solutions regarding co-existing with beavers. *(This came up at the second workshop, and it included people with all sorts of viewpoints and differing opinions.)*
11. There is an interest in more outreach and workshops on other work the County is doing in general. People were glad to see King County out doing this workshop. They'd like to hear more on what the County is doing in general, not only on beavers. People were extremely appreciative of this forum and wished there were

more opportunities for engagement on other topics as well. They would like more engagement with the County in general. *(This is not a beaver-related recommendation.)*

## **6.2 Specific Ideas and Solutions**

The 15% Solutions/25-10 Crowd Sourcing exercises were used to generate ideas for the County to implement that were either realistic given current funding and regulatory constraints or bold and despite any perceived constraints. All workshop participants scored cards based on how important they thought the idea or solution was. Both realistic and bold ideas are mixed together. Ideas that scored 20 points or more out of 25 possible points are presented in this section (with minor edits for clarity) and represent cards that scored 4 points or more on average by each reviewer. Although this cut-off is somewhat arbitrary, the higher points reflect relative importance of the recommendations to the workshop participants. All ideas are included in Appendix C for the Preston Workshop and Appendix D for the Maple Valley Workshop.

1. 25 points: Support, respond to private landowner concerns and set up a point of contact to initiate action.
2. 24 points: Give the Lake Desire Community labor assistance in cleaning the outlet stream. Develop a long-term beaver management plan.
3. 24 points: Being open, nice, and honest at all times. No cost.
4. 23 points: On Lakes: Do a lake by lake or pond by pond study to determine an “acceptable” level of water then manage all factors, including beavers, to stay at that level.
5. 23 points: Begin pilot project at Spring Lake (or similar problem area) where creative, bold solutions can be tested (e.g., streamlined permitting, financial assistance, landowner property protection measures, etc.). Scale up tools/programs that are effective.
6. 22 points: Respond to citizen’s phone calls/emails in a timely fashion with specific ideas for help/funding/volunteer help.
7. 22 points: Make it easy for communities to enlist professional companies, such as Beavers Northwest to install lake levelers to control lake output.
8. 22 points: Be bold with common sense.
9. 21 points: Set up program to address beaver impacts on neighbors’ properties prioritized based on ranked impacts. Only top ranked projects addressed.
10. 21 points: Set up 72-hour response time for calls.
11. 21 points: Develop a better line of communication between agencies to reach common goals of beaver preservation.
12. 21 points: Bold: Buy all streams and waterways and create wildlife habitat throughout the County.

13. 21 points: Bold, no constraints: Have enough resources to identify and work with all landowners who have issues with beavers to resolve situation together. Create plan together.
14. 20 points: Property tax incentive program that discounts the portion of your land now underwater because of beavers.
15. 20 points: Improve environment/habitat for healthy beaver/wildlife habitat.
16. 20 points: Communication and input with County planning.
17. 20 points: Bold: Consider each case independently. This will need more money to staff more employees to deal with each case. What's relevant to one case may be irrelevant to another.
18. 20 points: Allow and continue the preserving and development of beaver habitat.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This set of recommendations is based on what was heard at and observations from the two workshops. Recommendations #10 through #12 are based on observations from the workshops as opposed to direct feedback from residents.

1. **Hold additional workshops and presentations to provide general beaver-related education.** These workshops were not designed to provide a lot of background on biology, life history, or other aspects of beavers. The planning team made this decision in order to leave time to get through all the exercises that were planned. But many (most) people lack basic knowledge about beavers. Several people expressed the desire for more workshops or presentations to provide such basic information. Some participants thought if they'd had more information, their responses and input might have been different.
2. **Create internal guidance on the type and level of assistance the County provides to private landowners with beaver-related issues.** *This work is currently underway and expected to be completed by fall 2020.*
3. **Add a "Who to Contact" page to the County's Beaver website.** The new page could house information on who to contact for various beaver-related topics including but not limited to flooding, permitting, trapping, relocation, device installation, and educational needs.
4. **Establish a point person or central contact as an overall Project Manager (PM) for beaver-related issues.** Widely communicate internally and externally (via web) who the PM is. Often beaver-related resolution to issues gets deprioritized or stalls because there is no dedicated program, project manager, or funding set up to address the problem. Full set of duties of the PM to be determined, but goals would be responsiveness and transparency of processes. PM would respond within 72 hours of receiving a call or email, and continue to move an issue forward within a reasonable timeframe and keep the complainant updated on the progress.
5. **Examine new potential financial incentives to encourage residents to coexist with beavers.** Look into the feasibility, level of benefit, and other aspects of potential new programs, including but not limited to (a) cost-sharing for device installation, (b) tax break for land now underwater from beaver activity, possibly through PBRs. These incentives would ideally be established County-wide and not restricted to properties adjacent to County properties with beavers (input provided at the workshops was not limited to those from properties neighboring County lands).
6. **Consider establishment of a "Regional Beaver Collaborative."** Such a group would be a way for King County to meet, share information, and partner with cities, Tribes, and other local groups on shared projects, concerns, and issues such as fish passage, tools for coexisting with beavers, stream restoration, and conservation. It would be a venue for representatives of cities, Tribes, and other local groups, which

may have fewer resources, to benefit from the collaborative power of multiple local agencies.

7. **Establish new King County Code that specifically addresses permitting beaver-dam related activities such as pond leveler installation, dam notching, and dam removal.** Currently there is no code addressing beaver dams specifically, so in order to manipulate them, landowners are expected to meet with the Permitting Division and discuss each situation, which is then handled on a case-by-case basis. Creating beaver-dam-specific code will remove the uncertainty from the process and provide landowners with a transparent permit process.
8. **Meet with residents of Spring Lake and Lake Desire to address specific beaver-related concerns.** Coordinate with the Lake Stewardship Program about holding community workshops, possibly one for each lake, to better understand concerns, such as lake level impacts. An ultimate goal could be to create management plans that members of those communities help write and agree to implement.
9. **Conduct workshops and outreach on other topics that engage County residents.** Workshop attendees made it very clear how much they appreciated these outreach and engagement opportunities and how much they would like to see a lot more of it. Although this recommendation falls outside the purview of beaver-related work, it is too important to not include here. The County's residents would like more opportunities to engage with County staff on all the work we are doing.
10. **Host a smaller workshop or meeting focused on brainstorming new tools/solutions for coexisting with beavers.** One of the objectives of the workshops were to generate creative new solutions to beaver-related issues. However, the workshop activities were not really set up to delve into that particular objective at length or depth. A different workshop or meeting could be used to imagine and discuss innovative solutions, hash out their pros and cons, consider potential regulatory barriers, and come up with a plan for testing one or more of the ideas.
11. **Conduct online or mail surveys to engage additional residents and obtain input from more neighbors of County lands and other residents.** The first workshop was not well-attended because it unfortunately fell on a Saturday in late summer when a lot of people were out of town or had other plans. The second workshop was well attended, but even so still only provided a snapshot of the opinions of a very small percentage of neighbors to County lands. It is therefore recommended that a survey be developed to gain feedback from more neighbors to County lands and to foster more engagement.
12. **When doing similar workshops in the future, consider these points on geography and scheduling to maximize participation, partnerships for hosting, and content.**
  - Similarly styled future workshops should improve the geographic coverage by putting on at least three workshops. We hosted two workshops in locations intended to be central to the northern half of the county and central to the southern half of the County. However, the "northern" one was in the middle of

the County and no one from the Bear Creek area or other parts of northern King County attended.

- Workshops should not be scheduled near holidays or on weekends, especially during the summer.
- Host separate workshops for known issues involving several neighbors. The second Good Neighbor workshop was in an area of known issues—water levels at Spring Lake and Lake Desire. It is important for such specific issues to be addressed, and it is also important to hear from the community at large. Workshops or meetings focused on a specific need or issue could be conducted in partnership with other County programs such as the Lakes Stewardship program. Tailoring a meeting to the specific issues at hand would afford greater resolution on those specific topics, and then more general workshops such as these Good Neighbor workshops could spend more time hearing from a wider range of perspectives.
- Future similarly styled workshops should include an educational segment at the outset to provide basic information that members of the public may not be aware of but that may affect how they think about the topic. These workshops were intentionally structured for maximum engagement with minimal “talking heads.” We used a slide deck to provide instructions for activities, but no education or information presentations were given. If we did similar workshops in the future we would spend 10-15 minutes covering some basic information about beavers, including how beavers and salmon interact.



## 8.0 NEXT STEPS

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Where do we go from here? The Beaver Working Group will initiate the following actions:

1. Seek additional engagement opportunities with King County residents to gain more input that will inform the beaver program and beaver management protocols in King County (see Recommendation #11).
2. Refine internal response protocols and plan to have that work completed by fall 2020 (see Recommendation #2).
3. Consider potential code changes related to beaver dam management, possibly as part of the Comprehensive Drainage Plan (see Recommendation #7).
4. Revise the King County beaver website ([www.kingcounty.gov/beavers](http://www.kingcounty.gov/beavers)) to include a “Who to Contact” page as well as streamlining the information presented by fall 2020 (see Recommendation #3).

Other recommendations to come out of the workshops will be addressed during the 2021-2022 biennium as part of the County’s beaver program.

## **9.0 APPENDICES**

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Appendix A. Post Card mailed to residents who live near County-owned property with a stream

Appendix B. Slide deck from the second workshop

Appendix C. Meeting notes from September 8, 2019, Preston workshop

Appendix D. Meeting notes from October 29, 2019, Maple Valley workshop

## Appendix A. Post Card mailed to residents who live near County-owned property with a stream

King County's Beaver Working Group presents:

# GOOD NEIGHBOR WORKSHOPS



King County invites your input on how we can be a good neighbor when beavers live and build dams on County lands near you. Because you live next to County land that has a stream on it, your participation is valued at either one of the following workshops hosted by the King County Beaver Working Group:

**Saturday, September 7, 9am - 1pm**  
at the Preston Community Center.

**Tuesday, October 29, 5-9pm**  
at the Maple Valley Library.


Beavers live and build dams in streams across the region. You can find more information about beavers as well as register for a workshop at: [www.kingcounty.gov/beavers](http://www.kingcounty.gov/beavers).

### DID YOU KNOW?

King County manages over 28,000 acres of parks and natural lands.

If you are interested in participating, please RSVP, as space is limited. Go to [www.kingcounty.gov/beavers](http://www.kingcounty.gov/beavers) and look for the "Workshop" link.



 **Department of Natural Resources and Parks**  
**Water and Land Resources Division**  
201 South Jackson Street, Suite 600  
Seattle, WA 98104

PSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SEATTLE, WA  
PERMIT NO. 6013



For more information about the program or to sign up, contact Jennifer Vanderhoof at 206.477.4840  
[jennifer.vanderhoof@kingcounty.gov](mailto:jennifer.vanderhoof@kingcounty.gov)  
Find us online at  
[www.kingcounty.gov/beavers](http://www.kingcounty.gov/beavers)

Interpreter services available. Para pedir un interprete, favor de llamar al 206-477-4812.

### Alternative Formats

Call 206-477-4812 Or 711 (TTY)

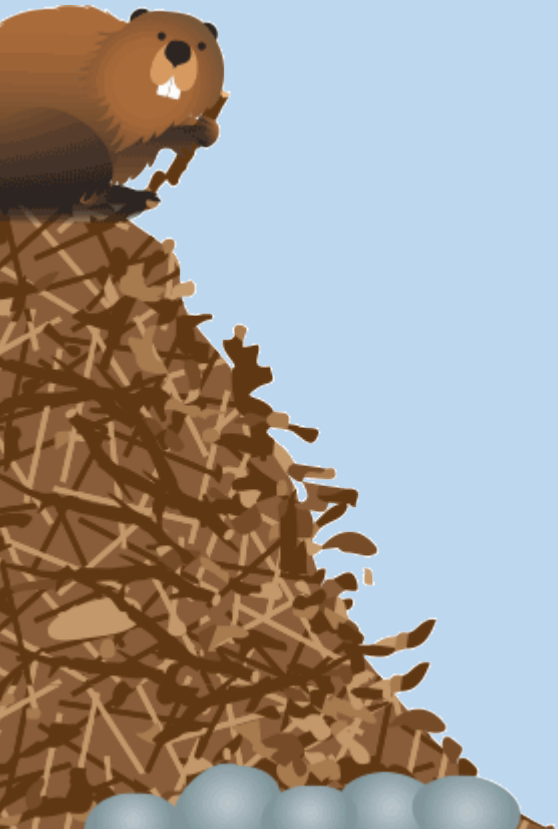
 Printed on recycled paper. 1908\_9760RA\_KCbeaverWorkingGroup.ai

## **Appendix B. Slide deck from the second workshop**

**King County Beaver Working Group**

# **Good Neighbor Workshop**

Tuesday, October 29, 2019



## **Today's Purpose**

Engage the community to learn what it means to them for the County to be a good neighbor regarding beavers on County lands.

# Meeting objectives

1. Engage with and learn from one another.
2. Learn what it means to our neighbors for the County to be a good neighbor where beavers are concerned.
3. Generate new ideas for means of co-existence.
4. Generate input that will inform new County policies and programs regarding beavers.

# Assumptions for Our Work Today

1. There are no top-down answers; we all have a stake.
2. Today is an opportunity for everyone to engage and participate on an even playing field.
3. Neighbors should have a voice in how the County's beaver policies and programs are designed.
4. We all have a stake in the outcomes; a collaborative approach is best.
5. Today's activities are designed to lift up the best ideas; the best ideas will emerge when all voices have been heard.
6. King County honors concerns from the community.
7. All interactions are mutually respectful and mindful of each other's time.



# Agenda

5:00 Greetings! Welcome, thank you for coming.

5:15 Begin first activity – Impromptu Networking.

5:50 Fishbowl activity.

6:30 Break! 15 minutes.

7:30 Begin final activity – What, So What, Now What?

8:30 Wrap up. Please fill out your Comment sheet!

# What's in Your Packet

Beaver Fact Sheet.

Summary of State and County Laws and Policies.

Drainage Complaint Form.

Decision Flow Chart.

Journaling Exercise Worksheet.

Comment Form.

# Who is here and why?



## Steps:

1. Find a partner.
2. One person listens while the other talks for 1 min.
3. Switch roles for 1 min.
4. Converse (Q&A) for 1 min.
5. Mingle, find a new partner, and repeat.
6. 3 rotations.

# Who is here and why?

- Hi, What's your name?
- Why did you come here today?
- Have you experienced impacts from beavers on County lands?



# Report out

mobile one

What did you notice?

Any similarities?

Did anything surprise you?

# Creating group purpose – “9 Whys”

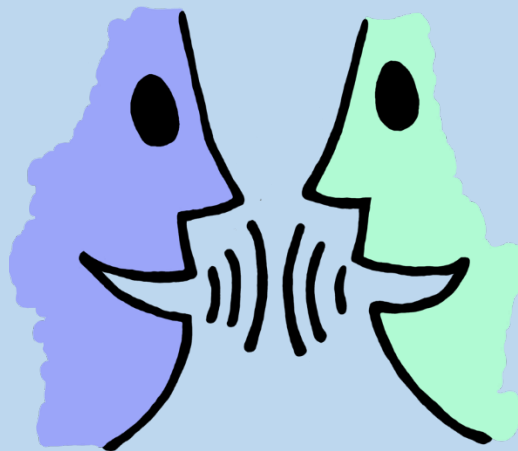
## Steps:

1. Pair up with someone new.
2. Person 1 asks partner one of these questions.
3. Partner responds.
4. Person 1 asks “why” to the responses 9 times.
5. Switch roles at the horn.

4 minutes



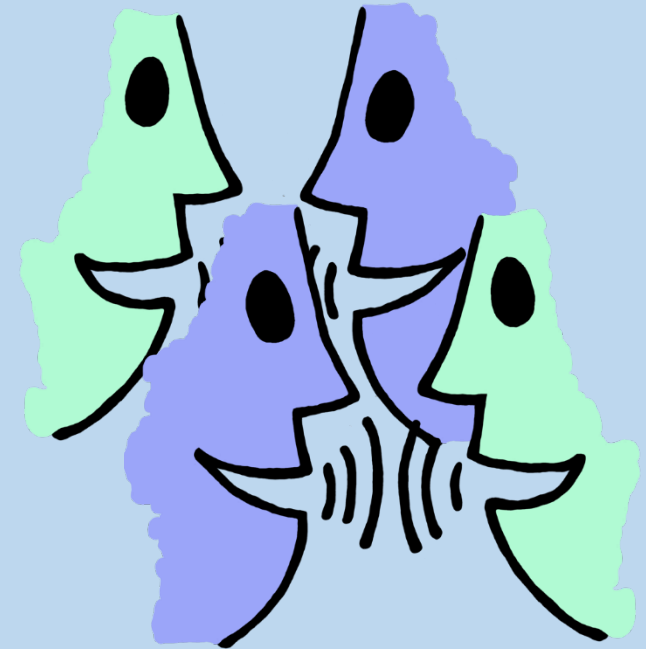
- What do you want to happen as a result of this workshop?
- Why is this **outcome** important to you?
  - Why ?
  - Why ?
  - Why ?



# Creating group purpose - 2

1. Each pair gets together with another pair.
2. Person 1 from Pair 1 describes Person 2's responses to Pair 2. Trade for each Person/Pair.
3. Come to an agreed-upon **outcome** for today's workshop.

**5 minutes**



# Report out

whole one

Where do you have common ground  
and/or differences for today's **outcomes**?

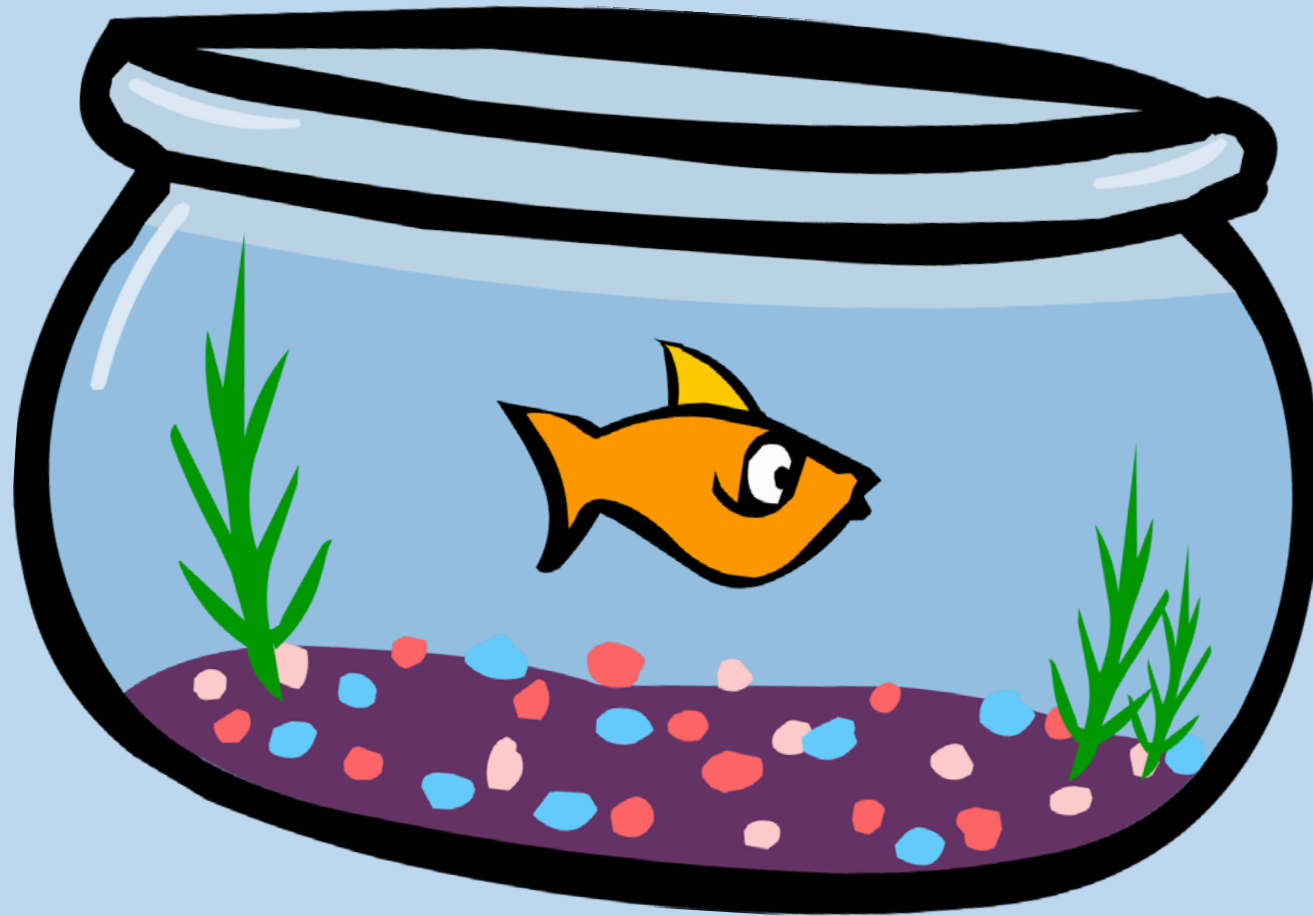
**5 minutes**



# Fish Bowl

## Inner Circle Discusses

- Talk to each other.
- Do not speak to the outer circle.
- Be respectful.



## Outer Circle Listens

- Listen and observe.
- Write any questions on note cards.
- Can join inner circle if space is open.

**15-minute break!**



# Journaling Quadrants – Pt. 1 (by yourself)

+

How is the County being  
a good neighbor?

-

How is the County not  
being a good neighbor?

What do you think the  
County can do to  
eliminate or mitigate the  
negatives?

What are you willing to do/  
tolerate/modify/accept to  
coexist with beavers?



Commitments

5 minutes

# Journaling Quadrants – Part 2

## Steps:

1. Groups of 4 get together at a blank butcher paper.
2. Tell each other what you came up with.
3. What were the commonalities and differences?

**5 minutes**



# Report out

whole one

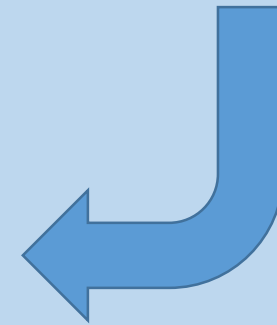
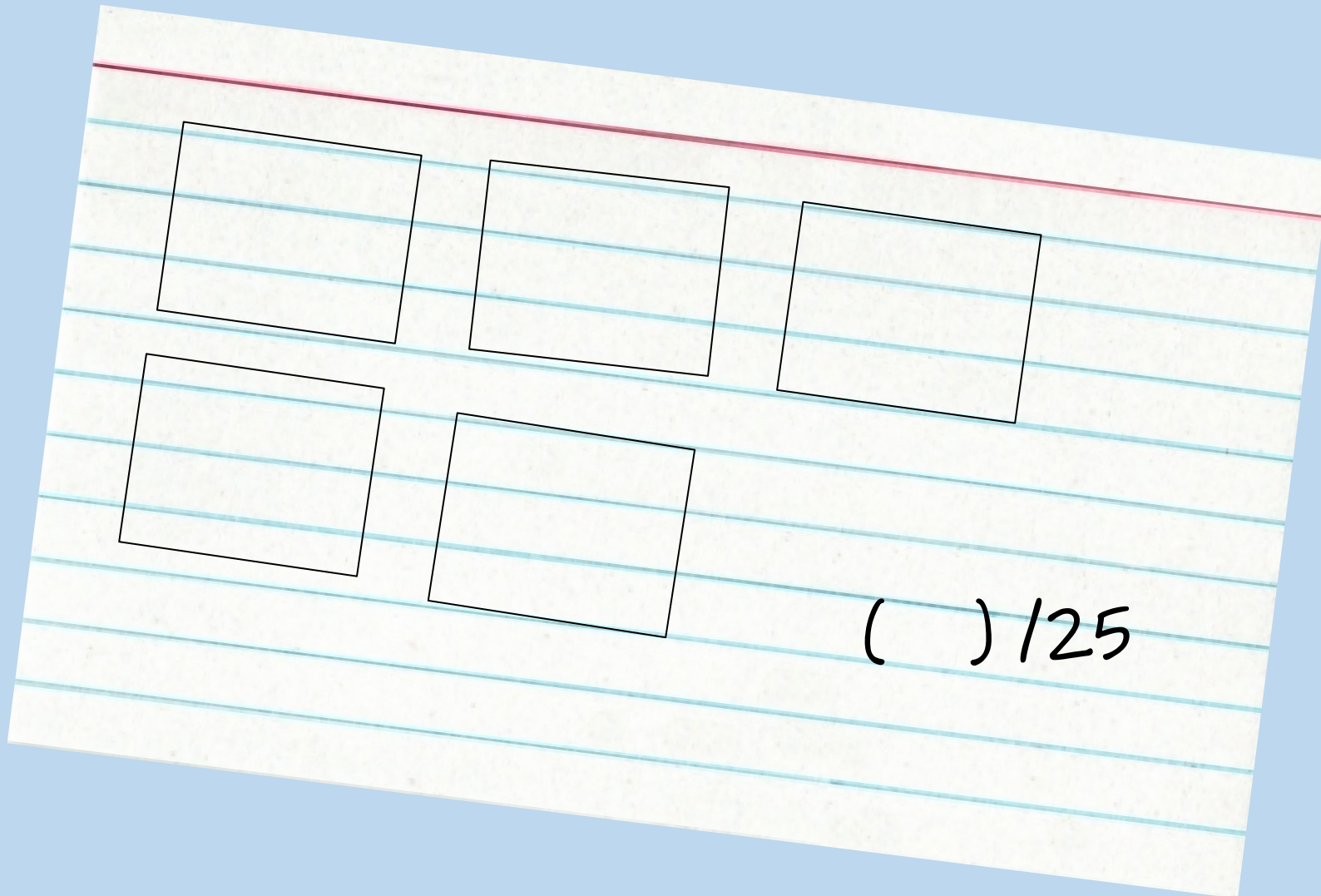
Each group reports out results.

# Gallery Walk

**5 minutes**

# Generating Ideas

Take a note card and draw 5 boxes on back, like this.



Keeping in mind current regulatory, funding,  
and other constraints:

What could the County do to be a good neighbor?

Or Be Bold! Imagine there are few or no  
limitations regarding funding or regulations:

What could the County do to be a good neighbor?

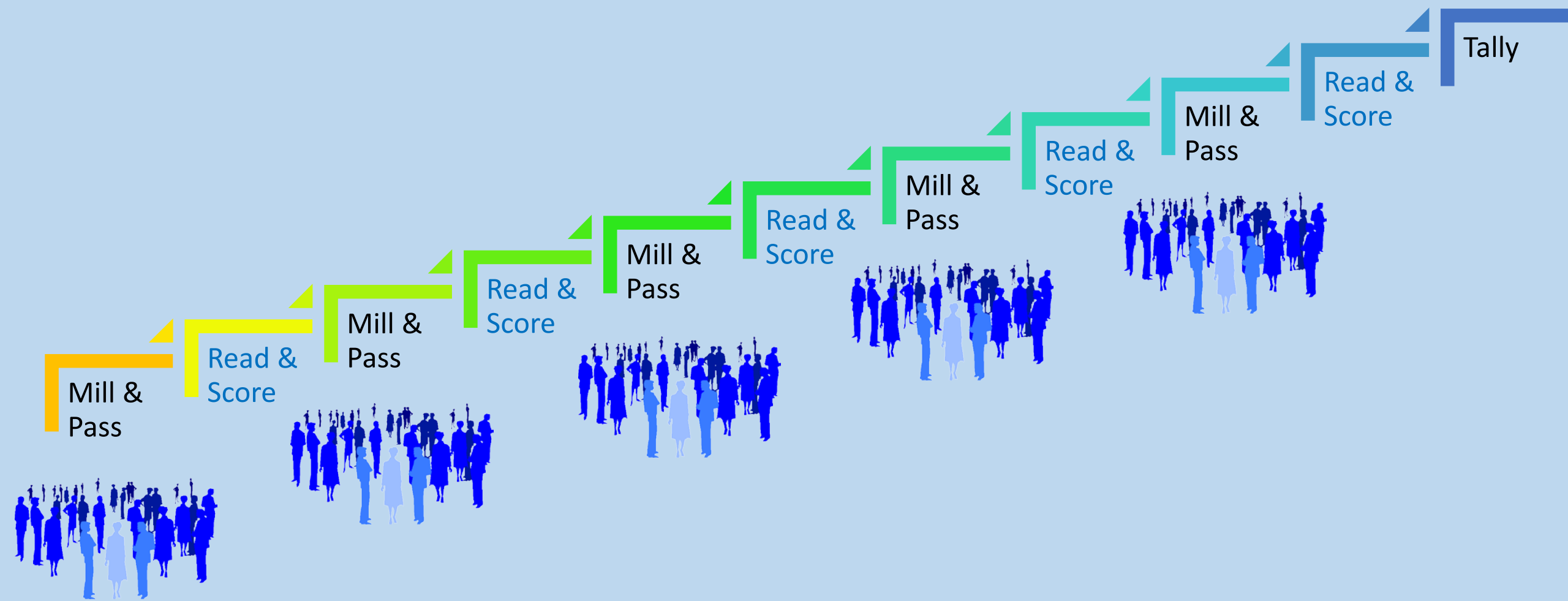


Choose one question and write your answer on the other side of the notecard.

What can the County do to be a good neighbor given current constraints?

-OR-

What can the County do to be a good neighbor with no limits or constraints?



# Rating system

1: Idea/action is not important to me.

2:

3: Idea is of moderate importance to me.

4:

5: Idea/action is most important to me !!

# Report out

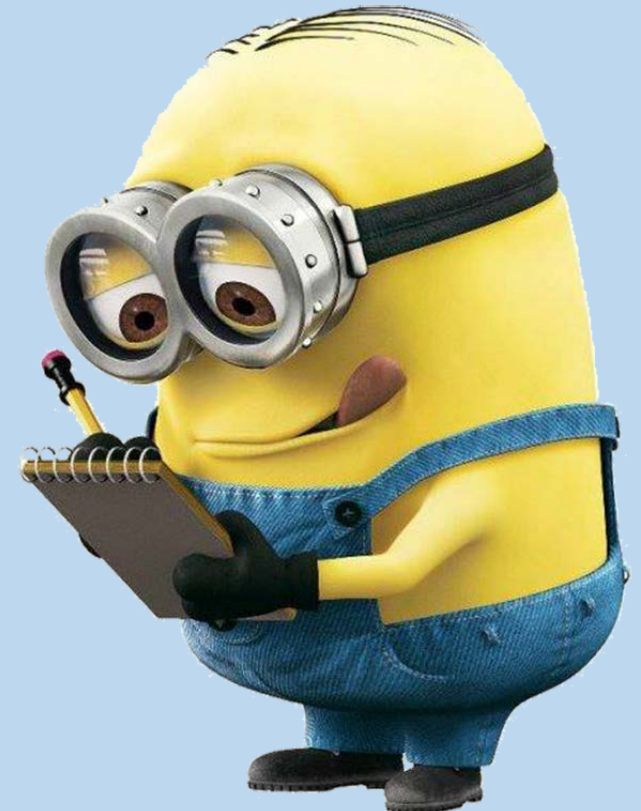
whole one

What ideas are the top vote getters?

# What, So What, Now What?

## Steps:

1. Groups of ~4.
2. Gather at butcher paper.
3. Work together to answer the following questions...



## **A. What?**

What facts did you observe or hear today?

## **B. So What?**

What important ideas emerged today for you?

## **C. Now What?**

What actions or ideas talked about today  
make sense to you?

Did your questions and concerns get shared?



# Report out

webbale one

Did we miss anything?



# Next Steps

- Collate all feedback.
- Present feedback, ideas, and suggestions from all participants to our management and share on website.
- Make policy and program recommendations to management in time for next budget cycle.
- Examine ideas for future workshops.

Before you leave,  
please fill out final comment form!



Thank you for participating!

[kingcounty.gov/beavers](https://kingcounty.gov/beavers)

## **Appendix C. Meeting notes from September 8, 2019, Preston workshop**

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTES**  
**KING COUNTY BEAVER WORK GROUP “GOOD NEIGHBOR” WORKSHOP,**  
**#1 OF 2**  
**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2019 – 9:00 AM TO 12:30 PM**  
**PRESTON COMMUNITY CENTER – 8625 310<sup>TH</sup> AVE. SE, PRESTON, WA 98050**

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**County (DNRP) Staff Present:** Eric Beach (Ag Regulations & Permitting), Nathan Brown (Ecological Restoration and Engineering Services), Brandon Duncan (Stormwater Services), Amiee Mccrea (Finance and Administration), Megan Moore (Rural and Regional Services), Brian Sleight (Stormwater Services), Jen Vanderhoof (Science Section).

Approximately 15 members of the public in attendance.

Note: these are “raw” notes that attempt to record meeting details. In these notes, the County staff person that made comments is identified by first name. “Public” refers to a comment made by a member of the public.

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**(1) Welcome & Setting the Stage**

Jen Vanderhoof led introductions of County staff in attendance, and outlined the purpose of today’s workshop: people co-existing with beavers. Nathan Brown introduced himself as workshop facilitator, explaining the County needs the public’s feedback to develop and inform its programs and policies addressing beavers.

**(2) Tapping “Well of Curiosity/Talent”: Pair Up/Networking Exercise**

Attendees were instructed to pair up and discuss each other’s reasons for attending today, then repeat the process with a new individual, twice. County staff also participated in this and all exercises. People reported the following points and questions they would like answered from their discussions:

- A variety of reasons for interests, including: backwater, vegetation, recharge from beaver ponds.
- Some people have beavers and don’t want them; some feel the opposite way.
- One man had a problem with beavers and said perhaps the County should help remove them.
- While the County has a program and website addressing beavers, the site is difficult to navigate for info.
- General ecology, such as benefits to salmon runs.
- Will landowners who allow County work on their property be penalized, and what is the County’s responsibility for habitat work on private land?
- Can the County amend the state law prohibiting transplanting of beavers?
- Do beavers pose a landslide threat?

**(3) Establishing Meeting Group Purpose (The “Nine Whys” – Exercise)**

Attendees were asked to pair with someone new and ask each other: “What do you want to happen as a result of this workshop, and why is it important to you?” Then hone down the answers by asking “why?” each time. Then, pairs would form groups of four and report on

their agreed-upon desired outcomes for today. The following desired outcomes were reported:

- **Group 1:** To streamline the County's beaver response: find out the County's process to legally manage beavers, how to get in touch with the right person with the right info. To see the County do more outreach and workshops on this issue. To determine if beavers can be relocated.
- **Group 2:** Gather info to inform a County beaver policy that takes different types of problems and situations into account. We need to know what we can and can't do with beavers. Educate County staff on County and state policies for beaver management. Better public engagement from County with citizens.
- **Group 3:** Set up a website with various search filters and criteria to better locate the right person at the County to address a situation.
- **Group 4:** Multiple concerns, particularly how beavers affect salmon habitat/passage and related issues.
- **Group 5:** Shared many concerns with other groups. Also: Should the County doing its job to address beaver issues cost taxpayers more money? Does the County "take over" private land during a project? Why is there no cost-sharing for beaver management on private property?
- A resident voiced frustration about the County developing a beaver policy when he believes WDFW's beaver trapping law already addresses this; he wished to see a bounty reinstated on beaver pelts. County staff replied that the County is not trying to change state law, but find better ways to implement it.

**---- 15-minute BREAK ---- Break was taken early to allow team to take a breather and adapt approach after the last conversation, which grew lively.**

#### **(4) Field Experts Share Knowledge & Experience: "Fishbowl" Exercise**

Nathan Brown led an exercise, gathering several County experts and public volunteers in a "fishbowl" discussion circle which would be fed questions from participants outside it, to answer in discussion amongst themselves. The following questions and topics were directed to the fishbowl:

- **What are the benefits of beavers to our lands, in relation to work programs and lands?**
  - From a stormwater perspective, beaver dams give sediment a chance to slow down and not charge downstream during floods.
  - Even dams highly saturated with water can often still serve to absorb more water.
  - Beaver dams affect stream flow, which relates to habitat benefits, including passage for salmon.
  - Ultimately, salmon and beavers coexisted fine before human intervention.
  - Sometimes, salmon wait for higher stream flows to help them pass obstructions.
  - The problems with salmon passage are more with artificial streams than natural ones.
  - Long ago, there were so many salmon that an occasional stream becoming impassable would not have been a major detriment to them.
- **From attendee: "If you store water and silt in a beaver dam, these will flood the salmon spawning areas when the dam breaks. Which do you want, beaver or fish?"**

- Salmon in many cases are resilient to these experiences. It also scours the side channels, and with that top sediment gone there is nice spawning ground. A seemingly catastrophic event can have long-term benefits.
- Not all beaver dams fail. Those that don't, over long-term fill in and become meadows that make good soil for being farmed. The stream keeps flowing, and the decades-long cycle is repeated.
- **Statement was made by attendee: "Eventually, hungry beavers will clear out trees on your property whether you want them to or not."**
  - Some trees, like willows, actually thrive when you cut them – if you cut one, multiple grow back.
- **We should talk about what available tools we have to deal with beavers.**
  - Trapping. Any landowner can hire one. In the Snoqualmie Valley, the Watershed Improvement District (WID) has one on retainer to respond to requests.
  - Relocation. The Tulalip Tribes is out front on this. A state law prohibiting beaver relocation was recently changed, but a license from the state is still needed for relocation. There is a pilot program underway, requiring husbandry facilities and designated release sites; beavers can't be moved arbitrarily. If you place beavers where there are already other beavers, this will create territory issues and they will just move to another location anyway. Beavers are being released on some federal lands in the Skykomish basin.
  - There is also a non-profit organization, Beavers Northwest, which can provide resources. Their focus is to install pond levelers, which helps keep beavers where they are.
  - "Beaver deceiver" culvert fences and pond levelers are two devices sometimes used to address beaver dams.
  - Ultimately, there is not a "one-stop" solution to problem beavers.
  - For the County to intervene, there must be public safety impacts or flooding of living spaces, which are addressed by the County's capital policy groups.
- **In a restoration project on Bear Creek, why did the County plant saplings and put woody debris in the bank?**
  - Bank armoring and erosion prevention. It also creates great salmon habitat.
- **Is there any thought to inventorying beavers on County lands?**
  - Only informally. Various groups track location for various reasons but don't coordinate with each other.
- **Are beavers overrunning the County?**
  - No, but trapping levels have gone down due to changes in trapping laws and fur pricing.
- **Is there effort to create more beaver/fish habitat on County lands?**
  - Yes, there are many fish restoration projects on County lands, many of which plant trees that beavers like.
- **How do we find out what programs/services are available to residents, in a streamlined way?**
  - This is part of why this group was formed, to coordinate efforts and eventually have a central contact.
- **How do we find out what projects are happening, and where?**

- Active restoration projects are listed on the County Ecological Restoration and Engineering Services (ERES) unit's website.
- **What are the known constraints and regulations that govern addressing beavers?**
  - The state only licenses trappers; it no longer traps beavers or has a beaver management program. It needs to be determined if the County will fill that vacuum, and not just on County-owned lands.
  - There is currently no centralized point of contact for County-state collaboration.
  - Many people lack an understanding of jurisdictional authority, such as cities vs. County.
- **Other Comments**
  - A bounty should be placed on beaver pelts; there are legal, lethal underwater beaver traps.
  - Why are County funds being used to undermine state law?
  - County should pay the same price to protect farmland as it does natural lands.
  - Beavers are factored into County projects when they weren't before, and sometimes even create better habitat.

#### **(5) Journaling Worksheet Handout**

The participants were asked to answer a series of questions on a worksheet. The questions were:

- How is the County being, or not being, a good neighbor?
- What do you think the County can do to eliminate or mitigate the negatives?
- What are you willing to do/tolerate/modify/accept to coexist?

Then they were put into two groups and consolidate/report out where their responses were similar and where they had differences.

- One group agreed that there is better communication now than in the past. They also agreed that they appreciated this forum to engage. They still want improved communications with clear responses, which they feel have been lacking. Some of this group wished for clear policy and desired streamlined information and processes.
- The second group also appreciated this level of outreach. They agreed the County is not easily accessible. They also agreed that they liked the idea of a cost-share program for installing devices. They agreed on the need for better planning on capital programs related to having beavers move into a planted area, raising the water levels, and killing some of the plants. They differed on the degree to which the County should be involved in beaver-related issues (one person believed it was entirely up to the State).

#### **(6) Generating Bold Ideas: Notecard Exercise**

The participants were asked to take two notecards, and answer the following questions:

- Card 1: What can the County do, with no limits or constraints, to be a good neighbor?
- Card 2: What can the County do, given current constraints, to be a good neighbor?

These cards would be mixed and passed randomly and their answers scored/ranked by fellow participants in the following exercise.

#### **(7) Generating Most Powerful Actionable Ideas (Crowd-Sourcing Exercise)**

All cards were passed around the group of participants for five rounds of scoring. Scoring was from 1 to 5, with 1 being least important and 5 most important. Each card ended up with



five different scores, to be totaled. The highest-scoring cards were considered the “highest priority” ideas as ranked by participants.

The answers in order of highest to lowest scores were:

- 25 points: Support, respond to private landowner concerns and set up a point of contact to affect action.
- 24 points: Being open, nice, and honest at all times. No cost.
- 21 points: Set up 72-hour response time for calls.
- 21 points: Develop a better line of communication between agencies to reach common goals of beaver preservation.
- 21 points: Buy all streams and waterways and create wildlife habitat throughout the County.
- 21 points: Set up program to address beaver impacts on neighbors’ properties prioritized based on ranked impacts. Only top ranked projects addressed.
- 19 points: Take beavers away from those who don’t want them, and give them to people who do.
- 19 points: Create a policy that streamlines the management practices surrounding beavers on public-owned land.
- 18 points: Bring back public input to higher-ups to advocate and inform (needs, concerns, and wants of public) when creating policy, action items, response, and implementation.
- 18 points: Try to come up with policies to work for everyone or at least provide some people info on the benefits of beavers.
- 20 points: Allow and continue the preserving and development of beaver habitat.
- 20 points: Communication and input with County planning.
- 20 points: Improve environment/habitat for healthy beaver/wildlife habitat.
- 16 points: Form online beaver information hub including contacts for appropriate subject matter (flooding, hazard trees, lost trees, etc.)
- 16 points: Eliminate all impacts to neighbors’ lands if the landowner so desires, but maintain beavers on King County lands. Include fencing, pond levelers, ongoing relocation, and landowner education.
- 16 points: There’re limits to everything.
- 16 points: Make beaver management a County initiative with all the funding it needs for outreach, education, technical assistance, planning, acquisition, etc.
- 15 points: Follow state laws and enhance them.
- 15 points: Talk to state people about the need for discussion on rules for the beaver dams in King County and other counties.
- 14 points: Do nothing, no more taxes, let property owners deal with their own problems.

- 12 points (one person put a check mark in the box instead of a score, so it's possible this could have scored higher): Create habitat within County land without affecting neighbors (containment).
- 12 points: Change beaver laws to allow lethal trapping without special permission.
- 9 points: Make environmental department in charge of beaver dam control with contact persons.
- 8 points: Stay out of my business.

**(8) Reflect on Shared Experiences (“What? / So What? / Now What?”)**

Attendees were asked a series of follow-up questions to help build understanding and spur action.

- **What: What facts did you observe or hear today?**
  - This is a complicated issue that branches out quickly.
  - Seems all are concerned about actual County response.
  - County employees were allowed to vote in exercises and provide suggestions (should they have been?).
- **So What: What important ideas emerged today for you?**
  - Opening the lines of communication.
  - Needed more information than was provided.
- **Now What: What actions/ideas from today make sense to you? Did your concerns/questions get shared?**
  - Setting up a system to address specific issues and response time – directing citizens to the right person in a timely manner, perhaps a website.
- **Did We Miss Anything?**
  - Some participants thought if they'd had more information, their responses might have been different.

**(9) Closing & Next Steps**

Jen Vanderhoof said a second workshop like today's would be held in October. In the meantime, all feedback from today's workshop will be collated and presented to DNRP management, as well as shared on a County website. A survey will also be conducted online to allow input from those unable to attend the workshops. It is hoped that policy and program recommendations to management will be made in time for the next budget cycle. A solutions workshop may be scheduled for some time this winter.

## **Appendix D. Meeting notes from October 29, 2019, Maple Valley workshop**

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTES**  
**KING COUNTY BEAVER WORK GROUP “GOOD NEIGHBOR” WORKSHOP,**  
**#2 OF 2**  
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2019 – 5:00 PM TO ~8:30 PM**  
**MAPLE VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**21844 SE 248<sup>TH</sup> ST., MAPLE VALLEY, WA 98038**

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**County (DNRP) Staff Present:** Eric Beach (Ag Regulations & Permitting), Nathan Brown (Ecological Restoration and Engineering Services), Brandon Duncan (Stormwater Services), Amiee McCrea (Finance and Administration), Megan Moore (Rural and Regional Services), Brian Sleight (Stormwater Services), Jen Vanderhoof (Science Section), all of planning team. Also attending from the County: Kollin Higgins (Science Section), Denise Di Santo (Watershed Stewardship), Sarah Brandt (Parks Division), and Dave Sizemore (Parks Division).

Approximately 26 members of the public in attendance.

Note: these are “raw” notes that attempt to record meeting details. In these notes, the County staff person that made comments is identified by first name. “Public” refers to a comment made by a member of the public.

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**(1) Welcome & Setting the Stage**

- Nathan kicked things off at 5:05 pm and explained the purpose of tonight’s workshop. Jen introduced herself and explained that the ideas generated tonight would be taken back to KC management to help address/form County beaver policy. Other team members introduced themselves.
- Purpose: To hear from people who live near County-owned lands affected by beaver issues and learn from them what it means for the County to be a good neighbor to them.
- Nathan explained meeting objectives, assumptions, and structure.

**(2) Tapping “Well of Curiosity/Talent”: Pair Up/Impromptu Networking Exercise**

Mingling activity: This is for folks to get a sense for who is here and why. Everyone will mill about while the music plays. When the music stops pair up with someone and ask them “Have you experienced impacts from beavers on County lands?” After 1 minute let the other person share their answer. Then talk together for 1 minute. Mingle and repeat 2 more times. County staff also participated in this and all exercises.

- Mingling report out and other comments from participants:
  - “I learned Spring Lake is a major problem, 2-3 people I talked to there are losing land to beavers.”
  - “We’re using resources to construct habitat for salmon spawning, but then we allow destruction of that.”
  - “We’re not able to get permits in timely manner; it should not be the landowners’ responsibility to follow through on County problems.”
  - “Lake Desire and Spring Lake share the same problem: lakes are up 2-3 feet.”
  - “I’ve lived on Spring Lake much of my life (17 years), but never lost any land or property - haven’t seen a problem. Wonder if some stories may be exaggerated.”

### **(3) Tapping “Well of Curiosity/Talent”: Pair Up/Impromptu Networking Exercise**

“Nine Whys” activity: Pair up and ask one partner what do you want to happen tonight and why is that important? Then ask “why” repeatedly until answer gets to the root of the issue. Switch roles and repeat. Then pair into groups of four and discuss/form a consensus on what you want to happen a result of today’s workshop.

- “Nine Whys” report out from participants on common ground and differences between them? The following bullets are what participants said:
  - Common ground: we want to learn more about how to coexist with beavers and their impacts.
  - We’re affected, or want to know our options to help solve the problems. We live in different areas. While the issue can be the same level in each area, we don’t live near each other.
  - Common ground: Develop toolbox to address beaver-related impacts. More education, managing of wetlands.
  - Find ways to resolve homeowners’ habitat concerns. Great to hear accurate information – many people have incorrect, not factual, assumptions about beavers.
  - Bottom line: we want to try to protect biodiversity by letting salmon get through channels but not eradicate beavers, maybe manage them. One citizen – they’re (who?) doing a side channel for beavers so salmon can get through. We all care about biodiversity.
  - Our situation doesn’t involve salmon.
  - We heard from each other: we’d all like to see the County find a balance between destroying vs. working the real problems people have, with policies and planning, getting people to work together. Finding a balance between these. It’s important in policies/procedures to be responsive to complaints. Also important: how can we educate the public on what you’re doing/resolving; for example, if you’re taking out dams on Spring Lake, how do we let people know? We’re interested in what’s going on upstream. Education of the public. County should come up with something that makes sense.
  - I think we all agree: the County needs a strategy for determining when it does or doesn’t step in. ‘Strategy’ is a good word. Another thing: the County should be working with other cities, jurisdictions etc. impacting each other to solve problems too.
- Nathan asked: Who in attendance lives near/is affected by beavers on County land? Dealing with beaver impacts? About half the people raised their hands.

### **(4) Fishbowl Activity**

Nathan gave the instructions as follows. Inner circle discussion: talk to each other. Don’t speak outside the circle. Be respectful. Outer circle: listen and observe. Write questions on index cards. Can join inner circle if a space is open. 2 or 3 spots for citizens to rotate in and out of the fishbowl. Suggestion of 5-minute limit for rotating spaces. But that rule was abandoned after checking with folks to make sure the change was okay, and people basically got in and mostly didn’t choose to leave. Several note cards were passed in from others outside the fishbowl.

- **First topic: Benefits of beavers.**

- Brian: I've learned over time that beavers are one of the best things out there for habitat in general. It's ironic that when KC builds a project, sometimes they get better when the beavers come in.
- Jen: I'd say in many instances we can help the ecosystem, including salmon, on a much greater scale, with beavers. It is complicated. What are the benefits for salmon? Beavers provide Coho rearing habitat, and in some cases Chinook habitat. Contrary to common perception, they lower stream temperatures below ponds.
- Brandon: The water level in the pond could push potentially colder water at bottom of pond into the ground downstream where it would daylight and could lower the overall temperature of the stream.
- Jen: Yes, there is new science showing this, that temperatures downstream are about 2.3 degrees C lower in a local study.
- Public: There's not a good understanding of how beavers provide benefits to salmon/salmon populations. I think of river restoration – this is beaver restoration. I think the County could do a much better job to educate the public on benefits to this – water retention, etc. Sammamish River becoming a vat. A cost-effective solution could involve beavers creating a longer, more sustaining benefit.
- Jen: Benefits on ecosystem level. Beavers don't solve all problems, but they can solve many.
- Brian: In Wyoming, they were trying to restore riparian habitat but were having hard time getting vegetation to survive. They built fake dams then imported beaver. The beaver stayed and their beaver ponds recharged the groundwater, which then helped the plants survive the summer
- Jen: Ponds continue to provide water to streams even in dry summers.
- Public: In talking about ecological benefits – I'm curious from a landowner viewpoint, but beavers are still causing me pain. Are there direct landowner benefits from beavers?
- Jen: It depends on the landowner. Beaver ponds provide high levels of biodiversity, including insects which are the base of the food web.
- Public: Would it benefit downstream flows?
- Brandon: I've heard it mentioned that beaver dams can attenuate flood flows.
- Brian: Certainly dams catch sediment. I might disagree on peak flows – when dams are built, a pond fills up. All that water below the top of the dam is “dead storage.” Some debate on this issue, on whether they actually act as a sponge.
- Public: I read a study with landowner feedback – it was specific to cattle, and may not apply here. These landowners found that letting beavers do what they do was more efficient in getting water to cattle and saving money. There might be other landowner benefits if we think about it.
- Brian: Reading Public question from note card – if beaver dams block salmon traveling upstream to spawn, how do we fix this?
- Eric: Washington State has policies that reflect this. I think from an evolutionary viewpoint, salmon coevolved with beavers for ages, so dams are not really an issue for mature salmonids.

- Brian: Tangent – there's a fisherman show I listened to on the radio. They always talk about fish waiting at the mouth of a stream for high water flows, to help them get over and around obstacles. I know salmon get around them, but don't know how.
- Jen: Historically, for thousands of years, even if there were beaver dams that salmon couldn't get around, there were so many fish in the rivers that it didn't matter. But now every fish counts, and every fish probably costs tens of thousands of dollars.
- **New topic: Available tools for managing beavers?**
  - Brian: It depends on the specific problem to be solved.
  - Public: With lake levelers, there's a history of using these on Spring Lake. I believe it worked. I don't know if that's an available tool now?
  - Brandon: how far down did the lake level drop?
  - Jen: I think this refers to an HPA problem, and is not a tool available now. It was fine for a while, but now the state has clamped down on restrictions. I'm talking with Snohomish County and others on this tomorrow – it's one of the few tools we have for really managing water levels. The hope is to start being able to get these permitted again. I'll know more after tomorrow.
  - Public: I recognize trapping is considered the #1 option now, but for some people trapping is not a savory choice.
  - Brian: KC permits – Eric and others are working on streamlining County code to make getting pond levelers in easier from the County side.
  - Brandon: Just so everybody is on the same page could someone explain what a pond/lake leveler is.
  - Brian: You put a pipe through the dam, then let beavers build over it. Usually beavers will stop damming once the water reaches a certain level, or if it gets too low, they go upstream/downstream and build another dam.
  - Public: Putting a pond leveler in – what are the positive impacts that beavers have, and how do they intersect?
  - Jen: It works if a beaver stays and does its thing. The Beavers Northwest organization tries to encourage beavers to stay where they are and not move so the system becomes predictable.
  - Brian: It depends on the problem you're trying to solve. A pond leveler problem – what size pipe should be used? If you put a pipe in based on summer flows, water will spill over the dam in winter so it will not lower the water level in the winter. If you size it for winter flows, then you just have a culvert which may have to meet fish passage requirements. I've asked people who install levelers how they size their pipes and have not gotten detailed answers.
  - Public: Anyone with nice shrubbery around here, trees – beavers can take those away. HPA permit only for (forests?) For farmland – you don't need a permit. WA Forest Protection Act doesn't cover agricultural land. People are worried about beavers – when they're on agricultural land, you're working with a different set of rules.
  - Brandon: You still need a HPA permit for in-stream work.
  - Brian: Agricultural lands do have some code exceptions; for how it pertains to a particular property, you should talk to an expert.
  - Public: I work for a drainage district...

- Brian: What tools are out there? There's a spreadsheet in your packet – a list of tools for different types of problems, and the pros/cons of each tool. No single tool out there is a one-time fix, be it trapping or a pond leveler or something else. There's still maintenance to be done.
- Brian: If you have a beaver problem and want to solve it – you'll create a beaver management plan.
- Public: I wonder – when one or two people decide there's a beaver problem, and there are 60-70 landowners on a water body... one question we should address, how do you determine if it IS a problem? People will take things into their own hands without an HPA. When people use their own water levelers, they may make others' weed issues worse.
- Jen: It seems that's a need that has been identified today – it will take some process to get folks together.
- Brian: It comes down to what type of problem. Different slopes and land elevations see different impacts from lake elevation. Maybe beavers aren't always the issue.
- Public: If you introduce higher water tables, it interferes with septic systems and drinking water.
- Public: The County shouldn't mess with residents on their private land; landowners should be able to trap beavers on their own land. Beavers can't just be cast away, they can destroy a property. A landowner should have the means to settle this on their own without the County interfering. I don't know why the County is interfering.
- Public: Different landowners have different issues/views on if something should be done. I favor more data – we have lake level data. We need to listen to property owner voices, those who're impacted. Those not impacted can have opinions – but for those being impacted, those are real losses that should be taken seriously. In Spring Lake we have a forest, but it can't run away – we don't want everything to become wetland. I think of the options as an impacted landowner – Brian's idea about pumps/permitting? (didn't catch)
- Public: I want to give a landowner viewpoint – there's an impact for all of us. If you think about habitat impacts... I am a fisherman. I want myself and future generations to be able to fish for salmon. If we remove habitat, Washington State will not be a place for people like me and others who rely on salmon anymore. We want to come back to – looking at options something to take seriously, the County should exercise (caution). Lake levelers... Lake Sammamish is almost becoming a human-controlled bathtub. Landowners seem fine but the wetlands are suffering. The County needs to look at precedents from other projects.
- Brian: If the County came in with a policy allowing shoreline fill due to beavers downstream, it would have to be carefully worded because you know a developer would try to use beaver as a justification for filling to create a developable lot.
- Brian: Beaver ponds are temporary. Eventually a pond fills in, and the beaver moves on. The pond becomes meadow, and the cycle begins again. We see only a short part of that cycle. Dead trees provide snags and places for other animals to perch. We need to look at long-term impacts, not short-term.
- Public: I don't see dying trees as a problem. I think it's important for the County to help lake landowners.



- Jen: One question about relocation from the audience: “the region’s population is growing, and habitat is less abundant. Is a beaver relocation program the most humane solution?” It’s one tool, yes. The Tulalips have a beaver relocation program. Trapping is a temporary option at best. If you’re trapping, it’s up to you if you use lethal means or if you want to relocate the beavers.
- Public: In Spring Lake we hired a trapper – it was an expensive, ongoing commitment. The beavers came back next year anyway.
- Brian: There could be 3 generations of beavers in a pond at one time. If you relocate a beaver, another can move in. If you’re lucky in your timing you might get a year without them. But it’s still temporary.
- Jen: Thinking about trapping – this is one stage of a longer solution. If you trap, consider that temporary and plan for how else you want to address the issue.
- Brian: It should be noted that a properly working lake leveler does not permanently change a water level. If a storm event comes through, water can come back up to the top of dam. If you think a leveler will keep all water out of your property all year... that’s not correct.
- **“Known constraints” - new topic.**
  - Eric: We have a state agency to manage wildlife. The County is here because of the Critical Areas Overlay. This protects sensitive areas like wetlands, etc. Beaver dams are in these critical areas. Beavers themselves – that’s the inherent conflict. Why do we want to duplicate a regulatory overlay when we have a system in place to manage these organisms? I understand this looks only at County lands, but it’s useful to see we have an agency in place with that mandate and if the County needs to duplicate that.
  - Brian: There was a state program long ago that was eliminated, which caused a vacuum in beaver management. The critical areas ordinance does not address beavers. If you want a leveler, or culvert fencing, etc. you need a county permit. This group is working on introducing beavers into our code to either exempt certain beaver management practices from permits or make the permits easier to get.
  - Jen: Right now it’s handled on a case by case basis, which is very inefficient and unpredictable.
  - Brian: If you have a problem, you need a beaver management plan. It will be an ongoing problem. There’s not a one-time solution. [There was confusion about what this management plan is, and we explained it’s nothing formal, but if you have beavers on your property, you need a plan for dealing with beavers in the long-term.]
  - Jen: We didn’t have this issue come up so much 20 years ago. But beavers are not going away. We’re trying to work with one narrow piece in our set of solutions.

*---- Break skipped after checking to make sure folks were okay with that ----*

- (5) Journaling Worksheet Handout: Quadrants. How is County being a good neighbor? Not being a good neighbor? What can County do to mitigate/eliminate negative outcomes? What are you willing to modify/tolerate/accept to be a good neighbor?**
- Beginning the “idea generating” section of meeting. Everyone worked on their own filling out the worksheet first.
  - Then four groups of 4-5 people were formed at flip-chart pages to answer: Commonalities in your journaling ideas? Differences?

- Report Out by Participants:
  - Group 1: Good Neighbor? We agreed that inviting these meetings and having a dialogue is good. We also like that KC does restoration on lands, that they own and steward property throughout the County.
  - Group 2: We need to find a balance between nature and homeowners. We need better management of lake levels and maintenance of outlets. Lakes are a living system, so make lake levelers a viable option. In my research, they're the most solid/least maintenance needed/most long-term solution.
  - Group 3: KC is doing good activities like this workshop – they're listening, but there's not always follow-up action. There needs to be more transparency, more tools offered. There's not enough funding for tools. There's no streamlined permit process, sometimes it's very long. We also agreed we all want to volunteer towards a solution. One difference we had – tolerating the location of flooding. Some said could they could tolerate it, others not.
  - Group 4: Common ground – KC providing more information/education/expertise on the problem. Some people didn't know what to expect tonight but have learned a lot. Also – in terms of restoring habitat, KC is doing that in certain areas and ensuring good beaver habitat. Also, there is a fair amount of bureaucracy and unclear direction from KC. Some of us felt involving KC was a good thing, but others thought it was bureaucracy and produced fewer results.

**(6) Generating Bold Ideas: Notecard/Index card Exercise**

- a. Instructions: Draw five boxes for scoring later. On other side, write ideas. Either:
  1. Keeping in mind current regulatory funding and other constraints – what could county do to be a good neighbor? AND/OR,
  2. Be Bold – Imagine few/no constraints – what could County do to be a good neighbor?
- b. You could choose one question or answer both on two cards.
- c. Once cards were done, everyone was instructed to mingle and randomly pass cards around until the music stops. Final person who has a card scores it 1-5 from least to most important. Process was repeated five times then the 5 scores were totaled (max score of 25).

**(7) Generating Most Powerful Actionable Ideas (Crowd-Sourcing Exercise) Score is not importance to County, but gauges importance to participants.**

- d. Nathan arranged everyone in order of highest points on cards they were holding to least points, then people read them aloud and he taped them up on the wall to see if there were themes. Following is a transcription of all cards with their scores:

24/25: Give the Lake Desire Community labor assistance in cleaning the outlet stream. Develop a long-term beaver management plan.

23/25: Begin pilot project at Spring Lake (or similar problem area) where creative, bold solutions can be tested (e.g., streamlined permitting, financial assistance, landowner property protection measures, etc.). Scale up tools/programs that are effective.

23/25: On Lakes: Do a lake by lake or pond by pond study to determine an “acceptable” level of water then manage all factors, including beavers, to stay at that level.

22/25: Be bold with common sense.

- 22/25: Make it easy for communities to enlist professional companies, such as Beavers Northwest to install lake levelers to control lake output.
- 22/25: Respond to citizen's phone calls/emails in a timely fashion with specific ideas for help/funding/volunteer help.
- 21/25: Bold, no constraints: Have enough resources to identify and work with all landowners who have issues with beavers to resolve situation together. Create plan together.
- 20/25: Bold: Consider each case independently. This will need more money to staff more employees to deal with each case. What's relevant to one case may be irrelevant to another.
- 20/25: Tax incentive program that discounts the portion of your land now underwater because of beavers.
- 19/25: Notification of work to be done; neighbor/community involvement; community council presentations; neighbor questionnaires; school education. Co-funding problem management areas; tools, workers, supplies.
- 19/25: Science-based management – identify projects that are worthwhile vs. waste of time. Key acquisition of properties likely to have conflicts and helping landowners with stewardship projects.
- 19/25: Empower the land owners, make it possible for them to remove beavers or create habitat.
- 19/25: Look at all the waters (rivers, lakes, streams) in KC and work w/ local jurisdictions & WA State to develop a management plan for maintaining and enhancing the riparian areas & wildlife that use the waters.
- 18/25: Make it easy for land owners to raise their land to compensate for rising lake levels (that was caused by KC land beavers). Simple, fast permits, not classifying rising levels as wetlands if it wasn't historically.
- 18/25: Be more responsive to citizens' needs. (Cut out red tape)
- 16/25: Develop a plan for management and mitigation, including funding/resources, and commit. Full cycle, per project (DMAIC) Define, measure, analyze, improve, control.
- 15/25: Unrealistic? Beaver Tourism. We're like the only family in our school community that has a beaver. All the other kids are jealous! If we could organize observation of the beavers doing their thing, people would pay money to see it. This money could be used to fund further programs. Private? Public? Has something like this ever worked or was it always a lie?  
Propose volunteer opportunities to HS students. Every student thinks all volunteering is for the homeless problem. Obviously web page/online/book keeping skills are needed. Do any of these kids know that?
- 15/25: Budget constraints – Employ/offer to cost share. Entice people to take you up on your offer to amend shorelines and habitat – similar to solar panel or PSE.
- 15/25: The County should make lake levels easily permitable and have a program for cost & maintenance sharing.
- 15/25: The County should maintain stable lake levels & protect outflows on lakes in their county & not let wildlife make changes without a permit. This is a stewardship issue like water quality & habitat health.
- 14/25: Pro-beaver education dispelling myths and presenting facts.

- 13/25: Provide funding to neighborhoods for beaver projects.
- 13/25: Neighbors help neighbors. KC is our park “neighbor” and needs to take care of their property that is affecting lots of other neighbors.
- 11/25: On streams: classify each stream segment (length to be determined) as having: A – low beaver tolerance, trap them all. B – mid beaver tolerance. Trap as needed/pond leveler. C – high beaver tolerance. No trap.
- 9/25: Don’t drain the swamp. “Get over it” – Mulvaney. Live w them, accept them (cheapest solution), or move to higher grounds. I am no Justin Beaver fan but let kids learn the natural habitat of beavers.
- 9/25: Bold: Human population control – child limit. No longer able to build or rebuild on bodies of water. Kill the rich. Take away all internet.
- 5/25: Program to upgrade/make all docks as floating, and to improve shoreline bulkheads.

**(8) Reflect on Shared Experiences (“What? / So What? / Now What?”)**

- Because of the lack of time remaining (library closes at 9 so we had to be cleared out by then), instead of doing this as a writing exercise, we did it aloud all together. Nathan posed the questions and the responses were recorded on flip chart pages.
- “What?”
  - Lots of talk about needed funding, partnerships with County.
  - Majority of people are in favor of some sort of management solution that brings better harmony.
  - People said it’s refreshing to see County interest/involvement.
  - This is productive engagement, respectful helpful discourse.
  - Still a difference of opinion on the proper solution... there needs to be a flexible plan. County needs to be quicker/more responsive.
- “So what?”
  - Maybe County could lease lands to place beavers on?
  - Cost-share program. Empower property owners to solve their own problems. I like the “empowering” option because... funding has to come from somewhere, and no one wants more fees but they do want more services.
  - Many landowners would argue that waterfront is a premium and should more pay to protect those...
- “Now what?”
  - One person said, “I like what Brian said – County realizing it’s hard for landowners to address raising lake levels, etc. because of permitting. I like the idea of landowners having a bit more power over their own place to stave off rising waters.”
  - One question not answered: This is a great first step (this workshop), but what will come of it? Something productive happening, how long will that take? Could there be some transparency that you are indeed working on it? It’s frustrating waiting for the government wheels to turn.
  - Working across different entities/jurisdictions – there are many resources to be brought to bear. Is it just KC’s responsibility to address these issues?
  - Overall actions – One person said: “One thing I like, though there are definitely two sides on this issue and whose interests are where – everyone’s saying ‘how do we

partner to get this done, how do we consider everyone's desires?' I think this was a productive meeting."

**(9) Closing Questions/Conversation & Next Steps**

- Jen: We will be transparent, and want to commit to that. In terms of speed – nothing is usually fast. We will collate everything we've heard at these workshops. We'll take input and go to our managers, who will have a budget proposal. Will be an 'ask' for resources. One idea – a beaver response squad, people whose dedicated job is to address these issues.
- One other issue: Someone said, "I see a need after talking with folks here – a need/desire for more public education. Maybe a different style workshop with more information sharing, more PowerPoint/pictures."
- What's the scope of your solution? Is there any way to loop WDFW into this solution? Or is this work just at the County level? Jen: Only piece we're working with the state on now is "device permitting" – Jen is meeting with them tomorrow.
- Brandon: Other group working specifically on your issue.
- <http://www.kingcounty.gov/beavers> – website. This site will be updated with the new content/updates.
- There's also an email signup option, to sign up for our newsletter. A message will go out in the next few weeks.
- Public: I want to appreciate the work KC is doing in putting on these workshops, very valuable to us.
- Jen: The outcome will be a budget proposal, which still has to go through several layers of County management. WLRD management is very interested in this. Beyond that, I'm not sure.
- Should we call someone else? Always call your Council representative.
- Jen: We will start working on the budget proposal early next year (2020).
- Brandon: KC has a 2-year budget cycle. We are right in the middle of our current one. So the earliest there would be any funding for potential action around beavers would be 2021.