



Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
November 9, 2005
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Alex Kamola, Doug McClelland, Julie Stangell, Jim Franzel, Ole Una and Lee Witter Kahn

Commissioners absent: Doug Schindler; Len Guss, Jean Bouffard and Dennis Dart

Exofficio member present: Amy Grotta

Exofficio members absent: Mike Reed and Randy Sandin

Forestry staff: Kathy Creahan, Linda Vane, Kristi McClelland

Guests: none

Meeting Summary

Action Items

1. Julie will draft a list of questions regarding certification to serve as the outline for an information sheet on forest certification.
2. A work group made up of Doug M, Julie, Amy, Alex, Dennis and Ole will develop an information sheet on forest certification based on Julie's outline.
3. Linda will email the work group copies of what has been said on the certification issue by the RFC.
4. Alex will send a letter of endorsement from the RFC in support of WSU Extension's application to the EPA grant program for a Youth Forestry Education project.
5. Linda will email a summary of RFC accomplishments prior to the next meeting.
6. Nominations for 2006 RFC officers are open until the January 11 meeting, at which time elections will be held. So far Alex has been nominated for Chair and Julie has been nominated for Vice Chair.

Motions

#110905-1: A motion to adopt the minutes from the May meeting was unanimously approved.

#110905-2: A motion to adopt the minutes from the September meeting was unanimously approved with the following changes:

List absent exofficio members separately from regular members of the commission.

On the bottom of page 5, to the list of Kirk Anderson's associations add "Small Forest Landowner Office, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Board member, Family Forest Foundation; tree farmer of 30 acres in Grays Harbor County and co-manager of an adjacent 60-acre tree farm."

Last paragraph, page 5, add "Ian said" and "Kirk said" where appropriate. Revise second sentence in the paragraph to read "Ian said that the issue of potential certification of county land came to NNRG via county staff late last year and there was interest from the King County Executive and staff in learning more about how NNRG's program works."

Top of page 6, 1st paragraph, add "Kirk said that" before the fourth sentence, "NNRG uses FSC certification to directly ..."

Middle of page 6, last sentence in 4th paragraph, add "of any conditions" after "the costs."

Page 6, paragraph 5, add "Ian explained that" before the first sentence and add "According to Ian" before the sixth sentence.

Include the questions and comments of the RFC related to the FSC certification discussion.

Chair Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Chair Report - Alex Kamola

Discussion of RFC Role and Origins

Alex said that he first started coming to Rural Forest Commission (RFC) meetings about a year ago because he started reading the minutes and he wanted to understand better what was going on. Alex said it would be helpful to review the roles of the RFC, County staff, the Executive and Council when new people or prospective members show up. We should all understand what we really are supposed to accomplish at the RFC. Ole added that he would like to review how the commission was established, the criteria that were set up for it, and what is the Forest Production District (FPD) and how does it affects people who live there?

Doug M is one of the original members of the RFC and has an understanding of the background and functions of the commission. He provided a short history of the commission. The creation of the RFC was recommended in the *Farm and Forest Report*, a plan for preserving agriculture and forestry in King County that was written with input from forest landowners and the forest industry. The County Council subsequently adopted the report. The ordinance that established the commission set up the representation by small landowners, large landowners, recreation, tribes, etc. The members of the commission are nominated by the King County Executive and validated by the King County Council. Doug said that the RFC has no legislative power, but provides input in a variety of areas identified in the ordinance.

The RFC establishes its own agenda of issues that the commissioners think are important. The RFC also works on things related to forestry that are brought to them by the County so that we can provide input. The commission identifies agenda items for meetings. The chair should approve the agenda. The role of staff changes over time depending on the level of support that is funded by the County. It is also the role of staff to look ahead and see the things that are happening at the County level where input is important and bring those issues to the RFC. Doug said that RFC members report directly to the Executive or to Council when needed, report to specific Council members if they wish, make recommendations, or even protest as the commission or as individuals representing themselves.

Kathy said that the role of exofficio members is to forward information to their respective departments when the information is needed. They serve on the commission by virtue of their jobs. For example, the exofficio member from the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) came when we were discussing the Critical Areas Ordinance, but probably will not attend meetings unless there is a regulatory matter on the agenda. Doug said there is a value to these exofficio members because they are a direct link to the County.

Opportunity for further discussion of the presentation on FSC certification by the Northwest Natural Resource Group at the September 14, 2005 meeting

Last spring the RFC responded to a request from King County Executive Sims for input on the question of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of county-owned forestlands with a recommendation that the County wait. In its letter to the Executive the RFC listed six points as to why the County should not pursue certification at this time. Alex said that if the certification question comes up again, he would like to see formulated recommendations with measurable goals that have to be achieved before the County should consider certification. He asked for the commission's response to this suggestion.

Doug M said we gave the County a list of things to think about regarding certification, but we did not give them a way to evaluate the decision. There should be a deliberate process for doing that. At the September meeting, the RFC heard a presentation by the Northwest Natural Resource Group on their FSC certification program. It was difficult in that the agenda was very tight and there was not enough time to discuss what to do with the information we heard from NNRG and determine next steps. Doug said that

rather than simply make a recommendation and walk away, the RFC should be active in the education of a decision that will be the right decision.

Julie brought up a problem with the County being lobbied by one organization for one specific certification program. The RFC as a commission has a obligation to step back and look at certification, not just from one particular group, because that is just one avenue, but to encourage the County to look at the whole picture.

Ole said that FSC certification of County forestlands would not provide a benefit. It has been looked at emotionally not intellectually. This kind of thing appeals to people who are emotionally involved with the environment and not hands-on. Lee said that since certification seems to be considered an important issue within County government the RFC should take a step back and look certification and the avenues to certification and try to broaden the discussion.

Jim said King County only has 3,000 acres in working forest. What is striking to him about all this is that it is such a small amount of land. He questions whether it is worthwhile for the County to devote a lot of time to the certification process. The cost of implementing certification given the small amount of land involved is a barrier. The Council should be made aware of this

The commission agreed to develop a question and answer sheet on certification as an avenue for educating decision makers and others. The document will be more in depth than the letter and will have specific answers to the questions that have been raised regarding forest certification.

Amy said academic studies could be referenced and other public agencies that have experience with this. Doug M, Julie, Amy Alex Dennis and Ole will form a work group to develop the information sheet. Julia will draft a list questions for the commission to serve as a skeleton and distribute it to the others.

Staff Reports

Linda Vane

The Urban Forestry Program has been partnering with the King County Parks Division to develop an urban wood salvage program. The County is seeking grant funding to develop the old Preston Mill site, which is owned by King County, into a log yard where they will store logs and bring in a portable mill periodically to saw salvaged logs. The wood produced will be used for non-structural purposes in King County Parks. In addition, Linda, Bobbi Wallace of the King County Parks Division and Amy Grotta organized an Urban Wood Salvage Expo a few weeks ago in Seattle that was very successful. The purpose of the event was to educate urban residents about the potential to bring in mobile mills to create usable wood from trees removed from urban sites. The event featured mill demonstrations and wood arts and crafts made from salvaged wood.

Kathy Creahan

Kathy presented issues that the County would like the RFC to consider addressing in 2006: *Rural Economic Development Strategy*. Kathy said that Julia Larson will send out a draft of the County's Rural Economic Development Strategy for review and comment. The RFC members are invited to respond.

Shoreline Master Program. Kathy let them know that the RFC has a concern about the shoreline permit for forestry practices and that the commission wants to be involved in the process as it unfolds over the next two years. Kathy offered to invite the project manager come and talk to the RFC.

CAO Amendments. The process of identifying technical errors or things that are not working as intended will be captured in an amendment to the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) in 2006. It is intended that there be an amendment some time next year regarding these changes. This would be helpful to get this on the agenda for next year so the RFC can have formal input. The Forestry Program staff are identifying issues also. One of these is to continue working on trying to simplify the process for thinning.

Fire Safe Communities Initiative. The Forestry Program would like help next year to do another community fire plan.

Cedar Green Partnership Repot

Chip Nevins, Senior Conservation Director, Cascade Land Conservancy

Chip provided an overview of the Cascade Agenda and concluded the presentation with an update on the Cedar Green Partnership in the Black Diamond area. Chip said that in King Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap counties the Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC) works with many partners to protect lands. The Cascade Agenda has been the focus of their efforts for the last couple of years. The process involved many public meetings to obtain input. What drives the project is a forecasted doubling of the population in the four county region. According to Chip the CLC believes that sprawl can be controlled by bringing more density into cities and existing urban areas.

Chip said that a priority for the Cascade Agenda is to protect farmland and foothills. Foothills and high mountain forests map at about 850,000 acres. Chip said that the CLC's public process showed that people want to preserve privately owned working forests. The goal is to conserve 93% of working forests or 777,000 acres. This is the percentage of working forests the CLC thinks they can conserve. Chip said that development pressure is greatest on the smaller blocks of land and these would be extremely hard to hold. The 93% is the amount of forestland that can be preserved reasonably.

Chip said that the CLC estimates that to conserve this amount of land will cost \$7 billion over the next one hundred years. Most land conservation needs to happen in the next twenty years because of the availability of land. According to Chip the CLC will accomplish this by promoting the Transfer of Development Rights Program to offset costs and allow the region to move development rights around to appropriate sites. In the short term the CLC is setting up working groups that will come up with the concrete implementation strategies.

Chip provided an update on the Cedar Green Valley Forest Legacy and the Black Diamond Agreement. The Black Diamond Agreement involves Plum Creek Timber, the City of Black Diamond, King County and the Cascade Land Conservancy. The crux is that a significant number of acres are protected both inside and outside Black Diamond (the City). In exchange the City has agreed to take more density within the city limits. About 1,600 acres of Plum Creek property have been protected with a King County conservation easement and will only be used for forestry. The CLC will steward the property. Chip expects that Plum Creek will eventually sell the property, but it must remain in timber use. Plum Creek owns some properties in the city's annexation area that they will be able to develop to higher density. Lake Sawyer Park will be transferred from the County to the City.

Ole asked if landowners would be able to set up gravel mines on land where development rights had been purchased. Chip said they would not. Julie asked if the CLC vision includes growing infrastructure like roads to support the expected increase in population? She has noticed a big increase in traffic already in the last five years. Chip said that in urban areas the approach is to have more public transportation. For areas like Black Diamond is it still an open question, especially in relation to transportation. Ole asked about the trade off for Plum Creek "donation" of land. Kathy explained Plum Creek is giving up development rights to the 1,600 acres and are getting credit that allows them to develop more densely within the city limits.

Chip said that conceptually the CLC would like to replicate the Transfer of Development Rights Program in such a way as to connect density with protection and help urban dwellers see the benefit. Right now it can be difficult to find buyer for the develop rights. There will never be enough money to buy all the

development rights so Chip said that the strategy is to buy close to the road and hope that the land farther from the road is less attractive to developers. The Cascade Agenda is available on the CLC web site at <http://www.cascadeagenda.org>.

Youth Forestry Education Project Proposal

Amy Grotta, WSU Extension Forestry Educator

The purpose of the program is to promote a better understanding of how forestry is really done. WSU Extension is applying for an EPA environmental grant to initiate the project in the summer of 2007. Amy said that the project will bring high school students in and have them set up permanent monitoring plots and collect data on County forest lands. The County will use the data to help monitor and get baseline data. The project objectives include educating the public about forest function, the values of forests and forest practices. In addition, the data are needed by the county in a way that is less costly than using staff time. Lastly, the project will give students career skills that may guide them to forestry careers.

Amy invited any interested RFC members to serve as mentors to the students and spend a day working with the kids. Amy has already made connections with the Auburn School District and West Seattle High School. The EPA grant will provide stipends to the students for their monitoring work. Amy requested a letter of support from the RFC and commitments to help out from individual RFC members. Alex will send a letter of support from the RFC in support of WSU Extension's grant application. Doug M recommended that Amy find ways to bring out elected officials to see what is happening on their land. Alex asked if the project will be ongoing since the students will put in permanent plots. Amy replied that the project will start with higher priority areas and is seeking a one-year grant to get the program established. She hopes that funding will be available to make this an ongoing program.

Snoqualmie Ranger District Update

Jim Franzel, District Ranger, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

Jim said that the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest covers 1.7 million acres and extends from Mt. Rainier Park to the Canadian Border. They also manage part of the Wenatchee Forest. About 42% of the land is wilderness area. There are about 1,500 miles in trails and about 1,500 miles of roads. The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest includes twenty-six campgrounds, five of which are in Jim's Snoqualmie Ranger District. Jim's district also manages the Crystal Mountain and Snoqualmie Pass ski areas and such popular recreation areas as Snoqualmie Lake, where one can often observe as many as 200 cars in the parking lot. The forest is distinctly urban in that it is very close to urban centers and is on the I-90 corridor.

The national forest is confronting many challenges. Jim's office anticipates significant turn over in staff in the near future as more than half of the employees are over 50 and in the next few years many will retire. Moreover, their staff has been reduced significantly in recent years in the face of budget cuts. Jim said that they have gone from 300 to 130 employees in the last twenty years. The nature of their management has changed so that now it is primarily custodial.

The "four threats" to the National Forest System are:

- Fire and Fuels: The new Healthy Forests Initiative is designed to reduce fuels and use money locally for forest health in western states.
- Invasive Species - Invasive knotweed and stinky bob are particular problems, yet there is very little funding for weed control.
- Loss of open space
- Unmanaged recreation - mostly off road vehicles (ORV)

Jim says the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest has done well with partnerships and this has helped them achieve a level of effectiveness although the current budgets are basically enough to cover fixed operating costs and do not have much discretionary money. Of a \$13 million budget, they were able to leverage about \$3 million in partnerships with organizations such as Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust and the Washington Trails Association.

The Healthy Forests Initiative has allowed them to initiate some creative and worthwhile projects such as the Snoqualmie Point and Greenwater Elk forage stewardship projects. The Snoqualmie Point project allowed them to remove some timber and improve views from a campground and provided a trail for mountain bikers. The elk forage project is a partnership with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to clear overly dense vegetation and provide about 900 acres of elk habitat in two phases.

The national forest does very little harvest. In 2004 the biggest timber sale was cutting about twenty trees at the ranger station. Available sale quantity now is about 5 million board feet. With “stewardship contracting” they are mostly thinning second growth to improve the health of stands. Doug M asked if they are being pressured to certify federal forest lands? Jim said that nationally there is some support for the Forest Service pursue certification, but the subject has not come up with regard to specific forests.

Jim said that where they need help is in the area of recreation infrastructure. There is not enough parking at the most popular recreation areas. They now cannot afford to upkeep their facilities. They are looking at reducing the number of these facilities and may sell part of the North Bend facility, e.g., outbuildings and back two acres. The funds from such sales would be used to maintain other facilities. Other needs are wilderness funding, ORV trail maintenance, and better compliance and fee collection for NW Forest Pass.

Alex asked if the public accepts harvest in lowlands would they accept it on the federal lands? Jim said most people today feel custodial management is the best use in the I-90 corridor. There is no support for commercial timber sales. Julie raised the issue that part of the land that is now part of the national forest is former Weyerhaeuser land and one cannot walk away from previously managed forests and expect them to grow. Jim agreed and said they acquired more than 100,000 acres of land like that through Mountain to Sound Greenway Trust’s efforts. It has greatly increased the size of the national forest. The forest is overstocked and forest management is needed, but the public support is not there. Doug M said the CLC has supported but it has taken five years for them to reach that point. He added that there is public support for restoration management. Jim said there are examples of that with “stewardship” contracts where harvest is done to improve forest health and the income is used to improve the land rather than turning it over to the general treasury. Doug said the Forest Service faces a challenge in needing to rebuild a forestry program with these young stands while their experienced staff are retiring.

Jim said that there are a lot of issues like this confronting the national forest. If RFC is interested in a field trip Jim would like to bring them out to discuss these issues further. Additionally, the RFC could help by promoting an understanding of stewardship contracting among the public. This is a way to get into active management.

Kathy asked how many local community groups are involved in designing stewardship contracts, for example to provide employment for displaced workers? Jim replied that the PAC group will be reconstituted and he hopes they will work on this question. Kristi asked if anyone was resisting the idea of stewardship contracting? Jim answered that yes, it is a huge public relations challenge because people become suspicious of any tree cutting. Kristi suggested that Jim work with Amy’s classes and the Forest Advisors to make speakers available to interested groups.

Climate Change Conference Report

Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources

Doug reported that several members of the RFC attended the Climate Change Conference in Seattle that attracted 700 people. In Washington State we will see changes in snow pack over the next twenty years, wetter forests and less snow. There was a lot of good conversation at the various sessions about forestry. It would be useful to bring this topic before the commission in the future and hear about the action items that came out of the conference. Lee Kahn added that this area will be more strongly affected by climate change than many other regions because we are right on the border between snowfall and rainfall all the time. A change in the snowpack will not only affect our water supply, but also our power supply and other aspects of life here.

Washington Forest Protection Association Meeting

Julie Stangell, Hancock Timber Group

Julie reported that she and Dennis Dart attended this annual meeting. There were a number of discussions throughout the day, a lot of tribal interaction and appreciation expressed to the industry for implementation of the Forest and Fish regulations and the environmental benefits that grow out of that.

Recruitment of New RFC Members

Linda reported that there are two candidates who have applied for the vacant seats on the commission. These and other candidates will be interviewed by Alex, Kathy and Linda as part of the review process. There are four seats open for representatives of a range of interests including small forest landowners, tribes and rural cities.

Elections of Officers for 2006

Ole nominated Alex for the position of Chair and Julie seconded.

Doug nominated Julie for the position of Vice Chair and Ole seconded.

Nominations will be kept open until the January meeting at which time elections will be held.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is January 11, 2006, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Preston Community Center.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

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