

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update  
Partner Planning Committee – Meeting #2 Meeting Notes  
December 20, 2022 | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

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List of attendees:

- Angela Donaldson (Fall City resident)
- Diane Pasta (Des Moines resident)
- Edan Edmonson (King County)
- Erin Ericson (Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District)
- Jackie Underberg (Bellevue resident)
- Jamie Hearn (Duwamish River Community Coalition)
- Jason Wilkinson (King County)
- Kayla Eicholtz (Department of Ecology)
- Kazia Mermel (Sound Cities Association)
- Kelsey Payne (Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, substituting for Matt Baerwalde)
- Lauren Silver (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)
- Laurie Lyford (Washington Sensible Shorelines Association)
- Lexanne Bumm (Des Moines resident)
- Lorin Reinelt (King County)
- Martha Neuman (Seattle Public Utilities)
- Matt Knox (King County)
- Mike Mactutis (City of Kent)
- Miranda Fix (Seattle resident)
- Patrick Haluptzok (Lake Sammamish resident)
- Sherry Edquid (City of Tukwila)
- Stewart Reinbold (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- Tom Dean (Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust)
- Spencer Easton (Consultant team – ESA)
- Dan Beckley (Consultant team – ESA)

Interested parties present:

Eric Beach (King County), Helen Gitahi (Green River farming interest), , Kjristine Lund (interested citizen), Laura Casey (Carnation farmer), Laura Wolfe (Port of Seattle), Lucy Gitahi (Green River farming interest), Molly Lawrence (Van Ness Feldman), Regina Fletcher (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)

**Public Comment**

An opportunity to provide public comment was provided at the beginning of the meeting. Kjristine Lund commented on her appreciation for the video about the Flood Plan and commended the sharing of the video as an opportunity to inform the public about the Flood Plan process.

## **Flood Plan Updates and October 26, 2022 Meeting Follow-up**

Jason Wilkinson provided a review of the role of the Partner Planning Committee and provided an update on current actions and upcoming steps in the Flood Plan Process, including detailing the scoping process for the Flood Plan under the State Environmental Policy Act. He also provided a summary of feedback received at the first Partner Planning Committee Meeting in October 2022.

### **Communication Agreements**

Spencer Easton shared the Communication Agreements that Partner Planning Committee members are asked to commit to. Further revisions were not made to the Communications Agreements. Committee members signaled their commitment to the Communication Agreements through Zoom reactions.

### **Goals, Objectives, and Guiding Principles**

Spencer Easton presented a summary of the feedback on goals, objectives, and guiding principles, provided by Partner Planning Committee members prior to the meeting. Comments on goals generally reflected a need to define or clarify words and phrases (“equitable” and “all flooding” in Goal 1; application of “cost-effectiveness” in Goal 3) or to change wording to be more address a broader set of issues (changing “tribal treaty rights” to “tribal rights” in Goal 2). Comments on objectives mostly suggested adding further specific process or outcome details, such as expanding upon Objective 11’s recommendation to seek funding sources for flood risk reduction to include collaboration and partnership opportunities. Comments on guiding principles largely suggested minor wording changes or sought clarification on the meaning or intent of the guiding principles.

Participants in the meeting were given the opportunity to provide further feedback on goals, objectives, and guiding principles in breakout rooms. Feedback from these separate discussions included:

#### **Goals:**

- Define “flood risk reduction” or further clarify intents (Goal 3)
- Highlight importance of coordination between various government agencies and intersection of various strategic plans
- Incorporate explicit language about consideration of different types of King County communities, such as vulnerable communities, and different types of land uses, including rural and urban development

#### **Objectives:**

- Requesting clarification on the relationship between the Flood Plan and other planning efforts, including Vision 2050, salmon recovery plans, and the 2020 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Suggest explicit consideration of renters as impacted stakeholders, not just property owners
- Suggest inclusion of an objective to increase water storage capacity in the upper watershed
- Address impacts to working waterfronts and existing development

#### **Guiding Principles**

- Numerous comments suggesting that guiding principles could be better organized, more clearly distinguished from facts and assumptions, or reduced in number

- Include guiding principles related to equity and social justice

Jason Wilkinson addressed comments about coordinating the Flood Plan with other planning efforts and government agencies, noting that King County is also updating its comprehensive plan and is coordinating with that effort. Jason Wilkinson stated that the Flood Plan will include an assessment of potential climate change impacts in coordination with the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group, in response to comments about using the latest climate science in the Flood Plan. Spencer Easton noted committee comments that the objectives and guiding principles often focused on natural environments and were less applicable to urban development, in response to comments about the lacking recognition of working waterfronts. Regarding the numerous comments about the need to define terms that are used in the plan, a glossary or definitions section in the Flood Plan would be helpful.

King County staff will email a copy of the draft goals, objectives, and guiding principles along with a deadline to submit further input. King County staff will revise the goals, objectives, and guiding principles based on the committee feedback and will report back to the committee about the edits at the February meeting.

#### **Next steps**

Participants in the meeting expressed general support for the breakout room approach to engagement that was used in the meeting. All participants were invited to participate in upcoming topic-specific workshops, starting in January. Anyone interested in the workshops can contact Spencer Easton at [seaston@esassoc.com](mailto:seaston@esassoc.com) for more information.

### General Comments/Questions

- How does this fit in with Vision 2050? That relates to salmon, etc.
- Would be helpful to include something adaptive. We aren't able to update these plans frequently, but we need to be able to more adaptive as new information comes to light, new plans are adopted, etc.
- Should there be an objective related to a risk assessment? 2006 plan had a risk assessment as an appendix.
- How will this plan relate to the 2020 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan?
- Can we identify local problems and places to get neighborhoods/communities involved in things they can do to help with and prevent flooding? Things like checking storm drains, etc.
- Consider connections with roads, fish passage barrier removal.

### Goals – describe the long-term outcomes the flood plan is trying to reach

1. To reduce risks from all sources of flooding and channel migration through comprehensive, equitable, climate-resilient solutions
  - Does “all sources” really include urban/suburban stormwater contributions?
  - Does “all” mean even minor flooding caused by water line breaks, possibly others not thought of?
  - What does “equitable” mean in this sense? Does this include compensation for historic/systematic inequities?
  - Matt B brings up excellent point...what is defining equitable and how is it promulgated?
  - Do “solutions” include those for which there likely is no funding?
2. To promote flood risk reduction solutions that preserve, restore, and enhance the natural functions of flood hazard areas, honor Tribal rights, and support interests important to King County communities through actions that achieve multiple benefits
  - Would it be too long to add “preserve” and/or “restore” natural functions?  
(Preservation/protections typically most cost effective)
  - I agree with Matt, I'd like to see “preserve” or “restore” added to the goal.
  - Suggest removing “treaty” and keeping more inclusive “Tribal rights” or “sovereign Tribal rights.”
  - In my mind this statement is completely contradictory. Enhancing natural functions is in direct conflict with supporting interest important to KC communities.
  - Wondering whether we can add “promote flood risk reduction solutions by preserving, restoring and enhancing...”
  - Re: interests to KC communities; often communities most impacted don't have as many resources. BIPOC communities impacted by flooding.
  - Should start with “To promote flood risk reduction solutions that enhance...”

- On its own this one doesn't make sense unless it refers to flood risk reduction actions.
  - Suggest this goal should be: Promote flood risk reduction solutions that enhance the natural functions of flood hazard areas, honor Tribal treaty rights, and support interests important to King County communities through actions that achieve multiple benefits
3. To promote flood risk reduction solutions focused on long-term cost effectiveness
- Add language that indicates a desire for more coordination and cooperation from other agencies (state, federal); coordination with other plans out there; coordination between groups and different jurisdictions. Agricultural plans, WRIA plans, city flood plans, etc. (all of the above). With the FCD ability, they can choose what to adopt from this. Concerns about what implementation will look like. Concern that the FCD is not obligated to adopt this. RFMS paid for by FCD.
  - Why is the only value listed that of cost-effectiveness? If we spend a million and it does very little vs 10 million and it helps a great deal, this statement would rate the effective solution lower.
  - There is a mention of multi benefit. Is it the number of benefits, or the amount of the benefits? How do we quantify or address them in strategy?

General comments on goals:

- Seems like there's something missing about how different actions will be prioritized.
- Have a definition in the plan about what we mean by reduce risk; minimize and prevent the impacts of flooding. Or are we trying to reduce peak flows and amount of water? Spencer noted that flood risk also includes prevention of flooding.
- A couple of notes: we did cover flood risk vs. flooding. Important that we are not trying to reduce flooding because it is a natural function. We should focus more on public safety. Add definition section. The term equity is questioned a lot. Are we referring to legal definition of equity or the ESJ of the KC plan. How does this coordinate with other KC plans? Definition of net ecological gain is not state law (yet?). Are we going off of the proviso from WDFW or the prior language? Provide context around "NEG" There are some RCWs that address this. I like the comment about preserving and restoring, but I would still like to see the word enhance. Use all three words - want to see net gain.
- Comment on reduced risk - flooding is natural. For example, is there an opportunity to provide more overall storage in the upper watershed (this is what goal #1 means)? Can we consider removing the word cost and focus on long-term effectiveness? Cost is a detail.
- I think the goals are pretty good as written.
- Can we weave in something about areas where we need to address flooding that are not very natural? E.g., areas in the Duwamish that are very altered. Need to capture both rural and urban needs well. I like "all sources of flooding."
- Is there a goal or objective recognizing existing development and infrastructure? So much of this seems focused on nature, managed retreat, etc. The goals might be different for working waterfronts, for example.

## Objectives — more specific statements describing how we will achieve the outcomes in the goals

1. Use the best available science to identify and assess flood and channel migration risks and identify how future changes may affect future risks.
  - Can we look at how things beyond climate change may affect future risk? e.g., land use trends/plans; large projects
  - Best available science covers many other subjects beyond climate change.
2. Promote public awareness of identified and potential flood hazards and resilience strategies in ways that are accessible and easy to understand.
  - Reference to promoting public awareness, will the plan contain an outreach strategy?
3. Identify and prioritize actions to reduce risks to life, property, and public infrastructure that advance multi-benefit outcomes and reflect the perspectives of affected communities.
4. For existing flood protection facilities, pursue the most appropriate long-term solutions—maintain, repair, retrofit, set back, or remove—that are compatible with current and future goals for the area, are set in a watershed-based context, and that take climate change into account.
  - Should something about the watershed-based context be an objective by itself to recognize that floodplain management shouldn't just treat symptoms? Work toward this as an objective.
5. Adopt forward-looking land use management policies to prevent creation of new flood and channel migration risks, while preserving or enhancing natural floodplain functions and preventing further habitat degradation of imperiled species.
  - Is there any thought or intent to expand the land covered by flood regulations beyond what FEMA has mapped?
  - Consider watershed scale.
6. Maintain a regionally coordinated flood warning and emergency response program and improve public awareness of emergency response programs
7. Coordinate across King County departments and with other jurisdictions to provide consistency in flood hazard management and disaster response and recovery activities.
  - Who are we talking about with the reference to other jurisdictions--cities, tribes, other govt's?
  - Add FCD as a specific jurisdiction?
  - What does flood hazard management encompass? Does this include regulations?
  - This objective should include water concurrency between the jurisdictions and the county.
8. Proactively acquire properties (developed or undeveloped) to reduce flood and channel migration risks, support the implementation of multi-benefit projects, and provide ecological benefits.
  - This is a high priority objective for the Snoqualmie Tribe.
  - Add idea of managed retreat? Way to break cycle of repeated damage, esp. in coastal areas.
  - How does acquiring property reduce flooding or risk?
  - What is the definition of a multi-benefit project, and how will benefits be prioritized?

9. Co-design solutions with impacted communities throughout King County that reflect local priorities, actively seek opportunities and partnerships to meet multiple benefits, and leverage grant funding and partner investments.
  - At what stage does co-design happen? Is this co-design during the planning, during implementation, both?
  - What does co-design mean? This goes back to the scope of the plan.
  - Who are impacted communities, and where are they? Does this mean cities or neighborhoods in unincorporated areas?
  - Also provide support to partners to achieve multiple benefits/mutual goals.
10. Improve access to programs that help residents recover from flooding beyond traditional flood insurance (such as federal crop insurance programs).
  - How do we improve access to programs? Are we promoting/educating about these? Are we actually dealing with access? How do we put ppl in state of prevention and preparedness rather than reacting?
11. Identify funding sources for implementing recommended flood risk reduction activities, including multi-objective activities, and identify opportunities, strategies, and partnerships to leverage grant funding.
  - Is there a specific person with this role of identifying funding sources? Needs to be considered in an ongoing way rather than being reactive (like a grant writer).
  - Including collaborating with/supporting partners.
  - What is the purpose of the King County Flood Control District taxing authority?
12. Use adaptive management to adjust actions based on scientific and technological advances, including climate projections, the best available information on floodplain management practices, principles, and risk assessment, and equity considerations.
  - Also, emerging equity issues.

General comments on objectives:

- Does the county anticipate updating their floodplain regulations as a part of the plan update?
- Don't focus only on property owners, consider renters as well.
- Consider water storage in upper watersheds as a way to facilitate climate resilience and address flooding. Can this be included somewhere (#5)? Consider controlled and natural storage project the WID has done a lot of work on this, reports are available.
- Lots of objectives—can we refine/consolidate?
- With outreach efforts, try to reach younger people. They have opinions that should be considered. Be creative and try different methods of communication.

## Guiding Principles — the facts and technical understanding that direct flood hazard management in King County

### Natural Environment

1. Flooding and erosion are natural processes that sustain biological productivity and diversity.

- Support for this principle.
  - With climate change and in urban areas, flooding and erosion don't always sustain biological productivity and diversity.
  - I think this statement is overly broad and may not reflect a developed environment.
  - Suggest it should be: "Promote flood risk reduction solutions that sustain biological productivity and diversity."
  - Flooding is a natural process we are trying to prevent in a manner that maintains as much prod
  - Sounds biased against fixing flooding issues.
2. Protecting and working with natural processes can provide environmental benefits, increase climate change resilience, and reduce flood risks to people and property in a less costly manner than structural flood control approaches.
    - Again, in an urban area, working with natural processes isn't always less costly.
    - Natural processes require space, and that results in purchasing expensive property.
    - Sounds biased against fixing flooding issues.
    - Promote flood risk reduction solutions that protect and work with natural processes and provide environmental benefits, increase climate change resilience, and can be done in a less costly manner.
    - And we may be willing to pay more (in some instances) for natural process solutions.
  3. Rivers and streams and their floodplains, coastal areas, and riparian areas provide habitat for salmon, including several that are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Salmon are intricately connected to Native American culture and tribal rights.
    - Needed?
  4. Riparian vegetation improves levee/bank stability and provides a host of other ecological functions and benefits.
    - Riparian vegetation also provides a whole host of other critical, irreplaceable functions.
    - It was a huge feat to get to the point where we have this understanding and can include it as a guiding principle.
    - Needed?
  5. Habitat protection and restoration and salmon recovery are dependent on rivers and areas adjacent to them, as well as marine nearshore areas.
    - Preserving, restoring, and enhancing are three distinct items, and they are the trifecta we want to go after.
    - These things are also dependent on marine areas.
    - "Restoring" may not be needed here.
    - This one could use some wordsmithing.
    - Needed?

## Risk Management



6. Many areas behind levees or outside of the mapped floodplain have a residual risk of flooding (for example, from potential levee failure).
  - Could be helpful to contextualize this residual risk with other types of risk, and what that means in terms of priority.
  - Not just people behind levees, also risks from decertified levees.
  - Needed?
7. Flooding is influenced by land use and land management decisions, stormwater, and climate change.
  - What about land “management” decisions? “Land use” implies regulatory framework but management includes actions.
  - Aren’t 7 and 11 mostly duplicative? Combine them?
8. Structural flood control methods can reduce flood damage in the near-term, yet those methods require maintenance, do not eliminate all risk, and may not be adaptable to changing conditions.
  - All flood control methods, structural or natural, fall into those categories.
  - These statements apply to all flood control methods, not just structural. None eliminate all risk. All of the things we do may not be adaptable to changing conditions. This seems unbalanced. Doesn't reflect urban flood management needs/conditions.
  - How are we defining what structural flood control methods are? We understand that no one method can eliminate all risk. Why are structural methods called out? Would prefer to see structural flood control measures considered?
  - This sounds biased against fixing flooding issues.

#### Best Practices

9. Actions to address flood risk to existing development must consider the existing land use context, other land uses and interests (such as fish and wildlife habitat, open space, agriculture, recreation, and transportation), and climate change and other future changes.
  - Does not address urban and urban use.
10. Flood damage creates public and private financial costs, and effective flood risk reduction reduces long-term flood damage costs while minimizing new impacts to other values.
  - What does “new impacts to other values” mean?
11. Flooding is a watershed-scale issue; actions and environmental conditions in upland portions of watersheds can impact flooding and channel migration downstream.
  - Floodplain management throughout history has been about flood control, dealing with symptoms and not cause. Would like to see the watershed-scale lens throughout the document. The new state guidance on floodplain management is integrated but I don't see us talking about integration in the goals and objectives. This is the first statement that talks about addressing the causes and not the symptoms. Angela is super passionate about this topic. We need to look at the whole picture. Want to put exclamation marks on this item.
12. Engagement with and involvement of tribes, residents, stakeholders, flood-vulnerable communities, and public and private landowners is vital in developing a responsible, effective flood management plan.

13. Private property rights should be respected when providing flood protection.
  - Unclear what this is trying to say.
14. Cooperation among local, regional, state, and federal agencies is essential for the success of long-term comprehensive flood hazard management.
15. Constructing new flood protection facilities where none currently exist should be an option of last resort.
  - Is this a guiding principle? It may be a statement of preference. This may be something we have to do related to sea level rise. Could be stated in the positive instead - natural solutions are preferred where possible.
  - What is considered as a flood protection facility?
  - What science is telling us that new facilities should be the last resort? Is this an opinion or should we be supporting further evaluation to see what's most effective?
  - Assume this does not apply to setbacks? Clarification needed?
  - Importance of protecting life and property. Not balanced. If building a new one is cost effective, we should. If not, we shouldn't. Suggestion to delete this one.
  - This could be specifically in critical areas. Flooding in older developed areas may not have other options.
  - Why would this be here? Shouldn't the cost/benefit analysis just apply to new and existing flood reductions equally, why this?
16. Identifying flood risks and determinations of flood risk reduction solutions is most effective in the long-term when informed by the best available science, best practices in floodplain management, and multi-objective and multi-benefit considerations.
  - "Best available science" may be a bit jargony and needs definition.
17. Solutions to address flood and channel migration risks should consider historic, ongoing, and continuous negative ecological impacts of flood risk reduction facilities and offset these impacts through implementing the standard of Net Ecological Gain for each project.
  - Nebulous standard (gain in whose opinion?); Is there and can we use a better term or phrase?
  - Solutions could make forward progress in addressing environmental justice.
  - Why is Net Ecological Gain capitalized? Is this a specific concept being referred to? This may be redundant with other Guiding Principles.
  - Net Ecological Gain - this is not a state law at this point. How are we going to reach a standard that is not legally set yet? Needs to be addressed in next leg session.
  - Concerned about the standard we are saying we will commit to without clarity on what the standard is.
  - In an urban environment that reduces flooding, we would not do it if it has loss of ecological function.
18. Equity and social justice factors must be considered in developing flood risk reduction solutions.

General comments on Guiding Principles:

- These are a lot of principles to keep track of, and there are a lot of redundancies in the list. It would be helpful to have something simpler.
- The guiding principles are very nature based and sound a bit biased. They don't address flooding in urban areas.
- The guiding principles don't address underserved communities.
- #14 is a good principle. Many of the others seems solution-oriented and not principles. There is a lot of mixing of different things in the guiding principles.
- Some of these are underlying assumptions and some are principles/guidelines. It's a mix, and guiding principles may not be the clearest title for them.
- Could be helpful to have a handful of guiding principles and a separate set of underlying assumptions/facts.
- Add a guiding principle that we want actions that are forward looking for a changing future.
- Add a guiding principle related to race and social justice issues.
- What are the facts and technical understanding that was the background for the development of these guiding principles? It would be helpful to know what these align with. There is a lot stated in here—assumptions about structural projects, for example—and these statements would be more helpful if they were aligned with technical references.
- The term “principles” is being used here in a different way than people expect. Principles should give direction to the plan—be forward thinking to a changing future, use current science, address impacts to people and business.
- Important to talk about lessons learned, adaptive management. After we complete a project, there are lessons learned that need to be captured so we can continue to adapt as we learn more.
- Where did the list of guiding principles categories come from? It seems limited.
- Guiding Principles looks like a list of reasons to not do any flood risk reduction.
- Suggest deleting 1-6, just statement of facts.