

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update
Partner Planning Committee – Meeting #4 Meeting Notes
March 21, 2022 | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

List of attendees:

- Adrienne Hampton (Duwamish River Community Coalition)
- Alex Lincoln (King County)
- Angela Donaldson (Fall City resident)
- Chase Barton (King County)
- Diane Pasta (Des Moines resident)
- Erin Ericson (Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District)
- Jackie Underberg (Bellevue resident)
- Jared Schneider (King County)
- Jason Wilkinson (King County)
- Kate Akuyz (King County)
- Kate Ryan (People to Preserve the Tualco Valley)
- Kayla Eicholtz (Department of Ecology)
- Ken Zweig (King County)
- Laura Hendrix (King County)
- Lauren Silver (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)
- Laurie Lyford (Washington Sensible Shorelines Association)
- Lorin Reinelt (King County)
- Martha Neuman (Seattle Public Utilities)
- Mary Strazer (King County)
- Matt Baerwalde (Snoqualmie Tribe)
- Mike Mactutis (City of Kent)
- Miranda Fix (Seattle resident)
- Monica Walker (King County)
- Nancy Sandford (King County)
- Natalie Seitz (King County)
- Patricia Robinson (King County)
- Patrick Haluptzok (Sammamish resident)
- Regina Fletcher (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)
- Sherry Edquid (City of Tukwila)
- Steve Bleifuhs (King County)
- Stewart Reinbold (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- Teresa Lewis (King County)
- Spencer Easton (Consultant team – ESA)
- Dan Beckley (Consultant team – ESA)

Interested parties present:

Danielle Butsick (Port of Seattle), Laura Casey (Carnation farmer), Molly Lawrence (Van Ness Feldman), Regina Fletcher (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)

Introductions

Spencer Easton provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting. Spencer noted the objectives of the meeting included reviewing outcomes of recent topic-specific workshops, discussion of river flooding problems, and discussion of primary flood hazards and problems that should be the focus of the Flood Plan.

Public Comment

An opportunity to provide public comment was provided at the beginning of the meeting. No public comments were made.

Outcomes from Workshops on Coastal, Tributary, and Urban Flooding

Jason Wilkinson presented background information on the topics for tributary, coastal, and urban flooding, for which there were two workshops per topic. Participants, who included city officials, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and residents had the opportunity to provide input on problem areas, impacts, and solutions.

Key takeaways from the workshops included:

- Improved stormwater management at existing and new development was discussed as a possible solution for all types of flooding.
- Better emergency management coordination across jurisdictions is needed, including more clarity around King County's role.
- Property acquisition is a key tool for reducing flood risk, but has complications and challenges, such as equity and housing impacts.
- Urban flooding issues are difficult and expensive to solve. Actions that provide multiple benefits open up more funding possibilities.
- Multiple factors combine to exacerbate coastal impacts, and addressing these impacts can be complicated by challenges with regulations, spatial limitations, and other natural hazards.
- Modeling for future flood conditions and pluvial flooding is needed to better understand risks.
- Sediment deposition and management are primary concerns in areas where sediment accumulation is impacting infrastructure and affecting flood conditions.
- Education and access to culturally appropriate tools are needed to better convey flood risk and related issues.

Following the overview of the workshops, Partner Planning Committee members who had attended the workshops emphasized the importance of future climate conditions, thoughtfully coordinated emergency response, and understanding the differences in approaches to flooding in rural and urban areas. Equity, mental health, waterfront access for certain land uses, and food production issues were discussed as some of the concerns that were identified in relation to managed retreat and floodplain property acquisition.

River Flood Hazards and Risks

Staff from King County's River and Floodplain Management Section presented on the South Fork Skykomish River, Sammamish River, and White River, continuing discussions of basin-specific flood issues and characteristics from the previous meeting.

Chase Barton described flooding and flood hazard management in the South Fork Skykomish River Basin:

- Flooding: overbank flows, channel migration, avulsion
- Impacts: landslides, Miller River avulsion destroyed portion of Old Cascade Highway, levee and revetment damage
- Initiatives: stream monitoring, inspection of facilities, levee repair, property acquisition

Kate Aykuz described flooding and flood hazard management in the Sammamish River Basin:

- Flooding: flooding largely contained by banks, channel capacity restricted, surface water ponding due to stormwater drainage issues, backwater effects can increase lake levels
- Impacts: erosion, sediment aggradation, inundation of agricultural land, wave action on Lake Sammamish and damage to boat docks and lakefront properties
- Initiatives: Sammamish River Capital Investment Strategy, Issaquah Creek flood mapping, channel migration mapping, Willowmoor Flood Risk Reduction Project

Mary Strazer described flooding and flood hazard management in the White River Basin:

- Flooding: sediment accumulation limits conveyance capacity, overbank flooding in urban areas, channel migration
- Impacts: erosion of levees, extensive residential flooding, increased flood extents from reduced channel capacity
- Initiatives: floodplain reconnection, setback levees, revetment repair, HESCO installation near development and infrastructure, channel migration studies, property acquisition

Committee Discussion

The meeting transitioned to an open discussion about sources and causes of flooding in King County and their impacts. The Committee's initial focus on discussion of transportation impacts included challenges with transporting children to school in rural areas due to flooding inhibiting access, costs of delay to employees and employers, flooding of roads, impacts to inundated vehicles, limited vehicle access for low-income families, and challenges with receiving support to resolve transportation issues. In response to a comment about a City of Portland emergency transportation route plan, staff from the King County Office of Emergency Management noted that routes for snow emergencies are default routes for other emergencies, but that a coordinated effort with cities and stakeholders to develop an emergency transportation route plan has not been undertaken.

Discussion of the importance of early flood warning noted the Snoqualmie Valley Floodzilla system, King County's alert system, and Seattle's alert system. Participants noted that flood warning systems could help to activate pre-positioned resources and prepare people in exposed areas outside of the mapped floodplain. Issues of obtaining funding for retrofits and repairs related to flooding outside of the FEMA mapped floodplain were discussed. Jason Wilkinson noted that King County has worked with the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group to model future flood impacts, which will not affect how FEMA maps the floodplain, but it can help inform King County about future flood risks outside of the mapped floodplain.

Historical floodplain management activities were discussed as causing harm and pushing flood impacts to other locations, which have resulted in impacts to agricultural, natural resources, and ancestral lands.

Flooding impacts to safe drinking water and food supplies were also noted as potential issues—flooded produce cannot be sold, and flood impacts to agricultural areas may limit access between farmers and sellers. Discussion of flood impacts to underserved populations highlighted that the lower cost of living in floodplains draws people to at-risk locations, and important considerations include the provision of sufficient resources to impacted communities, impacts to disabled and senior populations, and the possibility that basing funding for flood risk reduction projects on certain demographics could unintentionally result in a loss of funding.

Next Steps

Spencer Easton noted that the Partner Planning Committee will talk about a framework for identifying appropriate strategies and more Flood Plan development topics in the next meeting, following up on participant comments about the importance of the Flood Plan reflecting the discussions in these meetings. Jason Wilkinson stated that in upcoming meetings there would be opportunities to provide input on strategies and policies, including consideration of where changes in the policy approaches from the 2006 Flood Plan may be needed.