

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update
Partner Planning Committee – Meeting #5 Meeting Notes
April 18, 2023 | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

List of attendees:

- Angela Donaldson (Fall City resident)
- Diane Pasta (Des Moines resident)
- Eric Beach (King County)
- Jamie Hearn (Duwamish River Community Coalition)
- Jared Schneider (King County)
- Jason Wilkinson (King County)
- Judi Radloff (King County)
- Kate Ryan (People to Preserve the Tualco Valley)
- Kayla Eicholtz (Department of Ecology)
- Ken Zweig (King County)
- Laura Hendrix (King County)
- Laura Wolfe (Port of Seattle)
- Lauren Silver (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)
- Laurie Lyford (Washington Sensible Shorelines Association)
- Lorin Reinelt (King County)
- Martha Neuman (Seattle Public Utilities)
- Matt Knox (King County)
- Mike Mactutis (City of Kent)
- Miranda Fix (Seattle resident)
- Sherry Edquid (City of Tukwila)
- Steve Bleifuhs (King County)
- Stewart Reinbold (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- Spencer Easton (Consultant team – ESA)
- Dan Beckley (Consultant team – ESA)

Interested parties present:

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 soliciting input from the Partner Planning Committee about the Flood Plan's approach to policies and specific policy topics, as well as introducing the Committee to approaches to evaluating actions proposed in the Flood Plan.

Public Comment

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

Flood Plan Policies Presentation

Jason Wilkinson provided background on the policies from the 1993 and 2006 Flood Plans, which were not updated during the 2013 Flood Plan Update. There were 47 policies, which range from broad policy statements to detailed operational standards. Steve Bleifuhs described the use of Flood Plan policies for framing priority actions, guiding flood risk reduction efforts, informing decision-making, and being the basis for code development or updates. Jason discussed the potential for approaching policies differently in the 2024 Flood Plan, such as using broad policy statements with more detailed guidance reserved for other parts of the Flood Plan. Jason summarized input relevant to policy updates from past topic-specific workshops, Partner Planning Committee meetings, and Internal Planning Committee meetings.

Participants raised questions about requirements for cities within King County to adopt King County's Flood Plan and its policies. Steve Bleifuhs reported that while state law indicates a county's flood plan is to be considered binding on cities within that county, this requirement has not been enforced nor has the state indicated it is likely to enforce this provision going forward. Participants expressed some concerns about King County's Flood Plan establishing policies that set higher standards than basic compliance with National Flood Insurance Program standards, such as incorporating multiple benefit requirements, and what this would entail for cities in King County. A participant suggested that any new or maintained King County policies proposed for the 2024 Flood Plan should be compared to King County Flood Control District policies, in order to identify and explain reasoning for the differences.

Steve Bleifuhs, when asked about challenges to implementing the existing policies, stated that detailed operational policies can present challenges to implementing projects across different contexts, suggesting that high level policies provide more flexible frameworks. Jason Wilkinson stated that he would provide the Partner Planning Committee with more information in the future regarding the process and timeline for code updates related to Flood Plan policy changes.

Flood Plan Policies Breakout Rooms and Discussion

Participants were divided into three breakout room groups to discuss policy topics for the 2024 Flood Plan, including scope, new policies, and which existing policies to keep. Summaries of responses to breakout room questions are included below. Existing policies can be found in Chapter 2 of the [2006 King County Flood Plan](#).

Do you agree with an approach that reduces the number of policies and focuses on high-level direction?

- Policies should be clear about their intent, commitments, and measures of success
- Policies should be simplified, with a flexible overarching vision
- Policies should avoid details about specific operations and programs

- County policies should be coordinated with cities, get buy-in from other jurisdictions

Which topics and which categories of activities should be covered by policies?

- Cover all types of flooding in geographic scope, including tributary, urban, and coastal
- Consider whether policies covered in other regulatory documents are redundant or reinforcing
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities, coordination across jurisdictions
- Broad, flexible policies that can be applied to different contexts
- Cover climate change, equity, and environmental justice

What are the top policies that should be retained from the 2006 Flood Plan?

- Property acquisition, elevation, and relocation policies, with some revisions
- Integrated floodplain management, multiple benefits, and protection of ecological functions
- Inter-governmental and intra-governmental coordination policies

What are new policies that should be considered for the 2024 Flood Plan?

- Further clarification of inter-governmental and intra-governmental coordination, roles and responsibilities, requirements for cities
- More detailed policies on the inclusion of climate change in flood planning
- Integrated floodplain management, with more explicit consideration of agriculture, tribal treaty rights, and endangered species
- Policies that address different approaches to flood hazard management and needs for rural and urban areas

What policies from the 2006 Flood Plan should not be carried forward or need revision?

- Economic impact assessment requirements, which could have environmental justice implications from deprioritizing small projects and protection of low-income areas
- Gravel management, sandbags, and other detailed operational practices
- Stronger language around funding, revise funding requirements related to King County standards

Participants continued an open discussion of the breakout room questions after reconvening as a whole group. Numerous participants reported out the points they had made in the breakout rooms, summarized above.

Participants had concerns about conflicts between policies and conflicts with how policies are implemented in different contexts. One participant suggested that it would be challenging to resolve all conflicts between policies and that there should be different policies for different times and places. Another participant stated that the Flood Plan should not aim to establish consistency and resolve conflicts between all policies, as those are more detailed, technical issues that should be addressed elsewhere either in the Flood Plan or in other plans. Discussion continued about whether or not cities should have to adopt King County standards; participants with knowledge of state requirements reiterated that cities only need to meet National Flood Insurance Program standards. There was

disagreement about whether the Flood Plan should have different policies for urban and rural areas or if the policies should be flexible and cover all areas.

Participants generally agreed about inclusion of climate change policies and a geographic scope that covers all types of flooding and flooded areas. One participant suggested that stormwater management needs to be more explicitly considered in the policies as a flood issue on a watershed scale. One participant recommended carrying forward all policies related to funding but revising them to be more considerate of environmental justice and adding planning elements that would serve as precedent for funding requests. Agriculture and fish habitat were discussed as topics that should be detailed further in integrated floodplain management policies.

Evaluation of Actions

Spencer Easton presented an overview of how actions are evaluated for inclusion in flood plans, including state guidance on evaluation considerations and principles of comprehensive flood hazard management. Participants suggested that evaluating actions on the cost of implementation could present issues due to differing costs in urban and rural areas. One participant noted that an adaptive management component of the plan could provide a pathway for consideration of projects in the future that do not currently make sense to include in the plan.