

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update
Partner Planning Committee – Meeting #6 Meeting Notes
May 16, 2023 | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

List of attendees:

- Angela Donaldson (Fall City resident)
- Diane Pasta (Des Moines resident)
- Erin Ericson (Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District)
- Jackie Underberg (Bellevue resident)
- Jason Wilkinson (King County)
- Judi Radloff (King County)
- 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)
- Martha Neuman (Seattle Public Utilities)
- Matt Baerwalde (Snoqualmie Tribe)
- Mike Mactutis (City of Kent)
- Miranda Fix (Seattle resident)
- Patrick Haluptzok (Sammamish resident)
- Robert Seana (Snoqualmie Valley resident)
- Sherry Edquid (City of Tukwila)
- Steve Bleifuhs (King County)
- Stewart Reinbold (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- Tom Dean (Vahson-Maury Island Land Trust)
- Spencer Easton (Consultant team – ESA)
- Dan Beckley (Consultant team – ESA)

Interested parties present:

Molly Lawrence (Van Ness Feldman), Regina Fletcher (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance), Kjristine Lund (interested citizen)

Introductions

Spencer Easton provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting. Spencer noted the objectives of the meeting included providing information on state and federal guidance for planning and selecting actions, providing information on the action plan component of the King County Flood Plan, and collecting input on types of actions to consider for inclusion 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.

Presentation: Introduction to the Action Plan and Activities

Spencer Easton outlined flood issues that were identified during previous Partner Planning Committee meetings and in the topic-specific workshops that were held in early 2023. Spencer outlined the types of actions that were included in the 2006 and 2013 King County Flood Plans. Steps to identify and select actions were detailed from the Washington Department of Ecology's Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan Guidebook and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System Coordinator's Manual.

The Community Rating System is an incentive program that provides flood insurance premium discounts to property owners in communities that participate in the program and implement floodplain management activities that exceed federal minimum standards. A participant asked if properties in incorporated cities are eligible for discounts. King County staff clarified that incorporated areas are eligible for discounts based on whether the local jurisdiction participates in the program, and the flood hazard management activities performed by those local governments dictate the discount (all participating cities in King County currently receive smaller discounts than unincorporated King County).

Spencer explained that the proposal for the action plan component of the Flood Plan was to include priority programs and projects for unincorporated areas of King County. Actions that may be implemented by other entities or in incorporated areas were proposed to be included in an appendix that would detail programs and projects led by others that align with the goals, objectives, and policies of King County's Flood Plan.

Multiple participants were confused that the action plan would not include projects in incorporated areas, with some concerned about projects that may be implemented by other entities only appearing in the appendix. Jason Wilkinson responded that the Flood Plan—while intending to characterize flooding countywide—can only recommend activities under the authority of King County. King County desires to reflect the activities of others but wants to avoid dictating the actions other government entities should perform. In response to questions about the expenditures of the King County Flood Control District (FCD), Jason reiterated that the FCD is an entity independent of King County government. Jason explained that, while actions would be distinguished by jurisdiction or implementing entity, flood hazards and risks identified in the Flood Plan would be countywide and span jurisdictional boundaries.

Participants continued to raise questions and concerns about the organization of the action plan and King County not implementing actions in incorporated areas, including:

- Will the Sammamish River be included in the Flood Plan?
 - Jason explained that the Sammamish River and all other rivers in King County will be included in the Flood Plan, with the identification of risks and needs, but that like other rivers, King County can only commit to actions in unincorporated areas.

- As King County’s Water and Land Resources Division has historically performed some activities for the FCD, how will King County actions be differentiated from FCD actions?
 - Jason stated that King County implements numerous flood risk reduction activities that are not on behalf of or funded by the FCD, which would be distinguished in the action plan as the activities carried out by King County. These activities include flood risk reduction efforts carried out by Surface Water Management, the Office of Emergency Management, Roads, and Stormwater Services, among others. Activities that are carried out by King County on behalf of or funded by other jurisdictions would be noted as such.
- For tasks that King County’s Water and Land Resources Division performs on behalf of or funded by the FCD, will the King County Flood Plan policies be guiding that work?
 - Steve Bleifuhs responded that the Flood Plan policies will inform King County’s work for the FCD, and King County will communicate risks and information to the FCD to help prioritize projects. King County’s hope is that the FCD will adopt the Flood Plan.
- It was suggested that priority needs and actions that may be performed by entities besides King County should not be in the appendix but should be called out as priorities in the main text of the Flood Plan, with language to indicate that those actions are optional for entities besides King County.
- The flood plan team clarified that this was an initial conversation with the committee to get their input, and they will consider how to adjust the approach to the action plan in light of the feedback provided.

Spencer continued the presentation to review the following action types, based on the categorizations detailed in the Community Rating System Coordinator’s Manual:

- Preventive – activities that keep flood problems from getting worse, such as regulations
- Property protection – activities that reduce impacts of hazards to properties as a parcel or neighborhood scale
- Natural resource protection – activities that preserve or restore natural areas or natural functions
- Emergency services – activities taken during an emergency to minimize impacts
- Structural projects – activities that keep flood waters away from an area
- Public information – activities that inform people on ways to protect themselves and their property from hazards

Discussion: Input on Activities

Spencer initiated a discussion on activities that should be considered for inclusion in the Flood Plan, based on the activity types from the Community Rating System Coordinator’s Manual.

Suggested preventive activities included:

- Vegetation management in the Sammamish River and Sammamish Lake
- Drainage basin assessments and planning
- Incentivizing development outside of flood zones

- Sediment management to increase channel capacity
- Sea level rise studies
- Increasing freeboard requirements on structures in the floodplain

Suggested property protection actions included:

- Relocating structures to locations outside of the floodplain
- Incentives for mitigation for repetitive loss properties
- Deed upon death approach, where property is acquired when owner passes
- Reimbursement coverage for flood prevention actions by homeowners, such as sandbagging
- Framework for determining when it is acceptable to condemn properties
- Property acquisition, retrofits, and managed retreat
- Financial assistance for low-income households to purchase flood insurance

Suggested public information activities included:

- Communicating risks of levee breach and dam inundation areas, including potential overlapping flood risks with seismic events and landslides
- Require disclosure to tenants or property owners if a property is in a floodplain
- More outreach, including distributing information through schools, through community groups, and at community events
- Coordinate with Washington Department of Labor and Industries and Office of Insurance Commissioner to promote flood insurance
- Coordination of messaging and outreach between King County and other jurisdictions within the county
- Post-disaster outreach and education

Other suggested actions included:

- Providing people with emergency kits for their home or informing people about creating their own emergency kits
- Protecting headwaters wetlands and disallow filling of headwater wetlands with purchasing of mitigating credits from downstream projects
- Aligning activities with flood risk reduction policies in the Comprehensive Plan
- Flood modeling to identify changes from improving flood control structures
- Repurposing structures in the floodplain to flood-compatible uses
- Address flood risks in areas where other entities, such as the King County Flood Control District, are not planning to take action

Next Steps

The next Partner Planning Committee meeting will be on Tuesday July 18th. The meeting will cover draft policies and will continue with a discussion of potential actions to consider in the Flood Plan.