

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update
Partner Planning Committee – Meeting #7 Meeting Notes
July 18, 2023 | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

List of attendees:

- Angela Donaldson (Fall City resident)
- Diane Pasta (Des Moines resident)
- Edan Edmonson (King County)
- Eric Beach (King County)
- Erin Ericson (Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District)
- Jackie Underberg (Bellevue resident)
- Jamie Hearn (Duwamish River Community Coalition)
- Jason Wilkinson (King County)
- Judi Radloff (King County)
- Kayla Eicholtz (Department of Ecology)
- Ken Zweig (King County)
- Laura Haren (City of Kent)
- Laura Hendrix (King County)
- Lauren Silver (Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance)
- Laure Wolfe (Port of Seattle)
- Martha Neuman (Seattle Public Utilities)
- Nicole Johnson (King County)
- 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:

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 on the draft Flood Plan policies, providing an update on the approach to Flood Plan actions and the Action Plan, and collecting input on potential evaluation criteria for Flood Plan actions.

Public Comment

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

Discussion: Flood Plan Policies

Jason Wilkinson provided an overview of the revisions to the Flood Plan policies since they were last shared with the Partner Planning Committee. New policies were added to address capacity building with community organizations, limiting sediment removal activities, the importance of large wood in rivers and streams, identifying multi-benefit floodplain projects, and accounting for uncertainty in future flooding conditions due to climate change. Some of the previous draft policies were revised to expand on the application of best available science and streamline the policies that address land use.

Spencer Easton facilitated a discussion on the newest updates to the draft Flood Plan policies.

- In reference to draft policy #16, a participant asked what it meant for King County to exceed minimum standards of the National Flood Insurance Program.
 - Jason noted that by participating in the Community Rating System, King County already exceeds the National Flood Insurance Program minimum requirements. Laura Hendrix also noted that King County's land use regulations exceed National Flood Insurance Program minimums and that Washington's state floodplain management standards exceed the minimums.
- A participant suggested that policy #18, which urges street improvements for safe egress, should also encourage improvements for safe ingress.
- A participant described a gap in the policies in addressing existing development and land uses in the floodplain, noting that prioritizing restoration is not appropriate for all environments.
 - The participant described goals and objectives from the 2006 Flood Plan as having more acknowledgement of protecting existing development.
 - Other participants noted there are locations where intensive infrastructure exists and may have a need for flood control, also noting that if existing land use is not acknowledged, the draft policies could be interpreted as suggesting floodplain development should be removed.
 - Jason clarified that the absence of acknowledging particular land uses or infrastructure is not intended to suggest that they be eliminated or disregarded, but that the policies use a broad approach, in order to not disregard potential opportunities for restoration or floodplain reconnection based on existing land uses, while recognizing that full floodplain restoration is not possible everywhere.
 - Participants reiterated the need for clarification and acknowledgement around existing land uses, stating that existing land uses like working waterfronts and flood control infrastructure provide benefits.
 - One participant expressed a concern that committee feedback has not been incorporated into the draft documents developed for the Flood Plan.

- A participant suggested that more policies identify a need for adding floodwater storage, as well as the potential for releasing stored water during low-flow seasons, especially in response to climate impacts.
- A participant noted that many of the policies address planning before a flood, but there is a lack of policies to direct flood emergency response and post-flood recovery.
 - Jason stated that the King County Office of Emergency Management supported detailing specific flood response and recovery practices elsewhere in the Flood Plan.

Comments will continue to be accepted on the Flood Plan policies. King County will send out the policies and goals to the committee and would like comments back by August 18. The policies will not be finalized until the final draft of the Flood Plan in 2024.

Presentation and Discussion: Action Plan and Activities

Jason provided an update on revisions to the proposed approach to the Action Plan section of the Flood Plan. The previous proposed approach would have the Flood Plan list actions that King County would commit to in the body of the Flood Plan, while actions that King County supports other jurisdictions pursuing would be included in an appendix. The revised proposed approach would be called the Comprehensive Mitigation Strategy, which would include an Action Plan (actions that King County is committed to pursue) and a separate list of flood risk reduction actions that other jurisdictions may pursue. Participants indicated that this approach to the Action Plan addressed previous concerns about actions led by jurisdictions other than King County being reflected separate from King County's actions.

Presentation and Discussion: Evaluation Criteria

Spencer Easton provided an overview of how evaluation criteria would be applied to determine which actions to include from King County and other jurisdictions in the Comprehensive Mitigation Strategy.

Draft evaluation criteria for the discussion included:

- Compatibility with Flood Plan goals and objectives
- Compatibility with other King County plans and commitments
- Environmental impact
- Impact on people
- Benefits
- Effectiveness/suitability
- Resilience/adaptive capacity

The following comments were made in discussion of the draft evaluation criteria:

- There should be transparency on how projects are ranked against each other.
- Using the evaluation criteria, projects that are included in the Flood Plan should be organized in tiers based on priority.
- Definitions of evaluation criteria should be clarified to avoid subjective interpretations and improve transparency.

- Adding a quantitative component to the application of evaluation criteria could clear up confusion.
- There were mixed opinions on whether or not actions that would be pursued by jurisdictions other than King County should be based on existing, adopted capital improvement programs, although multiple people raised concerns about wanting flexibility for projects that may not be in adopted capital improvement programs.
- The resilience/adaptive capacity criteria could be more explicitly linked to climate change.
- The evaluation criteria should include consideration of projects being in accordance with King County regulations.

Wrap-up

Jason will resend the policies and distribute a copy of the revised goals, objectives, and guiding principles to the Partner Planning Committee, with comments on Flood Plan policies due to Jason and Spencer by August 18, 2024.