

King County 30-Year Forest Plan: Outreach Summary Report

Background and Overview

The purpose of the King County 30-Year Forest Plan is to develop a shared vision for rural and urban forest cover in King County and to create strategies for achieving that vision. It will outline priorities and goals associated with forest canopy to be met over the next 30 years by King County and the many partners whose work is critical to the success of this plan. In developing this vision, we collected input from a wide range of partners and stakeholders in order to better understand their priorities and goals and to develop a plan that could serve as an overarching vision for all of our work over the next three decades. As we collected this input, we were guided by two key questions: 1) What do we want? and 2) How do we get there? The answers we heard in response to the first question guided the development of key priorities and goals, while responses to the second question will help us to create strategies to achieve those goals. This report summarizes the outreach conducted to inform the development of the 30-Year Forest Plan, highlighting the priorities identified through this process.

1. Summary of Outreach Methods and Tools

Phase 1 – Scoping: Between May and July 2019, we sought input on the *scope and approach* to the plan through a series of meetings with key partners working on rural and urban forestry in King County. We sought additional input focused on equity and outreach to urban unincorporated areas in January 2020.

Phase 2 – Collecting Input: Between July 2019 and March 2020, we sought input on *priorities, goals, and strategies* for the 30-Year Forest Plan. We conducted outreach where we provided background on the forest plan and requested input with partners, stakeholders, and community groups through several means, including:

1. **King County staff workshops and meetings:** We met with teams involved with forest management and tree planting or with other strategic plans; we conducted Lunch & Learn events and asked for feedback through a worksheet on priorities, goals, and strategies related to rural and urban forests.
2. **Partner workshops and events:** We requested detailed feedback through a worksheet on priorities, goals, and strategies related to rural and urban forests.
3. **One-on-one partner meetings:** We requested detailed feedback through a worksheet on priorities, goals, and strategies related to rural and urban forests.
4. **Outreach to Tribes:** Through King County’s Tribal Liaison, we communicated the plan’s purpose and gauged interest in and availability to engage with plan development; we contacted 1 Million Trees tribal partners to provide information on the plan and request follow-up meetings.
5. **Online public input:** We created a brief survey to collect input on priorities and strategies, which was hosted on King County’s Engagement Hub and distributed by email, newsletters, and through social media (<https://publicinput.com/6101/>).
6. **Email correspondence:** We requested feedback either through detailed worksheets or through the online survey on priorities and strategies.
7. **Social media:** We posted information about the plan with a link to the online survey.
8. **Public comments and surveys:** We analyzed existing surveys and public comments collected through previous King County planning efforts for input related to trees, forests, or canopy cover.

2. Analysis of Input Received

We hosted or attended 26 meetings, workshops, or events; processed 93 worksheets in addition to comments received in individual meetings; and received 527 online survey responses (see Summary Appendix). We summarized input from meeting notes, worksheets, public comment reports, and online survey responses to identify recurring themes in the priorities and goals mentioned. We coded responses using the keywords described in Appendix A to group the input into categories and themes. Although Appendix A includes the number of times each theme was mentioned, we did not rank themes based on these counts because they draw from various types of input, ranging from in-depth individual meetings to online survey responses, and cannot be weighted in the same way.

3. Priorities Identified and **Draft** Goals

Forests provide multiple benefits – storing carbon, improving salmon habitat, providing timber, lowering temperatures in urban areas, improving air quality and water quality, providing recreation opportunities, and providing connections to cultural resources, among others. However, forests do not produce all of those benefits concurrently in all places. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize actions based on the objectives of county programs and the values of our partners and stakeholders. Through our outreach process, we identified seven priority areas relating to the value of forests. These priorities will help King County and partners focus forestry-related actions toward these shared values.

Within each priority area, we have identified specific draft goals related to cultural resources and equity. The forest plan will seek ways to support the maintenance and use of cultural resources in King County forests, honor treaty use rights, and incorporate tribal input into management. At the same time, the plan seeks to support and advance the county's Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) goals.

Climate: Contribute to mitigation of climate change by increasing forest carbon sequestration and storage and increase resilience to climate change in the county's forests

Draft goals:

- Quantify carbon stored in King County forests and the potential for additional carbon storage
- Maximize the amount of carbon stored in forests in King County
- Increase the area of forests that are resilient to climate change [also see Forest Health]
- Increase the climate resilience of trees planted for future forests
- Equity and cultural resources: Maintain western redcedar, which is susceptible to potential drought stress associated with climate change, in King County forests in order to continue to provide cultural resources and values associated with this species.

Forest Health: Improve and restore forest health, including increased resilience to disease, pests, and fires, increasing biodiversity, improving wildlife habitat, and maintaining or improving ecological functions

Draft goals:

- Increase the area of healthy forested land by expanding acreage under forest health and restoration treatments
- Increase acreage of invasive species removal
- Increase connectivity of protected forestland

- Equity and cultural resources: Reduce barriers to tribal access and improve ability of tribes to exercise cultural practices on treaty lands; include culturally important plant species in restoration planting

Urban Forest Canopy: Increase tree canopy in urban areas, with a focus on areas with lowest canopy cover; improve access to forested greenspaces

Draft goals:

- Maintain and increase tree canopy cover in urban areas, prioritizing identified areas with low canopy cover
- Increase access to forested spaces by reducing transportation and other barriers, and adding public open space where little exists (Open space opportunity areas have been defined through the Land Conservation Initiative and offer a starting point for this work, when paired with additional community engagement)
- Equity and cultural resources: Engage with urban unincorporated areas with lowest tree canopy cover to understand where and what type of tree canopy expansion may be desired

Human Health: Increase and improve tree canopy to contribute to the improvement of human health conditions associated with air quality and summer temperatures, while improving access to forested spaces for communities where health disparities exist.

Draft goals:

- Increase tree cover in targeted areas with poor air quality
- Increase canopy cover in areas most susceptible to summer urban heat effects
- Equity and cultural resources: Increase culturally appropriate programming and amenities at forested parks to encourage use and engagement (e.g., outdoor classrooms, volunteer events, ADA accessible walking paths)

Salmon Habitat: Increase and improve forest cover in areas where it can contribute to an enhancement of salmon habitat

Draft goals:

- Increase the extent and health of riparian forests, including in areas upstream of salmon presence, to protect water quality and ensure the long-term supply of large wood to streams and rivers
- Increase acreage of riparian forests in active restoration
- Slow the permanent loss of forest cover and the conversion of land out of forest management in priority areas for salmon habitat (as identified in the salmon recovery plans for each of King County's major watersheds and in the State of Our Watersheds report)
- Equity and cultural resources: Work with tribes to prioritize and implement culturally significant salmon habitat restoration; use culturally important plant species in restoration

Water Quality and Quantity: Maintain and expand forest canopy in areas identified as providing the most benefit for improving water quality, reducing stormwater runoff, and reducing flooding.

Draft goals:

- Maintain and expand forest cover in areas identified as having poor water quality or high pollutant loads to streams and rivers
- Maintain and expand forest cover in areas identified as having high potential to mitigate flooding

- Equity and cultural resources: Focus on areas critical to improve salmon habitat and integrate equity considerations into stormwater project prioritization

Sustainable Timber Industry: Support an ecologically sustainable and economically viable timber industry that promotes maintenance of ecological functions in working forests and local economic development

Draft goals:

- Increase the use of third-party verified practices that improve ecological functions (such as carbon sequestration, habitat, and hydrologic cycling) in working forests
- Improve access to infrastructure and markets that support ecologically sustainable forest practices
- Equity and cultural resources: Increase work force trained in ecological forestry methods

Next Steps

- Continued review of this report and the priorities and draft goals identified (April-May 2020)
- Incorporate comments and edit, update, finalize priorities and goals (May-June 2020)
- Draft strategies to meet the goals, including pilot projects, and measures to evaluate progress (May-August 2020)
- Develop full draft plan (September-October 2020)
- Review of full draft plan (October-November 2020)
- Finalize plan (December 2020)