



King County

Water & Land Resources Division
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MEETING NOTES

CEDAR RIVER COUNCIL

March 26th, 2019 – 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Red Lion Hotel, Cedar Room
1 S. Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057

The meeting was called to order at 7:14 pm.

1st Public Comment Period

There was no public comment during this period.

King County Sheriff Marine Dive Unit: River Safety/Wood in River – Mark Rorvik, Sergeant

Sgt. Rorvik is a supervisor with the KCSO's Marine Dive Unit. The unit is 4, sometimes 6, people responsible for the 200+ miles of navigable rivers in King County, along with Lakes Washington and Sammamish, and Vashon-Maury Island. The team includes trained swiftwater rescue divers.

In terms of investigations of large wood in rivers, the KCSO has an agreement with DNRP-WLRD. The Sheriff's office handles public safety, while WLRD handles environmental and recreational safety issues. Investigations are usually prompted by a public phone call, sometimes routed through WLRD. A couple of deputies are then sent to look, take pictures, and launch an investigative report. The report is then sent to WLRD, who does their own site visit and then holds a joint meeting between WLRD Rivers engineer John Koon and the deputies. Mr. Koon handles permitting and contractor setup. As this investigation process is not immediate, sometimes KCSO steps in to handle safety while the investigation is being conducted. However, if there is an immediate threat determined to public safety, the response is immediate, and assessment/determination is done from there. This can take 24-48 hours.

Frank Urabeck asked what the large wood prognosis for the Cedar River looks like this year. Sgt. Rorvik said while the KCSO sometimes conducts aerial checks of the rivers, such a check has not yet been done for the Cedar this year. The Cedar was not a major source of concern last year, and the chief safety concern for rivers in the County now focuses on the Snoqualmie. This is due to the large number of recreational tubers floating the river near Fall City. The KCSO's approach to the issue is still largely reactive, however, due to the short staff available.

Mr. Urabeck then asked who makes the call to close a river when a hazard cannot be immediately addressed. This decision is made by the Sheriff, after reviewing information from his office and WLRD. Larry Fisher observed it seems "silly" to close the river to fishing from the bank as well. Sgt. Rorvik replied while this was not specifically forbidden, there were many requests for specific exceptions to the "stay out of the water" mandate, and a hard line needed to be drawn. It was then asked whether anyone would be prosecuted for violating this mandate. Sgt. Rorvik said the unit's priority is rescue, that they don't have the staff to proactively enforce such mandates. Jeff Neuner asked if the large wood investigation reports are available for public review. Sgt. Rorvik answered that he was not sure, that WLRD might and a Public Disclosure Request (PDR) may be needed to access them.

Charles Ruthford noted that due to the dive unit being based out of Kirkland, most of their activity is probably recovery rather than rescue. Sgt. Rorvik agreed this is often the case, but that rescues still occur. Steve Farquhar asked how many injuries and fatalities generally occur on the Cedar and Snoqualmie. Sgt. Rorvik replied that while the thousands of people floating the Snoqualmie, many of whom may be inexperienced and/or intoxicated, could lead to an increase in problems, total overall drownings in the state have actually dropped.

Larry Phillips asked if anything can be done to improve the safety assessment/review/prevention process. Sgt. Rorvik said permitting is the main delay, but that Mr. Koon, not the KCSO, usually addresses that issue. Sometimes a hazard can take a week or more to address. Another issue is access to land; sometimes the KCSO needs permission to access private property to get to a site, which can also cause delays. Mr. Phillips also asked if the majority of loose wood in the river appears to be "placed" or naturally-occurring. Sgt. Rorvik said it appears largely to be naturally-falling trees.

Mr. Fisher suggested there should be more safety/informational signs placed at boat launch sites. He said he would like



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to see more responsibility put on the recreational users, instead of the government. A public commenter posed whether more information might make novice users even more dangerous, in that they may be given a false sense of security. He also asked if the entity responsible for placing the board would hold any liability should an incident occur. Sgt. Rorvik replied most casual recreational users will likely not stop to look online or at a sign before getting in the water.

Sgt. Rorvik reiterated the continued issue of the dive unit being short-staffed and unable to proactively patrol rivers and lakes, despite a proviso being issued to do so. The unit does have a new jetboat, received this last year, partially paid for by the Flood Control District (FCD). This has changed/improved how the unit responds to calls. However, he noted that due to varying depths in many rivers, it is not always possible to patrol long stretches in such a craft.

Larry Phillips asked how the unit is funded, if their budget comes from the general County fund. Sgt. Rorvik was not certain, but said they do receive some funds from the FCD, state vessel registration fees, and a boating safety grant.

Sgt. Rorvik also said that if someone drowns in a river, a boating accident report is filed with the state. The information is tracked by the state Parks department, who reports it to the Coast Guard. Sgt. Rorvik was not sure if this information was easily searchable for the public by river, and he believed it was sorted by county.

CRC Election of Officers

There were two nominees for chair, Max Prinsen and Charles Ruthford. It was discussed whether to “stagger” terms for chair and vice chair to expire in alternating years, but ultimately it was decided to keep them on the same annual cycle.

Frank Urabeck motioned to open the vote for chair, and Jeff Neuner seconded. A final call for nominees was made; there were none additional. Nathan Brown interviewed Mr. Prinsen and Mr. Ruthford via a series of questions. Votes were submitted in writing; Mr. Brown tallied them. Mr. Prinsen won re-election as chair for another 2-year term.

Mr. Prinsen then nominated Mr. Ruthford for vice chair, which Mr. Ruthford accepted. However, due to the absence of Tom Allyn, the other nominee, it was decided to delay the vice chair election to the May CRC meeting.

Update 2019 CRC Roster and Contact List

Nathan Brown circulated the most recent CRC member/contact roster and asked members to update their information.

Standing Agenda Items

- A) **2019 CRC Work Program**: Nathan Brown distributed copies of the finalized CRC work plan for 2019.
- B) **Membership**: There were no further updates.
- C) **WRIA 8**: Charles Ruthford reported two topics were covered at the last Salmon Recovery Council (SRC) meeting, the budget and orca recovery.
 - **Budget**: Mr. Ruthford came away from the SRC meeting with the impression the Riverbend project would not receive full requested funding from the state and federal government. He suggested talking to project manager Jon Hansen on how to approach funding for pieces of the project. He said outreach and educational initiatives appear to be getting funding, but capital projects seem less certain. Ryan McIrvin said the legislative capital budget should be available Friday. While the capital budget is not flush with money, he believes there could be a chance to advocate for underfunded Cedar River projects.
 - **Orca Recovery**: The wellbeing of the local Southern Resident orca pod is dependent on food, noise, and contaminant levels in Puget Sound. Counts for Chinook salmon, the pod’s preferred food (85% of their diet), are down, and the pod’s numbers are declining as well. Frank Urabeck noted tribal and sport fishing may be sacrificed this year to provide more salmon for the orcas, and one group is even suing NOAA Fisheries; but the outcome won’t be certain until summer.
 - **WRIA 8 Funding Work Group/CRC Representation**: After further discussion on the apparent precariousness of the WRIA 8 budget, it was suggested Mr. McIrvin represent the CRC for WRIA 8, as he is already a voting member of the SRC. Mr. Brown said this could be discussed. Mr. McIrvin said while time is running short to push for more project funding at the legislative level, there may be a bit of room for comment while the Senate and House negotiate. He agreed to review the capital budget and report back to the CRC. Mr. Urabeck recommended Mr. McIrvin take the lead for the CRC on this, while Mr. Urabeck is willing to testify before the right committees. Steve Farquhar, Max Prinsen, and Mr. Ruthford will also work on this issue.
- D) **CRC Venue**: Mr. Urabeck motioned for Mr. Brown to sign and finalize the contract to have Red Lion Hotel be the CRC’s main meeting venue for 2019. Mr. Ruthford seconded the motion, and the motion carried.
- E) **Cedar River Water Supply**: There were no updates.



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F) Fish Counts: There were no updates.

2nd Public Comment Period

There was no public comment during this period.

Good of the Order – CRC Member Concerns

- Ryan McIrvin reported that a local Sikh group, in conjunction with Forterra, recently completed a 550-tree planting behind Ron Regis Park. About 120 people attended the event, which commemorated the 550th birthday of the Sikh Guru Nanak. Steve Farquhar suggested recruiting the group for the annual Cedar River cleanup event. Mr. McIrvin offered to forward their information.
- Max Prinsen asked if any more action should be taken regarding the Lakeside Industries asphalt plant, as the CRC took no action after the prior meetings' discussion. He also said KUOW has contacted him to do a story about the CRC. It was generally agreed that at this point another letter would likely add nothing substantial. Frank Urabeck suggested simply telling KUOW the CRC is monitoring this situation. It was agreed that the CRC should avoid being drawn into areas where they don't have purview. Mr. Prinsen said any further word on a SEPA determination for the plant would probably be 2-3 months away. Nathan Brown said Lakeside conveyed a wish to respond to some citizen concerns; Mr. Prinsen advised they can send a letter to the CRC.
- Mr. Farquhar suggested a work item be added to get a head-start in addressing the other industrial facilities coming into the area. Steve Hiester said his organization is following that and would do some research, adding that all these new facilities still have to go through the County's docket process, which does not happen overnight. Mr. Brown agreed to gather information about the County's comprehensive plan update and where it would be appropriate for the CRC to engage.
- After further discussion, Mr. Brown suggested forming a work group to address the comp plan and zoning issues in general. Mr. Hiester volunteered to be part of this group. Mr. Brown also suggested getting on KCC's agenda to discuss the comp plan and following up with a letter.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting

April 23rd, 2019, 7 – 9 pm, Red Lion Hotel – Cedar Room, Renton.