

# Cedar River Council

## DRAFT Meeting Notes

May 19, 2020 – 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (scheduled)  
Meeting/Conference Call via Zoom (King County account)

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I) **Call to Order/Welcome:** Chair Max Prinsen called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. He noted the challenge in keeping people engaged in the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic, but said the ability to communicate and get information should not be lost due to the lack of in-person meetings.

### II) General CRC Announcements/Information (Open to all Attendees)

- Valerie O'Halloran reported the City of Renton has begun construction on repairs to sections of the Cedar River Trail damaged in February's floods. These include sections near I-405 through to Maple Valley. The work is expected through summer. Max Prinsen asked how traffic will be managed during construction. Ms. O'Halloran replied there will be a detour directing traffic around the work site. Larry Fisher noted that Renton has not been issued a permit for this work yet, but their application is in process at WDFW.
- Mr. Fisher met recently with Renton Parks Department staff to inspect a major scour to the edge of the riverbank less than a mile from I-405.
- Mr. Fisher also received a complaint from a resident, alleging people at Dorre Don are moving large rocks in the river by hand to divert water flow. Mr. Fisher suggested these may be residents who want the river to flow closer to their properties like before. He said WDFW or DPER or US Army Corps of Engineers may have enforcement authority, as intentionally altering water flow typically requires a permit. Mr. Fisher advised the caller to file the complaint through Department of Ecology to be routed appropriately.
- Tim Allen, area resident, asked about "catch-and-release" fishing on the Cedar. He said there is now a restriction requiring release of wild trout, but he didn't know how fishermen should identify if a fish is wild or not. Larry Fisher replied that cutthroat and wild rainbow trout must be released, and only hatchery rainbow trout can be kept. Hatchery rainbows can be identified by the clipping of their adipose fins. The Cedar is open for fishing the Saturday before Memorial Day, through August 31.

### III) Riverbend Project Update – Jon Hansen, DNRP Capital Projects Managing Supervisor

Mr. Hansen gave an update on changes to the County's Riverbend Levee Setback and Floodplain Restoration Project due to February flooding on the Cedar. Riverbend is designed as a multi-benefit project to improve salmon habitat, reduce flood hazards and long-term damage/repair costs, and re-initiate natural river processes.

Due to the flooding, the lower levee at the project site failed on February 10, 2020. This caused a major depositing of gravel from the river into Cavanaugh Pond. Continued depositing of gravel here could lead to problems, including head-cutting.

Mr. Hansen said the project will continue, but its team needs to be dynamic in its thinking, as the river itself is dynamic. Phase 1 elements scheduled for 2020 include: completing demolition, extending protection of the Cedar River Trail, and installing a buried setback through the mobile home park area. Phase 2, expected in 2021-2022, includes: levee removal along the left bank, side channel construction, and an additional buried revetment along the trail. These are delayed to allow the project team time to assess recent changes in the river, including rerunning flood models and updating geomorphic change projections.

There were several follow-up questions from CRC members:

- **Q:** What is the impact of nature putting gravel in the river? Does it help or hurt the fish?  
**A:** The presence of the pond (abandoned gravel mine) is an unnatural condition and having the river flow through it can have both good and bad outcomes. It could cause head cutting, mean less gravel going into the lower reach, or starving out of gravel in other places. We're still assessing options for further work needed to address these changes.
- **Q:** The river used to run 90 degrees straight at the trail and roadway at the west end of the site. Is the new project configuration safer for infrastructure?  
**A:** Yes. It does create new challenges, though.
- **Q:** With the gravel in the pond, what is the consideration towards loss of sockeye habitat?  
**A:** Overall, we expect the change to be positive for sockeye and other salmon using the reach. I think

long-term, while the pond has morphed due to natural failure, we were going to do much of this work anyway. Instead, the river did it on its own.

- **Q:** Will you use gravel from the mobile home park to fill in the pond?  
**A:** Most likely. We are looking at ways to maximize long-term habitat benefits.
- **Q:** Will the site remain closed for a long time?  
**A:** We're working with WSDOT, who says we have to maintain the connection through there. So there will be a detour in the area that will remain open. The actual site must be closed for the demolition and construction. Even so, there are dangers at the site regardless of construction, and we will likely need to put up hard barriers. Please advise people to be very cautious in this area.
- **Q:** Could we get pictures of the other impacted areas on the river?  
**A:** We have a new set of aerial photos we'd be glad to share. It will be on iMap eventually.

Larry Phillips observed that this project and the changes involved, regarding river management and flood control, are likely indicative of more dramatic changes to come in the river. People will have to think about what this means for infrastructure as well as private holdings. He said it's good to stop and reassess findings and the best course going forward. Mr. Hansen replied that while recent changes at Riverbend have been dramatic, it is remarkable that there were many positive changes to habitat that occurred this time without damage to public infrastructure or homes.

#### IV) CRC Updates

- **WRIA 8:** Corinne Young said the next Salmon Recovery Council (SRC) meeting is this Thursday.
- **Fish Habitat Conservation/Restoration (Sockeye):** See Larry Phillips' CRC Member Update below.
- **Cedar River Watershed:** Max Prinsen raised an issue from April's meeting, about nighttime water releases at Landsburg dam. He said when this happened years ago, a process was put in place to assure it wouldn't happen again, so area residents can take protective measures if needed. He believes this discussion needs to be resolved, so citizens can be aware of proper practices. Tom Allyn replied he'd received several concerned emails on the subject, and he will review them again and relay any pertinent information to Mr. Prinsen. Mr. Allyn said there is a way for people to be aware of this process ahead of time, but it is not as clear as it should be. It was agreed Nathan Brown would ask Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to present to the CRC on their water release protocols.
- **CRC Member Updates:**
  - **Larry Phillips:** The CRC sent a letter, spearheaded by Mr. Phillips, Max Prinsen, and Frank Urabeck, to Governor Inslee's office last summer requesting the Governor's help to coordinate inter-jurisdictional sockeye recovery efforts. The CRC has not received a reply. The pandemic has delayed CRC review of a draft follow-up letter to the Governor. The Governor's office and WDFW have been swamped as well. Mr. Phillips asked if the CRC should get this draft on its next meeting agenda, or if there was any desire for outreach in reviewing it. Mr. Prinsen noted that in-person meetings tend to be more impactful in terms of public comment, and budget constraints are also an issue at the moment. He agreed the draft letter should be delayed until a more opportune time, to invite public input on it.
  - **Tom Allyn:** Several SPU properties downstream from Royal Arch Park have seen significant recent changes in the river. The river has migrated about 30-40 feet east, and deposited several feet of sediment across the properties.

#### V) Meeting Feedback: June Meeting Topics/Time Slot

The next CRC meeting is scheduled for June 23. There was some dissent on the best time slot to facilitate attendance for the public and CRC members whose schedules do not fit a 3:00 pm slot. Nathan Brown and Max Prinsen agreed to conduct outreach among CRC members to determine the best time slot.

Mr. Brown also agreed to reach out to Seattle Public Utilities, to get updates on the dam release issue and the status of SPU project sites along the river. Mr. Brown and Mr. Prinsen agreed for July's meeting to be more "fish-centric," with information such as fish counts, which the CRC has not seen in a while.

**VI) General Public Comment:** There was no public comment during this period.

**VII) Wrap-Up/Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned early, at 4:10 pm.