



King County

**King County Rural Forest Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 16, 2023 – 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
online**

Commissioner	Present?	Commissioner (Ex-Officio/Non-Voting)	Present ?
Laurie Benson, WA DNR	✓	Brett Anderson, KCD	✓
Jeff Boyce, rural cities/professional forester	✓	Sarah Stewart - WSU Extension	✓
Wendy Davis, private forest landowner	✓	New Ranger, USDA Forest Svc.	
Wyatt Golding, non-timber values of forest land			
Li Hsi, forest landowner		Vacant, forest landowner	
Steve Horton, forest product user/forest landowner	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Mari Knutson, forest landowner	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
		Vacant, forest landowner	
<i>five RFC members attending is a quorum</i>			
County Staff Present			
Richard Martin, DNRP		Kathleen Farley Wolf, DNRP	
Wendy Sammarco, DNRP			
Public			
Eric Oien		Mike Mackelwich	

Motions

01-11162023 A motion is made to accept the September 21 meeting minutes as written. Steve Horton makes the motion; Cindy Spiry seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

Action Items

Action item: All RFC members assist in the RFC recruitment efforts. The RFC members could suggest and encourage forest landowners and managers to consider applying to serve on the RFC. (*unending action item*)

Action item: Forest operations that are impacted by neighboring structures that are >+\$1,000 value, should remain Forest Practice (currently Clearing and Grading); craft and pursue resolution through KC Policy (*holdover from previous RFC meeting*)

Action Item: Schedule/Coordinate Forest Field Tour for King County Council – Local Services and Land Use Committee (*note: waiting for renewed interest from King County Council*)

Action Item: Draft a letter to King County Council Local Services and Land Use Committee emphasizing the importance of forest and including specific asks. This letter will be a precursor to the field tour. Wyatt Golding will draft the letter; Wendy Davis will work on logistics to support the tour.

Action Item: Schedule a presentation on the WA DNR’s Trust Land Transfer Program

Action Item: Schedule a presentation on the WA DNR’s Carbon Program

Action Item: Explore, amend the RFC Charter, motion etc. on adding a student member position to the Rural Forest Commission

Action Item: Seek presentation on the King County Report on state forest trust lands currently managed for King County by WA DNR (July 2024) and the King County Report on mature forests in King County (September 2024) Project Manager Kathleen Farley Wolf

Call to Order

Laurie Benson called the meeting to order at 9:02. This meeting of the RFC is online.

Presentation: Starting the Conversation: The Upper Snoqualmie Resilient River Corridor Management Plan – Matt Baerwalde, Environmental Policy Analyst Snoqualmie Indian Tribe

Matt begins his presentation sharing the rich history of the Snoqualmie River Corridor and connecting the past and the present. The river flows through a spiritual, urban, and natural landscape. The Resilient River Corridor Management Plan is identifying and navigating the current and future pressures and stressors on the Upper Snoqualmie River. The community struggles to connect with the river and ecosystems have suffered. The first round of this project is to create the Resilient River Corridor Plan, the second round of this project is implementation. Matt shares that much outreach and science is required. Matt shares about the depth and breadth of Community Outreach in developing the Plan. He shares that people are interested in increasing the buffer around the river and to use this open space area for public access while also allowing for natural river shifting. There exist challenges with Tribal Community access to the River, increasing access for the Tribal community to the Falls is an important outcome, supported by this Plan. The Plan supports Tribal access experiences including stewardship and restoration of nearby accessible locations to harvest (salmon, steelhead, clams and Wapato), to increase awareness of Tribal connection (signage), and to increase awareness of Tribal rights to clean water and food. Technical and scientific work are part of this plan, creating science-based recommendations for a more resilient river corridor (floodplain processes, hydraulic modeling of existing and future flood flows). There are 22 recommendations in the plan representing a range of short-term and long-term actions, affordable and expensive ones. Outreach continues, following the completion of the Plan, example government to government, community group meetings, online media, prioritization and implementation meetings, etc. The Upper Snoqualmie Resilient River Corridor Management Plan communicates to river and city managers that a more responsible approach is needed to respond to the constantly changing river environment. And it encourages continued physical and spiritual connections with this important landscape. Matt stresses that the plan is intended to move away from conquest and towards connection with the environment and with each other.

Discussion

Wendy Sammarco: How extensive is the landscape covered by this plan? Matt: The plan is focused on the main stem of the Snoqualmie River, upstream of Snoqualmie Falls to the Three Forks area; however what happens upstream of this area certainly effects the River.

Laurie Benson: Is there funding for Plan implementation? Matt: No. The Tribe is pursuing grants; however, the Tribe needs capacity to get things done. The Snoqualmie Tribe is planning on expanding staffing. Sometimes funding is problematic, for example one year of funding for a project with no additional funding for maintenance, matching funding is also challenging. A new funding structure that includes funding for ongoing maintenance would be ideal.

Henry Mayer (Green River College student): Did you do youth outreach? Matt: We reached out far/wide in 2020/21 but we were limited by Covid. There is certainly room for more outreach.

Steve Horton: Are you interested in cost share? Matt: Matching funds increase the application/implementation burden. We have had some success with cost share, and the funders like to see the results of the cost share

Blake Rose (Green River College student): I am curious about volunteer events? Matt: The Tribe has an active restoration program and volunteer work projects are part of that. Professional crews do a great job removing weeds and volunteers do a great job planting.

Matt (presenter) The Tribe is seeking opportunities to increase capacity and pick up the pace with

implementation.

Mari Knutson: The upper Cedar River Watershed floodplain projects are in conflict with road crossings. Matt: Ideally getting infrastructure out of the floodplains would help.

Past Meeting Minutes

The RFC members review September RFC meeting minutes.

Motion: A motion is made to accept the September 21 meeting minutes as written. Steve Horton makes the motion; Cindy Spiry seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

Presentation: King County Council Motions on DNR State Forest Trust Lands and Mature Forests – Kathleen Farley Wolf, King County staff

Kathleen shares that two King County Council motions relating to forestland in King County pass in October 2023. Motion 16436 sponsored by Dembowski and Upthegrove is A motion requesting the executive to develop and transmit a study regarding state forest trust lands currently managed for King County by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Motion 16437 sponsored by Upthegrove is a motion requesting the executive to identify and analyze mature forests in King County and transmit a report. Kathleen shares that DNR managed Trust Lands in King County total 79,006 acres, including 22,881 acres of State Forest transfer trust lands. State Forest transfer lands were acquired by counties through tax foreclosures. Revenue from these State Forest transfer lands help fund county services and help fund junior taxing districts. Kathleen shares about state forestland revenue by County; in 2020 (most recent year reported) revenue to King County was \$1,613,241. A final report/study on both motions will be completed in July (forest trust lands) and September (mature forests). Kathleen shared a WA State legislated action: DNR Carbon Sequestration Forests Budget Proviso (NCS Fund) providing \$70 million to purchase forestland in counties west of the Cascades prioritizing lands at risk of conversion. Up to 2,000 acres of structurally complex, carbon dense forestland on state trust lands may be transferred out of trust statutes and replaced with lands of equal value. DNR's is seeking to conserve areas adjacent to existing habitat, in areas to improve connectivity, and to avoid isolated small fragments scattered across ownership.

Discussion

Laurie Benson: DNR is tasked with identifying the 2,000 acres? Kathleen: yes

Mari Knutson: Would like a shape file, to determine if DNR is considering forest land near her, with the headwaters of Issaquah Creek containing old growth. Kathleen: If it is old growth, DNR would not consider harvesting it. Old growth is determined by structural characteristics.

Eric Oien: Locking up land from development is good; on the other hand, affordable housing is needed. Basically, the State is budgeting \$70 million to purchase land west of the cascades to preserve, limit conversion. Kathleen: In King County, the land that may be considered for purchase is likely in the industrial forest landscape and not forest land in the wildland urban interface.

Eric Oien: King County has been purchasing conservation easements; is the difference that this new legislation has to do with carbon? Kathleen: I don't think it is carbon related but rather keeping mature forest from being harvested.

Henry (Green River College student): When the 2,000 acres is identified and transferred out of trust statutes, who will be responsible for management? Kathleen: The lands will be put into conservation and if the land is reconveyed to King County, it would be managed by King County Parks.

Laurie Benson: Who will make the decision after the analysis is completed? Kathleen: For reconveyance, State laws allows this to occur and there is a procedure to follow.

When these two King County reports are completed, the RFC will have Kathleen Farley Wolf back to share the highlights and findings.

Working Session

Introduction/discussion of Tree Length and a half from a structure draft RFC letter

The draft letter is shared via Teams and a discussion and real time editing session occurs. The final version of this letter is intended for the King County Executive and King County Council. The RFC offered great edit

recommendations. The RFC will continue focusing on this topic, with the goal of having a final draft of the tree length and a half letter close/finalized by the March RFC meeting.

Agency Updates

-DNR – Laurie Benson (DNR alumni) shares that DNR internships will be advertised soon, for locations throughout the State. Internship applications will be due by approximately MLK day. Wildland fire fighting positions for 2024 are currently being advertised.

-WSUe – Sarah Stewart is a new education assistant, helping Kevin Zobrist. Sarah will be representing WSUe at future RFC meetings.

-KCD – Brett Anderson shares that KCD received a State grant focusing on forest health and wildfire resiliency in Skykomish and Snoqualmie Pass.

-Snoqualmie Tribe – Cindy Spiry shares that the Tribe continues to focus on habitat restoration. They are hiring new staff and planning conservation and restoration opportunities in the Snoqualmie Tribe Ancestral Forest.

-KC DNRP (Parks) –The hiring process for the currently vacant position which will focus on small forest landowner stewardship and community wildfire risk reduction (education and outreach) is underway. The position has not yet been advertised. It is expected to be filled by April 2024.

Adjourn

The meeting is adjourned at 11:43 am.