



King County

**King County Rural Forest Commission
 Meeting Minutes
 Thursday, January 18, 2024 – 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	Carolyn (Lyn) Tampi (KC Intern)
Wendy Sammarco, DNRP	
Public	
Jon Matson	Mike Mackelwich
Tom Amorose	Doug Kennedy (DNR)

Motions

01-01182024 A motion is made to accept the November 16 meeting minutes as written. Cindy Spiry makes the motion; Jeff Boyce seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

02.01182024 : A motion is made to adjourn the January 18 RFC meeting. Wendy Davis makes the motion; Mari Knutson seconds the motion.

Action Items

Action item: All RFC members assist in the RFC recruitment efforts. The RFC members may 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 – 2024 work in progress*)

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 amending the RFC Charter, motion etc. on adding a student member position to the Rural Forest Commission

Action Item: Future 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 calls the meeting to order at 9:02. This meeting of the RFC is online. The meeting begins with a member roll call. A quorum is present.

Presentation: Meeting Focus – Connecting with the RFC Report: Objective 1.6: Reduce operating and permitting costs for Forest management and remove permitting and other roadblocks to forest practices –
Wendy Sammarco, KC Staff

Wendy begins the presentation with a reminder about the King County Rural Forest Commission Strategic Priorities Report completed by the RFC in 2022. Wendy shares how to access the Report using the KC RFC webpage. The ranking criteria of Actions is shared: Now, Soon, Later, Continue. Today's presentations will be focused on Objective 1.6: Reduce operating and permitting costs for forestry activities and remove permitting and other roadblocks to forestry practices. and 1.6.1 Continue efforts to clarify permitting process and fee structure for forestry activities not governed by FPA [rated as CONTINUE] and 1.6.6 Cap costs of permits for forest practices as has been done with agriculture [rated as NOW] The January meeting presentations will be centered on harvesting trees within a tree length and a half of a structure.[note: there is a last minute cancellation of one of the presentations on this topic]

Presentation: Washington Department of Natural Resources-harvesting trees within a tree length and a half from a structure – permitting overview – Aileen Nichols, DNR Forest Practices District Manager acting and Carla Fosberg, Forest Practices Program Coordinator DNR SPS Region

Aileen and Carla share the Washington Administrative Code definition of forestland: *Forestland is all land which is capable of supporting a merchantable stand of timber and is not being actively used for a use which is incompatible with growing timber.* WAC 222-16-010. In 1995 DNR leadership created a guidance memo centered on the 1 1/2 tree length area around a structure. This area was determined to be incompatible with timber growing.

Discussion

Brett Anderson: If a forested parcel will be developed following a harvest, how does DNR interpret this? Carla: This would be considered a conversion harvest and the harvest permitting would be through King County permitting.

Laurie Benson: From the DNR 1995 guidance memo, is there any movement within DNR to update or formalize/regulate the 1 1/2 tree length area? Aileen: The 1 1/2 tree length area is constantly being discussed because of confusion by landowners and variability between DNR and County permitting; however, there will likely be no regulatory change on this issue from DNR

Laurie Benson: In Pierce County, no harvest permit is needed in this 1 1/2 tree length zone? Aileen: Yes, however if critical areas exist in this zone, County code must be followed.

Laurie Benson: If you are planning on harvesting within 1 1/2 tree lengths of a neighbor's structure(s), DNR would not issue a permit for this area? Aileen: yes, 1 1/2 applies to structures, not ownership.

Wendy Sammarco: How would DNR permit harvesting in Parks? Carla: The FPA would be a Class IV Special

Richard Martin: What constitutes a Park, is there a clear definition? Carla: There is not a clear definition, although there is a Parks Register List.

Richard Martin: King County owns approximately 30,000-acres, with some of these acres managed as working forest. Carla: The Park must be used for recreation. The best way to determine Park status is to check with Carla.

Wendy Sammarco: Does zoning impact DNR FPAs? Carla: FPAs are linked to defined forestland, and not

zoning.

Richard Martin: How is 11/2 tree length distance calculated? Aileen: it is based on the tallest tree.

Past Meeting Minutes

The RFC members review November RFC meeting minutes.

Motion: A motion is made to accept the November 16 meeting minutes as written. Cindy Spiry makes the motion; Jeff Boyce seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

RFC Recruitment Discussion

-Tom Amorose, Jon Matson, and Eric Oien have been recommended for appointment to the RFC by the KC Executive. The next step will be King County Council approval.

-Laurie makes all aware that in October 2024 five RFC members will be completing their second three-year term. Laurie makes all aware that these five members may consider continuing to serve on the RFC for a consecutive 3-year term, to continue the good work of the RFC.

-Doug Kennedy, Assistant Region Manager acting, joins the RFC today. Doug shares that he has worked for the DNR for 91/2 years managing FSC and SFI certification and the DNR Carbon Credit project. The Carbon project is on hold currently while the DNR resolves a lawsuit. Doug may serve as the DNR representative on the RFC, pending South Puget Sound Region Manager approval.

Presentation: King County Council Proposed Ordinance 2023-0310 Establishing an hourly minimum wage rate for employees of employers in unincorporated King County, employees of certain county contractors, and county employees – Wendy Sammarco, KC Staff

Wendy shares the recent history of statewide minimum wage in Washington, beginning in 2016 with Initiative 1433 passed by voters. The result of that initiative was that beginning in January 2017 minimum wage for residents 18-years and older was set at \$11/hour. Beginning in January 2021 the statewide initiative is modified with the hourly minimum wage being adjusted annually for inflation. In 2024 the hourly minimum wage in WA is \$16.28. The KC proposed ordinance would establish an 2023 hourly minimum wage for unincorporated King County of \$18.99 (2023 state minimum wage rate is \$15.74). The proposed KCC ordinance has an annual inflationary increase of 6.8%, adjusting the 2024 proposed KC hourly minimum wage rate to \$20.29 (2024 state minimum wage rate is \$16.28). In the KCC proposed minimum wage rate ordinance there are exceptions based on number of employees and gross annual revenues. The status of this draft ordinance is that it was referred back to the Transportation Economy and Environment Committee; sponsors are Zahilay, Dembowski, Kohl-Welles and McDermott. Regarding actions the RFC might consider, for comparison, the KC Ag Commission sent a letter to the KCC inquiring about disparity with other Counties and Regions, how this minimum wage might effect work force competition and farmer competitiveness and recommended either a study on the impacts to the Ag Sector or an exemption for employers of ag employees.

Discussion

Li Hsi shares that he pays a minimum of \$25/hour and feels that if you offer any less you will not be able to hire anyone.

Richard Martin shares that the Ag Commission members also are paying above the minimum hourly rate proposed, and yet are concerned that for the same pay, workers may choose to work at a less labor-intensive job.

Laurie Benson shares that Richard and Li's perspectives may not be revealed in the results of a study.

Wendy Davis shares that in the construction sector you can not find any one to work for less than \$25/hour.

Cindy Spiry shares that it is hard to find/hire field workers for less than \$25/hour.

Steve Horton shares that wage inflation drives everything, driving everything up .

Laurie Benson concludes discussion by suggesting that no letter is needed from the RFC on this issue; a study may not be useful, and that forest workers are being paid above the proposed minimum wage rate in King County.

Agency Updates

DNR – Doug Kennedy shares about 2023 WA legislation requiring DNR to find 2,000 acres of carbon dense and structurally complex forests statewide to put into conservation status. Currently 290-acres have been identified on Tiger Mountain to move into conservation status. The legislation requires DNR to purchase replacement lands, for

the lands removed from active timber management (moved into conservation status). Ideally replacement lands will be found in the same County; however, they may be elsewhere. Doug shares that all of KC DNR lands are managed under an HCP with self-imposed restrictions centered on marbled murrelet habitat and restrictions/prohibitions on harvesting old growth forests. DNR is experiencing increased interest in harvests planned in naturally regenerated second growth forests (origin dates 1930-1940). This interest/opposition is coming from KCC, conservation groups and Tribes, with all effecting DNR's social license to operate. DNR is implementing the Watershed Resilience Action Plan (completed in 2022 for the Snohomish Basin). DNR is ramping up watershed restoration project in WRIA 7 (Snohomish Basin) Working with landowners, performing beaver relocation, combatting invasive weeds, and providing incentives. On the DNR managed forests adjacent to and accessed off Highway 18, the Hwy 18 DOT project will require a closure to recreation and forest management activities during the summer 2024.

Laurie Benson adds that if interested in partnering on the watershed restoration projects in the Snohomish Basin contact Rachel.Benbrook@DNR.Wa.gov

Snoqualmie Tribe – Cindy Spiry shares the Snoqualmie Tribe is focusing on habitat restoration projects in the Snoqualmie and Sammamish watersheds. The Tribe is involved in a prairie restoration project, planting camas and other species. Data collection is underway in the Ancestral Forest collecting information on current conditions to better inform future planting decisions.

KCD – Brett Anderson shares that KCD just completed a strategic planning process to support the 2025 Interlocal Agreement.

KC DNRP (Parks) – Richard Martin shares that his team has hired two interns. Lyn Tampi (intern) will be supporting the Ag Commission and the RFC. Milo (intern) will be supporting current use taxation. The Fire and Stewardship Forester position will be advertised soon, and once posted will be open for 3-weeks. A reorganization has occurred, with the AFI group moving into the Rural and Regional Services Section.

WSUe – Sarah Stewart shares that an online Coached Forest Stewardship Planning course is starting today. On February 1 a bigleaf maple syrup workshop is planned near Duvall. Patrick Shultz (WSUe) will be hosting an Agro-forestry webinar. On February 21 an in-person Coached Forest Stewardship Planning course will begin on Vashon.

Homework

Laurie Benson assigns homework for all: For those RFC members whose second three-year term will be complete in October 2024: Consider serving a third term and/or reach out to potential replacements. All should recommend potential RFC members, and KC staff will follow up.

Adjourn

Motion: A motion is made to adjourn the January 18 RFC meeting. Wendy Davis makes the motion; Mari Knutson seconds the motion.

The meeting is adjourned at 11:08 am.