



**King County Rural Forest Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 21, 2024 – 9:00 am to 12:00 am  
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	
Tom Amorose	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Jon Matson	✓		
Eric Oien			
<i>five RFC members attending is a quorum</i>			
County Staff Present			
Richard Martin, DNRP		Carolyn (Lyn) Tampi, KC Intern	
Wendy Sammarco, DNRP			
Public			
Mike Mackelwich		Julie D.	
Bernie McKinney		Trudi	
Valerie		Zach Pratt	
Bonnie		Irene	
Tim O'Brien			

**Motions**

- 01-03212024: A motion is made to accept the January 18 meeting minutes as written. Steve Horton makes the motion; Jon Matson seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.
- 02-03212024: A motion is made for the RFC to write a letter about the surface mine and asphalt plant proposal to the King County Executive. Cindy Spiry makes the motion; Steve Horton seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

**Action Items**

- Action Item: All RFC members assist in RFC recruitment efforts. 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 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) from Project Manager Kathleen Farley Wolf.
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### **Call to Order**

Wendy Davis calls the meeting to order at 9:00 am. This meeting of the RFC is online. The meeting begins with a member roll call. A quorum is present.

### **Presentation: Trending and Long-Term Forest 'Health' Issues Affecting Western Washington Forests – Joey Hulbert, Forest Health Watch Program Director, WSU**

Joey shares that he is a post-doctorate at WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center. He shares that there are opportunities for student interns and that much research work is accomplished with the help of interns.

Joey then provides an overview of forest health issues:

- Western red cedar dieback;
- Bigleaf maple decline, which may be related to sooty bark disease;
- Red alder dieback, particularly in riparian areas and potentially linked to phytophthora;
- Western hemlock foliar disease, if needles affected near the bottom or middle of tree it is likely fungal;
- Sword fern dieback (Seward Park);
- Emerald ash borer is in Oregon now, may result in losing Oregon ash;
- *Agrilus anxius* - bronze birch borer which is a native insect affecting birch; and
- Mediterranean oak borer may affect Oregon white oak/garry oak.

Joey then shares about western red cedar and notes its big presence and importance culturally and ecologically. In 2017, DNR begins noting dieback primarily in the San Juans. In 2018, western red cedar dieback is noted in the Cascades, and in 2020 it is noted in the NE corner of WA. A Forest Health Watch survey reveals western red cedar dieback is the top concern for stakeholders. Forest Health Watch is a citizen science approach, using iNaturalist. Currently 800 people indicate interest in western red cedar dieback, with over 350 contributing western red cedar information via iNaturalist. Investigations into western red cedar reveal that most red cedar mortality occurred recently. 3 consecutive years of drought may result in death to western red cedar trees in some areas. If there is a break in the drought cycle, some red cedar can respond favorably. These drought-related impacts affect low-elevation red cedar. Analysis of soil and climate is being looked at. The 'Open Red Cedar Adaptation Network' is a recently-installed project comparing Oregon red cedar seedling growth with WA red cedar seedling growth, with seedlings planted at 3 locations including Discovery Park. Forest Health Watch is also investigating presence of phytophthora and finding a low-level presence in western WA soils.

Joey shares about heat map research, linking dead treetops in urban areas to temperature extremes. Joey also shares about bigleaf maple sooty bark disease. WSU has a Sooty Bark diagnostic guide available. Basically, sooty bark disease resembles a sooty appearance on bigleaf maple trunks. This sooty appearance is from the fruiting bodies of the fungi. Sooty bark disease can cause allergic reactions in susceptible people.

Joey shares that he is working with a collaborative focusing on what to do to keep western red cedar healthy. The collaborative is surveying arborists about what they are doing to help red cedar. The collaborative's output is anticipated to be a best management practices guide for keeping western red cedar healthy and likely will include soil health and thinning considerations.

Joey shares that work is underway with WSU and USFS at the Port of Tacoma aimed at early identification of introduced pathogens affecting the forest/trees. Joey is also working on a pilot seed collection program aimed at conserving western red cedar. Also, a spore trap study is underway to determine when spores are abundant in the air so that pruning can be staged to minimize exposure.

### Discussion

- Steve Horton: I had 35"+ DBH western red cedar that slowly died over a 10-year period. What are the dieback rates? Joey: Currently there is not a good understanding of how long it takes for a cedar to die, sometimes it takes 1 year, sometimes longer.
- Steve Horton: When does top dieback indicate the tree should be considered a hazard? Joey: Red cedar does have natural durability and strength; perhaps when there is 75% crown dieback, consider removing the tree or topping.
- Cindy Spiry: Western red cedar with dead tops seems to be in areas that are warmer, is there a connection with cedar and drought? Joey: 3 years of drought can trigger tree death. For trees in riparian areas, dying may be the result of particularly shallow roots.
- Wendy Davis: Wendy shares about a nice large healthy red cedar tree near her home in Burien, asks if Joey is looking only for affected trees in his seed collection efforts? Joey: The seed collection program is exploratory, with a focus on healthy trees; however, if there is a special tree, that may/would be appropriate for a seed collection source as well. The viability of western red cedar seed is 7 years. Joey is planning to create a guide to seed collection techniques and seed processing.
- Tom Amorose: On Vashon, the western red cedar is universally appearing droopy with no top dieback. Joey: Every fall, western red cedar will shed some needles; cedar holds on to needles for seven years. If the foliage of western red cedar appears thin, this could be an indication of stress. Western red cedar needles appear more compact in sunny areas.
- Mari Knutson: Steve Horton, did you notice excessive cone production on your dying cedar? Steve: No. Joey: Cone crops on red cedar may occur on healthy trees. Mari: Relative to the heat dome, I noticed south- and east-facing trees are particularly impacted.

### Past Meeting Minutes

The RFC members review January RFC meeting minutes.

Motion: A motion is made to accept the January 18 meeting minutes as written. Steve Horton makes the motion; John Matson seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

### Presentation: Current Issue – Surface Mine and Asphalt Plant Proposed on F-Zone Parcels Near Cumberland – Overview and Discussion – Wendy Sammarco, KC Staff

Wendy provides an overview of the proposed Cumberland aggregate mine and asphalt plant project. The location of the project is north of Cumberland and on F-zoned parcels. Information is shared about the proposed mine, from the current SEPA checklist submitted by Segale Properties LLC. The purpose of SEPA is to help government agencies determine whether the environmental impacts of a proposal are significant. The lead agency on this proposal is KC Department of Local Services. Segale indicate in their SEPA checklist their plans to begin mining activity in 2026 and continue for approximately 25-35 years. Technical reports have been submitted by Segale with their SEPA checklist. Segale indicates the land will be returned to forest use once the mining operation is completed. Segale indicates in the SEPA checklist that no mining will occur within 200 feet of the Green River; also, the Segale property ownership boundary is 300 feet or more away from the edge of the Green River Gorge. Segale plans to leave a 50-foot-wide forested buffer on the perimeter of the mine site. Mining and reforestation will be done in phases over time. These parcels were purchased by Segale in 2003 from Plum Creek. Indicated in the SEPA checklist is Segale's pursuit of a land exchange with neighboring WA DNR forest land.

King County draft policy that intersects with this mining proposal is sourced from the KC Comprehensive Plan 2024 Update. The Comp Plan is the guiding policy document for land use and development in unincorporated KC and ensures compliance with the goals and requirements of WA Growth Management Act. Basically, the draft

policies in the 2024 Comp Plan update do not oppose the proposed mine and asphalt plant, and mineral extraction activities are permitted in the F-zone.

King County Code is a compilation of the KC laws that are permanent or general in nature; KC Code are the laws of KC. Basically, KC Code permits the proposed mine and asphalt plant under specified conditions.

### Discussion

- Steve Horton: What is the reclamation time frame? Wendy: The Reclamation Plan is approved by DNR, and DNR determines the time frame.
- Jon Matson: Is the mine contingent on the land swap with WA DNR? Wendy: No
- Jeff Boyce: Water consumption and production on site is 1/2- to 3/4 -acre-feet per day.
- Mari Knutson: Concerns about surface water impacts and invasive species issues on scraped-off topsoil.
- Valerie: Lives on Hyde Lake which is downhill from the site. There is a big cliff 200-300 feet above the Green River. Valerie requests the RFC write a letter with the goal of keeping the property forested. The RFC letter should insist that Segale be required to do an EIS. State Parks may be looking to purchase this property.
- Bonnie: Member of the Green River Coalition; the setback from the Gorge is not enough. Environmental impacts from the asphalt plant could be disastrous.
- Valerie: It would be scary to set a precedent to do a land swap. The aggregate is supposedly better on DNR land. The precedent is that a wealthy landowner can get what they want. Also, 9 springs are identified on the Technical Reports, any change will affect water temperature.
- Tim: The site is productive forest land. There are holes in the SEPA information submitted by Segale. The sample pits are at the edge of the Green River Gorge. Operations will require 250 gallons of water per day, and they are seeking water from City of Tacoma (Green River Watershed) or Cumberland. Holes in SEPA: 1) there is no reclamation plan; 2) Intention of operating 4-5 pits on site at the same time; 3) reclamation will occur when they reach the floor of the pit; 4) Lizard Mountain will likely be mined. This Cumberland rural economy is being developed as a recreation economy with Cumberland being a hub. Mining in the area is already well-developed. This mining project will deter recreation in Cumberland and deter recreation-related rural businesses. KC has made an offer to purchase rim property. *(Note: this is unconfirmed.)*
- Bonnie: There are moderate increases in the Comp Plan for riparian buffers relative to fish. Are there other options for preserving the area?

### **Presentation: Meeting Focus – Connecting with the RFC Report: Focus Area 1: Protection, Restoration, and Stewardship of Private Forestland with a focus on the Land Conservation Initiative - 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 1.1, Protect remaining priority privately-owned forest tracts not currently under easement, with special focus on protecting contiguous blocks of forest and meeting LCI goals;
- 1.1.2, Increase public engagement and communication around objectives for acquisition and restoration (e.g., LCI);
- 1.1.3, Support acquisition of additional working-forest conservation easements on commercial forestlands that are LCI targets; and
- 2.1, Strengthen stewardship planning protocols for King County forestland. The March meeting presentation will center on Overview, Update, and Status of KC Land Conservation Initiative.

### **Presentation: Overview, Update, and Status of King County Land Conservation Initiative – Heather Ramsay Ahndan, KC Land Conservation Initiative Program Manager**

Heather begins her presentation explaining about the vision of the Land Conservation Initiative: Within the next

generation, its goal is to protect the remaining high conservation value open spaces while ensuring equitable access for all. The evolution of the Land Conservation Initiative:

- 2014 - KC visioning and research
- 2016 - LCI Advisory group convened and Phase 1 work begins
- 2017 - LCI Planning and Phase 2
- 2018 - Open Space Equity Cabinet convened
- 2019-onward - Implementation

Heather shares about the coordinated strategy to accelerate LCI work, combining efforts with Parks Open Space, Farmland Preservation, Salmon Recovery, Forestry, Conservation Futures, Parks Levy, Transfer of Development Rights, Mitigation, Ecosystem Markets, Current Use Taxation, Equity and Social Justice, and Healthy Lands Project. LCI focuses on 6 land categories: Urban Green Space, Farmlands, Forests, Natural Lands, Trails, and Rivers. The LCI target is 65,000 acres, using tax incentives for private landowners (20,000 acres) and new acquisitions by King County and partners (18,000 acres fee and 27,000 acres easement).

Heather shares about the LCI funding model, combining grants, Parks levy, public funds, private funds, and the recently approved by King County voters (2022) Conservation Futures funding. The LCI has a nexus with King County's Clean Water Healthy Habitat Strategic Plan (acquire or protect 1,000 acres of forested land per year), Strategic Climate Action Plan (protect 6,500 acres of forests and natural areas by 2025), and Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan (access to safe, clean, and quality outdoor spaces).

Heather also shares about equity in King County and the intersection with the LCI. Going where needs are the greatest so that all/most have access to green, open spaces; everyone deserves access to natural lands.

Heather shared on Land Conservation Initiative progress, with overall acreage progress being below target; however, opportunity area progress (equity areas) is ahead of schedule. Opportunity area acquisitions tend to be low acreage and high dollar (expensive).

Note: Excellent information on the King County webpages, particularly 'Making Progress' page:

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/services/environment/water-and-land/land-conservation/making-progress.aspx>

#### Discussion:

- Wendy Sammarco: Can the RFC help on any LCI issues? Heather: Kathleen will draft a report on forest canopy, linked to recent King County Council legislation. The Parks Levy is up for renewal in 2025, which we all can vote to support.

**Public Comment:** None.

#### Agency Reports

- **WSU Extension:** Vashon and Kitsap Coached Planning courses are underway. The recent online course had their field day at the Davis forest, and Wendy Davis shares that it was well attended.
- **Snoqualmie Tribe:** The Snoqualmie Tribe Ancestral Forest baseline data collection is continuing. The snow is melting, allowing earlier access when compared with last year. Invasive weed projects are underway, primarily dealing with Scotts broom. 5 or 6 new positions have been filled. A new project focus on culturally modified trees outreach is occurring.
- **KCD:** Wildfire mitigation program is evolving, with a goal of making the program efficient and effective with practice standards and cost share rates defined. The program target audience includes individual homeowners, groups of homes/communities and larger communities.
- **DNRP:** Two King County Council motions focusing on 1) changes to forest cover and 2) distribution and abundance of mature forests. This info will guide efforts on easements and acquisitions. Kathleen Farley Wolf will present on this later in 2024. The AFI group is nearing completion of recruitment for a forester position. King County Parks is expanding staff and hiring 4 foresters and 3 forest technician positions.

### **Concerns of the Commissioners**

- Cindy Spiry shares that she is 100% in support of the RFC sending a letter to ask for an EIS and/or acquisition of the Segale proposal/parcels.
- Steve Horton reminds the RFC about the Reserve Silica (former surface mine) and their request for rezoning because of the expense to reclaim the surface mine area. Steve reminds all that the RFC is about forests and forestry, and questions what the right route forward is to protect forests. The RFC is about protecting the ability to grow trees.
- Wendy Davis shares that she is concerned about the surface mine impacts to healthy vibrant forests.
- Steve Horton shares that surface mining this area would be a reduction in forest land, and it must be reclaimed in a timely way.
- Wendy Davis asks: Where does this leave us as an RFC?
- Steve Horton asks Richard Martin: RFC's goal is to focus on forestry with a goal of keeping it viable?
- Richard Martin responds: King County has several policies of no forest cover loss, also, there have been no examples of restoration of forests after mining (example: Reserve Silica). If an RFC letter will be written on this issue, it should focus on impacts to forestry: 1) no forest cover loss; and 2) no example of effective restoration. The RFC letter should be to the King County Executive.
- Wendy Davis asks all: are we, as a commission, interested in an RFC letter?
- Steve Horton shares that the RFC should issue a letter and get at it from no loss of forest cover, and ability to restore back to forests after mining is complete.
- Mari Knutson shares that water rights should be addressed in the letter.
- Wendy Davis shares that Bernie has offered to consult on the letter.
- Richard Martin responds that Bernie consulting is okay; however, the RFC should write the letter.
- Mari Knutson, Steve Horton, and Jeff Boyce will volunteer to write the letter.

Motion: A motion is made for the RFC to write a letter about the surface mine and asphalt plant proposal to the King County Executive. Cindy Spiry makes the motion; Steve Horton seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

Mari Knutson asks what is the RFC role regarding water flow? Wendy Davis responds that it is likely beyond the scope of the RFC.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- Steve Horton asks who will lead the letter-writing subcommittee.
- Mari Knutson volunteers to lead.
- The RFC will meet in April for 1 hour to review draft letter.

The meeting adjourned at 11:37 am.