



King County

**King County Rural Forest Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 15, 2025 – 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Online – Microsoft Teams**

Commissioner	Present?	Commissioner (Ex-Officio/Non-Voting)	Present ?
Laurie Benson, non-timber values of forest land	✓	Ellen Arnstein, KCD	✓
Jeff Boyce, rural cities/professional forester	✓	Sarah Stewart, WSU Extension	
Wendy Davis, private forest landowner	✓	New Ranger, USDA Forest Svc.	
Steve Horton, forest product user/forest landowner	✓		
Mari Knutson, forest landowner	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe	✓	Vacant, large forest landowner	
Tom Amorose, forest landowner	✓	Vacant, academic forester	
Jon Matson, forest landowner	✓		
Chris Raynham, professional forester	✓		
Lori Price, DNR Representative			
<i>Six RFC members attending is a quorum</i>			
County Staff Present			
Richard Martin, DNRP		Mike Lasecki, DNRP	
Wendy Sammarco, DNRP		Alli Ferreri, OEM	
Guests			
Natalia Williams, KCD			
Delaney Skiles, KCD			

Motions

- **01-05152025:** A motion to approve the March 20, 2025 amended meeting minutes is made. Cindy Spiry makes the motion to approve the minutes as amended, Mari Knutson seconds the motion. The motion is approved unanimously.
- **02-05152025:** A motion is made to adjourn the meeting. Steve Horton makes the motion, Tom Amorose seconds the motion. The motion is passed unanimously.

Action Items

- 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. (*Ongoing item.*)
- Review final draft of King County Community Wildfire Protection Plan and draft RFC letter of support (to King County Executive and King County Council). (*Note: letter should be completed by November 2025 RFC meeting.*)
- 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.*)
- Schedule a presentation on WA DNR’s Trust Land Transfer Program.
- Schedule a presentation on WA DNR’s Carbon Program.
- Explore amending the RFC Charter, motion etc. on adding a student member position to RFC.
- Track progress/delivery of RFC correspondence and report on outcomes. (*RFC Liaison.*)

Call to Order

Laurie Benson calls the meeting to order at 9:04 am. The RFC meeting is online. The meeting begins with a member roll call. A quorum is present.

Presentation: Who is Doing What Relative to Wildfire in King County – Mike Lasecki, King County Wildfire Mitigation Specialist

Mike shares that his presentation will be on four areas relevant to wildfire work: 1) Mitigation; 2) Preparedness; 3) Response; and 4) Recovery.

Beginning with Wildfire Mitigation, Mike defines mitigation as modifying the environment or human behavior to reduce potential adverse impacts from a wildfire. Mitigation actions are actions that are implemented to reduce or eliminate (mitigate) wildfire risks to persons, property or natural resources. Mike shares that there are many doing wildfire mitigation in King County: King Conservation District manages a Wildfire Mitigation Program, Eastside Fire & Rescue manages a Wildfire Safe Eastside Program, and WA DNR manages a Service Forestry Program & Community Resiliency Program.

Mike then shares about Wildfire Preparedness in King County, beginning with a Preparedness definition: a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in effort to ensure effective coordination during wildfire incident response (includes evacuations). Mike shares that many are doing Wildfire Preparedness actions in King County, and highlights: 1) WA DNR Wildfire Management & Forest Resiliency Divisions; 2) Local Fire Districts; and 3) King County Office of Emergency Management. WA DNR is most active in this space, including modeling wildfire behavior, and what wildfires will look like. To be successful in Wildfire Preparedness requires cooperation and involvement with community members. Mike shares about the DNR Wildfire Ready Neighbors program, which has not yet been rolled out in King County.

Mike then shares about Wildfire Response in King County, beginning with a Response definition: activities that address short-term, direct effects of an active wildfire. Response includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. Wildfire Response is fighting the actual fire. There are many doing Wildfire Response in King County, highlights: 1) WA DNR Wildfire Management Division, Pinnacle Unit; 2) Local Fire Districts; and 3) US Forest Service - MBS National Forest, South Fire Management Zone. The WA DNR Pinnacle Unit is a 10-person crew with engine in North Bend, located in the Wilderness Rim area. USFS maintains three engines in North Bend.

Mike then shares about Wildfire Recovery in King County, beginning with a Recovery definition: encompassing both short- and long-term efforts for restoration of wildfire-impacted ecosystems and rebuilding and revitalization of affected communities. There are many doing Wildfire Recovery in King County, highlights: 1) WA DNR Forest Resiliency Division, Post-Fire Recovery Program; 2) US Forest Service - MBS National Forest, BAER Teams; and 3) Natural Resources Conservation Service. WA DNR is active in wildfire recovery, with actions and workshops – there is much new work going on, strong interest, and strong concern in planning for recovery. USFS's BAER team (burned area emergency response) focuses on evaluating actions to minimize post fire impacts; they were deployed on the Bolt Creek and Loc Katrina fires.

Mike then shares about wildfire coordination and collaboration groups, including: 1) King County Wildfire Mitigation Working Group; 2) King County Interagency Rural Forestry Quarterly Meetings; and 3) Washington Fire Adapted Communities Leaning Network (WAFAC).

Presentation: Status and Vision of King County Wildfire Protection Plan and Connecting with the RFC Strategic Priorities Report – Alli Ferreri, King County Office of Emergency Management

Alli begins with tying into the RFC Strategic Priorities Report, Focus Area 3: Wildfire Hazard Reduction. Alli and team are focusing on completing the King County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). A CWPP is a plan that collaboratively identifies ways to reduce risk of destructive wildfires and helps our communities, especially in areas in and near the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), become better adapted to wildfire. The CWPP program was established by Congress in 2003.

King County's CWPP will include an analysis of local wildfire history, wildfire hazard assessment map, risk reduction strategies by area of the county, action plan for projects by area, and recommendations for King County residents. Similar work is underway across Washington State.

Alli shared the work completed, and work remaining, on the CWPP. The King County CWPP is planned for completion in late 2025. The King County CWPP will apply to the Wildland Urban Interface Areas, Local Communities, and Countywide. In a fire-adapted community, everyone has a responsibility, with priorities and actions differing across planning areas.

Alli offers details on how the RFC can be involved with the CWPP: 1) provide direct input into plan (participate in surveys, community meetings); 2) support collaborative, ongoing risk reduction; 3) spread word on ongoing work with relevant partners/public; and 4) provide support letter for final CWPP. The final King County CWPP will be approved through KC Office of Emergency Management, and Fire Commissions, with the WA State Forester giving the final Plan approval.

Discussion

- Mari Knutson: I have concerns about the perceived responsibility imbalance, with WUI landowners impacted by actions/inactions of large landowners. Private large landowners have high fuel loads with little responsibility. No one is pursuing utilities, etc., for fuel breaks, and there appears to be no coordinated regional approach. It should be on BPA and large landowners to reduce fuel load and minimize risk.
Alli: Complete the surveys on shared wildfire risk reduction and public wildfire protection planning.
- Mari Knutson: I'm concerned about evacuation plan coordination for rural communities, which are disconnected.
Alli: With wind-driven wildfires, evacuation plans will be important; less wind-driven fires will have different mitigation efforts.
- Tom Amorose: In the engaging partners phase of the CWPP development, will RFC members be notified when CWPP outreach is occurring in their area?
Alli: On Vashon, May 31 is the CWPP outreach event. Also, Mike Lasecki and Natalia Williams (KCD) are working with the Vashon interim fire chief.
- Wendy Sammarco: What is the utility involvement with the CWPP?
Alli: CWPP team has reached out to utilities; these companies often have Wildfire Plans in place.
Chris Raynham: SPU is working on a Wildfire Action Plan focused on water infrastructure.
- Wendy Sammarco: Once complete, how will the CWPP remain relevant?
Alli: Once the CWPP is complete, plans include keeping mitigation groups and partners engaged in the future, working on shifting the mindset. The CWPP planning team is aware it will take work to keep momentum going.
Mike Lasecki: In the mitigation team, the evolution will be as an interagency body that keeps the plan active, meeting regularly and staying engaged.

- Chris Raynham: In the Recovery section of the CWPP, how has erosion been addressed, what materials are suggested, etc.?
Mike: The CWPP team is identifying major concerns, strategies, and actions to use in recovery, both short- and long-term.
Alli: The vision is comprehensive recovery, what people need in a recovery process (contamination, etc.). DNR is adept with ecosystem recovery, but often recovery is also about people.
- Mari Knutson: Shares what should be included in the CWPP - strategic fuel breaks in key choke points (like the Cascade foothills); fire-adapted forest thinning across jurisdictional boundaries; aggressive Scotch broom eradication near roads, power lines, and WUI zones; real enforcement of utility vegetation management obligations; equity in funding and assistance for small landowners to do prescribed burns or forest restoration.
- Richard Martin: To keep plans effective, they should include high level actions and strategies that are implementable, not many, many actions.
Mike: High priority actions and feasibility are the focus of the CWPP.
- Who signs the final CWPP?
Alli: King County Council and Executive signatures are not needed; however, plans are to present highlights of the CWPP to KC.
- An RFC support letter for the CWPP should occur at the beginning of November.

Review and Motion to Approve RFC Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the March 20, 2025, amended meeting minutes is made. Cindy Spiry makes the motion to approve the minutes as amended, Mari Knutson seconds the motion. The motion is approved unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Presentation: Olympic Experimental Forest Overview and Status [Exploring King County Demonstration Forest Idea] – Teddy Minkova, WA DNR Research and Monitoring Manager for OESF

Teddy shares about OESF's origins: the recommendation to establish OESF made by the 1989 Old Growth Commission, with OESF learning objectives set in the 1992 Forest Resource Plan, and the mission, conservation strategies, and research priorities outlined in the 1997 State Lands Habitat Conservation Plan. Also, the Olympic Natural Resource Center was established in 1994 in partnership with UW. The original vision of OESF was centered on forest health. OESF is 270,000 acres of DNR-managed forestland on the west end of the Olympic Peninsula. Teddy shares that her program is based in Olympia and involved in research and monitoring of OESF. The mission of the OESF Research and Monitoring Program is to learn how to integrate revenue production and ecological values across the landscape, and deliver the knowledge to DNR managers for continuous improvement of land management practices. The goal of OESF has evolved to include social aspects. Activities linked to the Program include Research and Monitoring Projects, Adaptive Management Process, Information Management, Outreach and Communication, Research Partnerships, and Education.

Teddy shares that DNR is not a research organization, so Research Partnerships were created, and the Education includes graduate student level research as well as K-12 education. Monitoring Projects include evaluating the habitat and species responses to the HCP conservation strategies, with a focus on the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and salmonids.

Teddy explains that the Adaptive Management process in OESF is used to manage natural resources

when knowledge is incomplete about ecosystem functions or how management affects those functions. Research Partnerships in OESF are experimenting with innovative silviculture, developing new tools for natural resource management and monitoring, and increasing ecological knowledge on ecosystem and management effects. Outreach and Communication about OESF includes an Annual Science Conference, a Biannual Newsletter, and Scientific Publications. Education linked to OESF includes Internships and Capstone studies, Advising Students, Lectures and Field Tours. Funding for OESF Research and Monitoring is through DNR management fees, research grants, in-kind contributions by research partners (equipment, etc.), and the Washington State Legislature.

Discussion

- Wendy Sammarco: Does including the entire west end of DNR-managed landscape in OESF work well?
Teddy: If you do not control the entire watershed and the ownership changes, that might be problematic.
- Laurie Benson: Will you share about social reasons and stakeholder consent?
Teddy: DNR needed to change because their management was not sustainable. Navigating a contentious time in the 1980s, with the remedy being “let’s stop and learn, which got less public push back?”
- Wendy Sammarco: How vulnerable is OESF to funding shortfalls?
Teddy: A combination of DNR management fees and state Legislature funds are the largest contributors, and no, the funding is not stable.
- Laurie Benson: What is the #1 challenge in managing the forest?
Teddy: Achieving coordination between DNR operations and OESF applied science. If there is no mandate for change, there is no motivation to change. The HCP does mandate change through adaptive management.
- Wendy Sammarco: Please share examples of positive outcomes.
Teddy: Riparian buffers indicate lower water temperatures; identifying low wood in streams and a lot of shade means leading to different ways of managing riparian growth to improve stream productivity and wood/stream habitat. Keeping buffers intact may not get us to where we need to be. DNR was unsure where to buffer riparian areas on streams to mitigate potential windthrow; working with UBC, a windthrow probability model was created to determine where more buffers are needed.

Discussion & Possible Actions Items Inspired by Today’s Presentations

- Richard Martin: Impressed with Teddy’s presentation, amazing work on OESF. The demonstration forest will not be a research forest. What are the sideboards for the KC Demonstration Forest?
- Chris Raynham: Vision for landowners to visit and see treatments that meet different objectives.
- Tom Amorose: Agrees with Chris.
- Steve Horton: Also agrees; however, if Green River College wants to do research, it’d be a bonus.
- Jon Matson: Also agrees; objectives should be to build more social license and benefit landowners.
- Richard Martin: Worked for The Nature Conservancy and used heavy restoration techniques. Took high level donors to what would be perceived as a clear cut; a Demonstration Forest would allow people to see what an area would look like if a particular implementation was initiated.
- Laurie Benson: Is there an audience besides the public and forest landowners?
- Mari Knutson: We should consider the voting public for education and social license.
- Tom Amorose: Servicing both forest landowners and the public at large, particularly a public that is not informed about sustainable forest practices.
- Steve Horton: Get young kids out to the forest to expand their knowledge.

- Mari Knutson: Forest preschools are great for both kids and families.
- Laurie Benson: Richard, what do you see the role of the RFC in the Demonstration Forest idea?
Richard: Share with KC what intended outcomes should be, and KC will develop a proposal and provide RFC for review and edits.

Agency Updates

- **Snoqualmie Tribe, Cindy Spiry:** Annual Earth Day event in partnership with Mt. Si Green Team on restoration site next to high school at Kimball Slough. Continue to collect baseline data in STAF, collecting wildlife data, which is particularly interesting. Because of the forest size (12K+ acres), baseline data is a big project, working towards sustainable practices. New Snoqualmie Tribe Wildland Fire Manager Karen Zirkle will work with the Tribe to develop wildland fire approach.
- **KCD, Ellen Arnstein:** Demand for rural forest technical assistance is steady, with 20 landowners seeking assistance. A wildfire awareness event is planned for June 7 in Wilderness Rim (North Bend). Internal audit is underway on past actions on landowner properties.
- **SPU, Chris Raynham:** A job posting for a forest ecologist is being advertised, open until June.
- **King County DNRP, Richard Martin:** King County installed multiple Climate Adapted Planting Trials in 2025. King County's forest carbon credits are all sold, with a third round of carbon credits now being processed and for sale soon. The carbon program may be changing at the federal level; however, King County is looking to ramp up its carbon program.

Adjourn

A motion is made to adjourn the meeting, Steve Horton makes the motion, Cindy Spiry seconds the motion. The motion is passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 12:00 pm.