

Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood 2.0 Implementation Oversight Committee MEETING NOTES

Friday, December 15, 2023 – 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Duvall Visitor & Community Center – 15619 Main St. NE, Duvall, WA 98019

Committee Members Present (Y/N) * = caucus co-chair					
Fish Caucus		Farm Caucus		Flood Caucus	
Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe* <i>(proxy: Matt Baerwalde - Y)</i>	Y	Bobbi Lindemulder, farmer*	N	Angela Donaldson, Fall City Resident*	Y
Denise Krownbell, Snohomish Forum	Y	Lauren Silver-Turner, Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance	Y	Lara Thomas, City of Duvall	Y
Micah Wait, Wild Fish Conservancy	Y	Meredith Molli, Agriculture Commission	Y		
Daryl Williams, Tulalip Tribes <i>(proxy: Kurt Nelson - N)</i>	Y	Dave Glenn, Sno Valley Tilth	Y		
Rick Shaffer, Snoqualmie Forum	Y				
Ex Officio Members Present (Y/N)					
Gary Bahr, WSDA	N	Tom Buroker, WDOE <i>(proxy: Joe Burcar - N)</i>	N	Matt Mega, King Conservation District	Y
Josh Baldi, KC DNRP	Y	Kirk Lakey, WDFW	N		

I) Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

FFF Management Sponsor Joan Lee of King County DNRP began the meeting at 9:12 am and led introductions of all present. King Conservation District’s (KCD) IOC seat, now held by Matt Mega, is shifting to Ex Officio status to allow for a voting farm caucus member from the Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District (WID).

II) Agriculture Strategic Plan [ASP] Priorities and Recommendations (Patrice Barrentine)

Patrice Barrentine, ASP task force coordinator, reviewed the task force and its work. After the presentation, several questions and comments were received from those present. Barrentine noted the ASP holds several recommendations for the County to implement, requiring funding and “green lights.” She also noted that extensive GIS work was done to match the ASP data analyses scale with the scale used by the Buffer Implementation Task Force (BITF) for riparian areas. This data alignment allowed for distinguishing farmable and unfarmable lands from a one-acre scale to 200 feet or less to present the IOC with consistent scale data for acreage. Within the plan, “unfarmable” includes many categories such as waterways, existing buffers, rights-of-way, steep sloped ditches, and forests.

In response to a question about the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) 5% cap for non-tillable lands, Barrentine said the County’s FPP legal analysis is slated for completion by the end of 2025. A question was asked how much land should be permanently preserved; Barrentine replied that the plan recommends to permanently preserve 7,696 farmable acres by expanding the APD and through FPP easements. In addition, the ASP accepts the conversion of 1,250 acres (950 acres from the BITF and 300 acres from King County capital projects) of farmable land to riparian habitat over the next 25 to 50 years, as long as this is balanced with the “Acreage” issue paper recommendations 1 through 5 outlined in the plan. FPP will be leaned on for this. With respect to preservation of adequate farmable land into the future, Barrentine said new FPP deeds need to include chartered riparian habitat before finalizing. The plan also notes the need for irrigation if food production is to continue in dry conditions projected for the future. Analysis of needs was based on a 25- to 50-year period and a wide variety of crops from high value crops to grass.

Matt Baerwalde voiced a concern that including dam projects in the ASP is opposed by the Snoqualmie Tribe, and an FFF or County stamp on the ASP would be counter to this position. County representatives replied that the ASP includes water storage, not dams¹; does not have FFF approval; is not an adopted FFF product; and dialogs on it will continue. It was recognized that the ASP’s completion is a milestone for FFF in clarifying long term agricultural interests - the reason for FFF identifying the need for such a plan was the absence of such substantive work to inform the development of FFF 1.0 priorities. “Section IX - Around the Table” of these meeting notes includes additional discussion on the ASP and how it fits with FFF.

¹ There are no “dam projects” within the ASP, but it does recommend pursuing water storage solutions to lessen flooding impacts and provide more water for low flow solutions for both irrigation and fish. This includes a series of studies and captures FFF 1.0 language.

III) Buffer Implementation Task Force [BITF] and Recommendations (Melissa Borsting)

BITF coordinator Melissa Borsting explained FFF’s first buffer task force finished in 2019, with a determination of need for another task force for further guidance pieces. The first task force came to six recommendations under a coordinating entity. The current BITF’s goal is how to accelerate voluntary buffer plantings in the Snoqualmie APD.

Meeting facilitator Nathan Brown implemented a “fishbowl” discussion format between Borsting and other BITF members, prompted by written questions from the audience, fielded to them by Brown.

• **Q: What are task force members excited about?**

A: Our work had hard dialog on what buffer widths would be. Doing it well became a bigger part than expected.

A: We’d agreed what we thought maximum buffer widths should be in agricultural lands. We soon realized we needed more flexibility in some areas to make up for others where buffer goals aren’t being met. We wanted to incentivize buffer planting for landowners, but some won’t do it, and other areas can’t be planted at all.

A: We learned from a Skagit watershed study about landowner challenges and motivations in planting riparian buffers. We needed our own data addressing the Snoqualmie watershed’s unique features, including APD and FPP land protections. Representatives of several Snoqualmie Valley entities are speaking with landowners on what can help them accelerate buffer plantings. We expect more information in the coming year.

• **Q: Are there any other recommendations that excite you?**

A: There was frustration from funding restrictions. Many tasks work better on a two-year cycle, but funding often mandates finishing work in a year. Some sources allow five years of buffer maintenance, but it should be 15 years or more. Funders are starting to learn this.

A: New riparian funding is coming through the state conservation commission. There’s still a need to cover thinning costs at the 15- to 20-year marks. Tree growth becomes denser and encourages disease spread.

A: It’s an iterative process. Many folks are involved. It’s process-based restoration, and many systems are broken. Many voices say we need stewardship and maintenance funding, and it’s important to convey this.

A: One piece the task force put in its report openly calls for the IOC to track progress toward goals and establish a coordinating entity. The Snoqualmie Forum and the County have applied for a grant to fund this entity.

• **Q: Are there other elements of the report the IOC should be aware of?**

A: We had a “planting workgroup” committee, when we saw we needed more input from planting practitioners.

A: The first idea was to recommend a few prescriptions. This became a group that regularly meets to exchange ideas and ensure people time plantings properly. Practitioners are committed to doing this work for years to come.

A: We appreciated their emphasis on landowner relationships.

A: We discussed funding for types of landowner compensation, particularly an idea of paying the land value up front and not piecemeal. The cost is less than you might expect, similar to FPP.

• **Q: Can you agree on the List of 42 action items? Is there anything to add?**

A: We need to track progress towards establishing the coordinating entity, and how to track when there’s a planting happening.

A: The entity needs to establish itself, be successful and sustainable, and do its intended ecological functions.

A: Long term funding is needed to maintain it.

• **Q: Are landowners willing to enter an easement to participate in planting? How do we effectuate that?**

A: Our social marketing study is determining how to remove barriers to put these buffer plantings in a positive light.

• **Q: What dollars are allocated to BITF work?**

A: An application to NOAA’s Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant Program has requested money towards KCD as coordinating entity. King County has also submitted a grant application to Floodplains by Design which includes funding for the coordinating entity.

A: There are several sources. Depending on what a landowner wants, we’ll try to find the grant that fits them.

• **Q: What or who is the coordinating entity, and what’s their job? What would they do?**

A: If there is funding, KCD is interested in serving in the coordinating entity role. More funding would allow KCD a dedicated staff person for it. The job would be to implement the task force report. This includes translating findings from the social marketing into on the ground efforts, digging into incentives, working with funders, and improving maintenance. The idea hinges on someone to implement all of this.

It was asked if there could be more discussion of the Snoqualmie Tribe’s voiced concern, during the Agriculture Strategic Plan presentation, on dams and irrigation. It was agreed this should be discussed, but not in this format.

IV) FFF List of 42 – First Cut of Priorities for Next Three Years (Nathan Brown)

Nathan Brown asked attendees to split into groups of three, who were given five minutes to answer two questions:

1) Is there any status on the List of 42 that you disagree with?

2) Do you have additions to the list to consider, from what you’ve heard this morning or caucus discussions?

After the five minutes, Brown asked for reports from each group:

- Group 1:** Action 16 and 17 / Farm Action 1 and 2 – we believe these aren't started. We believe Action 40 / Fish 3 hasn't started but is linked with Farm 1 / Action 3, which doesn't seem to be on this list. The WID has already worked on this. If Farm 1 / Action 3 is added, you can say this is started and partly completed.
- Group 2:** Action 14 - we take issue with the label of "ongoing," vs. if there's been actual progress. We need a biologist to work with ADAP, which has been a recurring issue. Attempts have been made to fill the job, but if no one's in it, this is "not started." Action 13, we'd call "ongoing" or "underway," not "completed."
- Group 3:** Action 41, accelerating home elevations, we don't fully understand and aren't sure on status without more facts. We must ensure elevations are focused with set criteria or served on a random or first-come basis.
- Group 4:** Action 13, regarding completion of two to three projects, is this "ongoing, progress made?"
- Group 5:** Actions 13 and 39 should be "ongoing" or "not done." It's disingenuous to label the fish biologist item as "not started." Action 31 on farm worker housing, much more can and should be done here.
- Group 6:** Reiterate Action 40, for low flow assessments and associated agriculture work.
- Group 7:** Action 14, the fish biologist, has been addressed. For Action 40's "not started" status, can King County commit to start work in the next year? For Action 8 on improving drainage opportunities, is this done? For Actions 24, 35, and 36, on bank stabilization, there's a question of inconsistency with salmon recovery goals on the list; we need a fish caucus recommendation that these will be looked at in the multi-benefit spirit of FFF, and not just about fixing levees or revetments. For Action 27, should the Lower Frew project be listed as it's outside the APD? More emphasis is desired for Raging and Tolt River projects. For the BITF, we want more planting goal recommendations on pages 3 - 4, and resolutions to FPP policies. For Action 30 on placing fill and flood storage capacity, the flood caucus feels this isn't part of the Best Available Science (BAS). We like projects that add benefits. There should be a dive into the language of the recommendation on benefits to farm worker housing with affordable housing community, and farm language.

V) Follow-Up Discussion: Snoqualmie Tribe ASP Concerns (Matt Baerwalde)

There was a request for Matt Baerwalde to finish articulating the Snoqualmie Tribe's concerns about the Agriculture Strategic Plan (ASP) and how it intends to address irrigation. Facilitator Nathan Brown invited more comment from Baerwalde.

Baerwalde said an item in the ASP is that agriculture needs a plan to match the salmon recovery plan. He said the agriculture community was included in developing the salmon plan, as two King County agriculture representatives served on that committee. Therefore, he went on, the salmon plan is legitimate and has the stamp of all involved. He voiced concern the ASP is moving forward with everyone's approval. He said he had spoken with the ASP task force, so they are aware dams and reservoirs aren't something the Snoqualmie Tribe can support.

Baerwalde asked that the Tribe's position be included, restating they don't support dams and other methods should be found. He said it should be asked if irrigating all farmable land in the Valley is realistic. He added that including the Tribe on any ASP approval would be disingenuous, and they should be treated as they've been asked to do for others. He noted that there can easily be a misperception that because the idea for the plan was promoted by FFF, the plan itself will be perceived as a County document with County support for elements in the ASP.

Brown said it's important to recognize these concerns, and they should be addressed. He advised there may not be time for it today, but future IOC agendas need space to acknowledge these concerns and move toward a solution.

VI) King County Comprehensive "Comp" Plan Update on Best Available Science [BAS] (Michael Murphy)

Michael Murphy heads WLRD's Open Space Acquisitions unit and serves as DNRP liaison with the King County Executive's office on the current Comp Plan update. He presented on the update's status and reviewed some of its proposed changes, including from the recent BAS review. In the presentation, Murphy noted a few key steps in the update timeline:

- The Executive's office sent their proposed changes to KCC on November 7. Further changes go through KCC.
- BAS recommendations will be transmitted to KCC in early March 2024. These are on a different timeline from the rest of the Comp Plan, as they work to balance regulatory and non-regulatory measures.

Following the presentation, some questions and discussion came from the IOC where Murphy clarified that the County's Critical Area has been adopted by the City of Sammamish. He also clarified that proposed changes were made by Chris Jensen to continue to tighten up the plan policies, improve consistency, and remove redundancies where policies already had been codified. From that vantage, the changes do not affect implementation. When some concern about what would trigger the County code was raised, particularly with respect to acquisition, Murphy noted that the Multi-Disciplinary Review Process is intended to be used as early as possible in the acquisition and grant pursuit process option. Doing so early in the process allows for site possibilities to be openly discussed and agreed upon earlier, which should in turn create clarity for grant proposals, and save time/funds in feasibility analysis and design

phases of the work. More work is needed to ensure the process occurs at the right time with the right people in the room. There was also concern expressed about the changes to the consensus language. The IOC was reminded that they are an advisory board to the County, and as such can make comments to the King County Council (KCC).

Murphy finished with a reminder that the update is now solely in KCC's hands. He assured the IOC that the County wants them involved in these discussions. He agreed to send out a document cross-referencing proposed changes to the Comp Plan and added that more information is forthcoming.²

VII) King County Executive's Response to March 23, 2023 IOC Letter (Josh Baldi)

WLRD Director Josh Baldi noted that the Executive had responded to the March 23, 2023 recommendations that were attached to today's meeting announcement. In particular, there is ongoing support for FFF, but challenges remain for programs funded by the General Fund, which historically has been the primary funding source for agricultural program staff³.

VIII) Outgoing DNR Director Christie True

DNR Director Christie True, who retires in January after 39 years of King County service, reflected on FFF's 10-year anniversary. She thanked those present who have participated since its beginning. True said FFF became a place to wrestle with competing interests and opportunities to problem-solve. She continued that many have noticed FFF's accomplishments, which likely contributes to its success in grant funding.

True said that, in hindsight, it was known the FFF table wasn't balanced at first, that farm interests hadn't been as considered as others, and there was effort to maintain balance. She had insisted farming interests be sustained. True continued there is still much work ahead for FFF, that they'll continue to be at the discussion table to be involved and implement goals. She noted while the future is bright, challenges remain: regulatory barriers, climate change impacts, and others. She concluded that this group is a great table and hopes their efforts will continue.

IOC members voiced gratitude to True, that County support has been key to FFF's accomplishments and allowed it to gain ground as other counties fall behind. Fish caucus co-chair Cindy Spiry presented to True, on behalf of the co-chairs, a wreath from a local farm. Spiry and flood caucus co-chair Angela Donaldson thanked True for normalizing the concept and discussion of multi-benefit work and offered congratulations on her retirement.

IX) Around the Table (Joan Lee, Nathan Brown)

Joan Lee offered acknowledgment that today's meeting was occurring in the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people and expressed gratitude for their stewardship of the land.

The IOC agreed to amend today's agenda to add discussion of the Snoqualmie Tribe's concerns about the Agriculture Strategic Plan (ASP).

Patrice Barrentine recapped the ASP's history. It comes from the List of 42 actions agreed upon in FFF 1.0, to give farm interests an organized plan on par with those of fish and flood. Barrentine noted while the ASP is unique in that members of non-agricultural natural resource interests weren't included in its development, feedback on a public draft was incorporated from the Snoqualmie Tribe, FFF fish caucus, and others. Barrentine said the ASP isn't meant to be adopted by the IOC; the IOC only signs off that the task force work is done. The hope is for the plan to be adopted by task force entities, with its strategies used as needed for a specific effort. Joan Lee added that if the IOC signs off on the ASP's completion, they can dive into it and have single-purpose conversations as needed. Signing off can be done via a letter to the Executive, with the IOC recommending adopting part, all, or none of the ASP.

Josh Baldi clarified that the need for an agriculture plan is different than the plan needing a consensus. He supported the "a la carte" concept, and adding qualifiers and general statements to guard against the ASP being used to advance causes other caucuses oppose. Barrentine said the ASP isn't a King County document and has flexibility in its potential implementation, so it may not matter how it comes to the Executive. Angela Donaldson advised the ASP work should be celebrated, as the IOC was never intended to own FFF work but be its catalyst. The ASP is a tool kit, not a tool; used not to guide strategy, but vice versa.

Baerwalde thanked the IOC for the discussion, saying much is still needed but this is a good start. Lee affirmed the ASP will be communicated to the Executive as "done," with the BITF work and List of 42 recommendations.

² After today's meeting, King County Councilmember Sarah Perry's office drafted revised Comp Plan language and solicited input from FFF. Lauren Silver-Turner has created a document comparing the proposed changes. The caucus co-chairs replied with a letter supporting Councilmember Perry's proposed changes.

³ Since today's meeting, WLRD's Agriculture, Forestry, and Incentives Unit, led by Richard Martin, has had strong success pursuing and being awarded grants that will sustain agricultural efforts in the near term.

X) Prioritization Exercise – Second Cut of List of 42 Priorities (Nathan Brown)

Nathan Brown outlined an exercise for the IOC to prioritize items on the List of 42. Some members thought adding items may harm existing items; others believed flexibility is needed to not get stuck in an old framework. Some agreed more discussion and progress is needed for current items. The fish caucus affirmed desire for flexibility to add to the list; co-chair Cindy Spiry noted there are task force recommendations not on the original list that should be now. Brown said the exercise goal is progress towards prioritization, not a final list. Josh Baldi said the IOC should decide what priorities the Executive should focus on, which are most important to the IOC and how to support them.

XI) Prioritization Exercise: Priorities Consensus (Nathan Brown)

Each IOC member scored cards labeled with items from the List of 42, ranking them on a wall by total scores. Pictures were taken to document the results. The IOC discussed these results and gave feedback on the exercise. In general, feedback was that while some considered the exercise unscientific and random, others found it effective.

XII) Wrap Up (Nathan Brown, Joan Lee)

Nathan Brown asked the IOC what from today will feed into their next meeting. Takeaways included:

- Consensus is needed on whether to add to the current List of 42, or create a separate list for new items.
- Clarify List of 42 so language is understood by all, using original template/language and not a spreadsheet.
- Summary of progress to-date, particularly for unfinished items.
- Come to agreement on priorities, particularly Farm 1 and Fish 3.
- Determine a method for the IOC to adopt BITF recommendations.
- Have clarifying conversations on high priorities.
- Create work groups for priority tasks and funding.
- How to speed up work on priority issues.
- Acreage tracking.
- Create webpage or email resource to simplify finding key FFF documents.
- Hold a virtual “orientation” for those unfamiliar with the original FFF documents.

IOC members agreed their next meeting should be in person. Lee suggested another meeting, perhaps virtual, to address List of 42 priorities and Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) in the Valley. Angela Donaldson said while CIP review is important, the transmittals to the Executive are more urgent. It was proposed to move the CIP topic to the spring if there are no urgent issues around those projects.

XIII) Adjourn (Joan Lee)

The meeting ended at 3:00 pm.