



Accelerating Streamside Vegetation Plantings in the Snoqualmie Valley Agriculture Production District

Final Report of the FFF Buffer Implementation Task Force



Acknowledgements

A large thank you goes to the Buffer Implementation Task Force (Task Force) members for their time commitment, thoughtful discussion, and creative problem solving, which resulted in six high level recommendations to accelerate improvements to salmon habitat while respecting the interests and needs of agricultural land managers.

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Project Background

In late 2013, King County Executive Dow Constantine assembled representatives from the Snoqualmie Valley to explore the issues that were creating obstacles and conflict around salmon recovery, flood protection, and productive agriculture in the Snoqualmie Valley Agriculture Production District (SVAPD). The committee was established to advise King County on how best to advance all three interests in the SVAPD. Representatives included a cross-section of agricultural, salmon recovery, and flood risk reduction as well as tribal, state, and local jurisdictions. In 2017, after a collaborative 3-year process, the Fish, Farm, Flood Advisory Committee (FFF 1.0) unanimously agreed to a set of more than 30 recommendations that, if implemented, would significantly improve ecological function and habitat quality, while at the same time strengthening the agricultural economy and reducing flood risk. In 2018, FFF 1.0 moved forward into the implementation phase and became FFF 2.0 with an Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC), which was tasked with guiding and overseeing the implementation of the FFF 1.0 suite of actions.

“I gave the Fish, Farm and Flood Advisory Committee a difficult assignment: Overcome competing interests to achieve shared goals – and they delivered.” – Executive Dow Constantine in 2017

In April of 2018, as a priority recommendation from those representing the Fish interests in FFF 1.0, the County convened the Buffer Task Force (BTF) under the auspices of the FFF IOC. The BTF had the specific goal of generating recommendations for variable width riparian buffers for voluntary restoration on private land in the SVAPD. The intent was to identify riparian buffer widths that provide scientifically supported ecological lift for salmon, while minimizing the impact to agriculture in the context of voluntary restoration on private lands. The effort was focused specifically on voluntary riparian plantings, not intended to negate or dismiss existing regulation or best available science, and not intended for use in future regulations. It was agreed that establishing variable width buffer recommendations with on-the-ground flexibility would encourage more farmers, landowners, and agriculture advocates to actively support voluntary habitat restoration streamside vegetation plantings.

The BTF used a science-based decision model to develop maximum recommended riparian buffer widths based on watercourse types and landscape characteristics, with adjustments to allow flexibility that would minimize impacts to farmable land and agricultural viability. The outcome of this work was mutually agreed-upon variable-width riparian buffers recommendations for all watercourses in the SVAPD.

The final report of the BTF (available [here](#)) was presented to the FFF IOC in late 2019. The IOC transmitted their acknowledgement of the completion of the work and recommended next steps to the King County Executive in early 2020. The IOC and Executive Constantine both recommended that King County and FFF partners use the BTF decision model to apply variable buffer widths when working with private landowners to implement voluntary planting agreements. Snoqualmie Watershed Forum has been using the variable-width recommendations as guidance (not a requirement) for funding of riparian planting funded by the Snoqualmie Cooperative Watershed Management Grant. Two additional related FFF deliverables are FFF 1.0 Recommendation Farm 4, Action 1 (yet to be completed) and the Agricultural Strategic Plan (nearing completion). The FFF IOC should convene conversations coordinating the three deliverables after the completion of the Task Force.

Based on the recommendations of the Buffer Task Force, the FFF IOC recognized the need for a Buffer Implementation Task Force (Task Force) to determine minimum planting widths, identify incentives, and define strategic planting goals. The Buffer Implementation Task Force was formed in January 2023 to identify how to accelerate the rate of restoration planting in the SVAPD while accounting for inevitable impacts to agricultural lands and ensuring public dollars are invested in streamside vegetation that provide meaningful ecological benefits.

Process

The Buffer Implementation Task Force met eight times from January through June 2023 to develop recommendations, with additional meetings in September and October 2023 to finalize the report summarizing their work. For some topics, Task Force members additionally met between the large group meetings to have focused conversations. The Task Force was composed of six voting members and subject matter experts who received meeting materials, updates, and attended meetings when the agenda was relevant to their work. Task Force members represented the Tulalip Tribes, the Snoqualmie Tribe, the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum, the Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance, and individual farming and private landowner perspectives. Over the course of the six months, the group laid out a detailed understanding of the barriers to accelerated streamside vegetation plantings and specific ideas around addressing those barriers.

Task Force members represented the Tulalip Tribes, the Snoqualmie Tribe, the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum, the Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance, and individual farming and private landowner perspectives.

In addition, the Task Force formed a Planting Guidance Working Group. This group met three times and discussed many of the barriers to restoration plantings initially identified by the Task Force. With this additional time to discuss specific barriers, the Working Group was able to refine some issues, articulate additional barriers, and begin to identify possible solutions. They also identified learning and research opportunities. The Working Group engaged six planting practitioners whose expertise involved the planning, establishment, and maintenance of streamside vegetation. Additional Working Group members represented UW School of Environmental and Forest Sciences research interests and agricultural interests. Two of the Working Group members were also on the Task Force. The findings of this Working Group are incorporated into this document and their full summary is included as **Appendix A**.

The Task Force discussions were informed by a Skagit Conservation District (SCD) report that became available midway through our process. The SCD Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) report helped guide our thinking about the need for more cohesive messaging directed towards the farming community, along with the breadth of perspectives on what landowner riparian planting incentives may be useful and successful.

Planting Goals and How to Accomplish Them

Acknowledging that the rapid establishment and enhancement of streamside vegetation is a critical element for the health, functions, and conditions of aquatic areas, which help improve the outlook for Pacific Northwest salmon and other species, the Task Force established goals for streamside vegetation plantings in the SVAPD.

The Task Force goal is to have 2,692 acres with streamside vegetation by 2033 with the intermediate goal of having 50% of those acres (1,346) with streamside vegetation by 2028.

These are ambitious goals that will not be met by the current rate of planting. The Task Force identified some systems, structures, and incentives that need to be created, improved, or changed to meet the goals. Success in achieving the goals is very much dependent on successfully implementing each recommendation and how much the recommendations are used and adopted by partners. In addition, success relies on landowner willingness and a commitment to retaining/enhancing economic viability of affected farms. Other strategies may also be needed to reach the goals. The findings are captured in the following six recommendations. The details of each recommendation are summarized in this report.

Recommendation 1

- Formalize a system among planting partners and funding sources to improve coordination around outreach, project implementation and maintenance, and tracking.

Recommendation 2

- Conduct Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) research to develop a streamside vegetation outreach plan and tools to encourage participation by landowners in the SVAPD.

Recommendation 3

- Use the variable widths established by the BTF (2019) as planting target widths while allowing for flexibility to achieve planting goals.

Recommendation 4

- Adapt, expand, and create financial incentive programs to address gaps identified by the Task Force as well as those identified by future CBSM research.

Recommendation 5

- Build efficiency and increase funding for streamside vegetation maintenance.

Recommendation 6

- Integrate riparian planting with other programs to achieve multi-objective approaches and leverage funding.

Associated with each recommendation is a set of Tactics and Near-Term Actions. These are the beginnings of a roadmap for accelerating riparian restoration planting in the SVAPD. Recommendation 1 serves as an umbrella for the remaining five recommendations and establishes an approach to coordinating and delivering on the proposed actions for all the recommendations.



Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Formalize a system among planting partners and funding sources to improve coordination around outreach, project implementation and maintenance, and tracking.

During Task Force discussions, it became clear that habitat restoration practitioners were running into common challenges or barriers. One way to address many of these challenges would be to improve coordination among the groups working on riparian restoration. We will use the term “Coordinating Entity” for the purposes of this discussion, acknowledging that the exact structure is yet to be determined. Options include identifying an existing organization or entity to take on the role of leading SVAPD buffer planting coordination and communication, creating a new entity to take on this role, or empowering a new or existing steering team to coordinate these efforts.

Initial steps are bringing interested parties together to determine appropriate structure and securing funding to expand coordination in taking action around buffer planting efforts. Roles identified for a Coordinating Entity include:

Be a Unifying Voice to Support Accelerated Riparian Buffer Planting in the SVAPD

- ▶ Farmers on the Task Force articulated that having a single source to provide landowners with information about all planting programs would increase their trust with the process—providing confidence that each landowner or farmer is connecting to the planting program that is the best fit their farming situation. The Coordinating Entity could serve as a guide for landowners ensuring they are matched to the best suite of programs to meet their needs.
- ▶ In addition to serving as an information clearinghouse about all available planting programs, a Coordinating Entity would be a resource for information about the suite of King County programs related to land management. Recommendation 6 explores this idea in more detail.
- ▶ The need for long-term buffer maintenance was emphasized by all Task Force members. Improved coordination would provide an opportunity to share experiences and ideas to facilitate continuous improvement in buffer establishment and maintenance. Recommendation 5 centers on this critical component.
- ▶ There are current efforts statewide to provide shared messaging, media, and outreach for riparian planting. A Coordinating Entity could be the point of contact with these statewide efforts, lowering the burden on each individual planting partner to participate.

UNIFIED VOICE

- ▶ Planting partners said that their time is focused on implementing effective and efficient plantings and associated maintenance, so staff time to reach out to new landowners at the scale necessary to achieve the goals is limited. A Coordinating Entity could be the lead on creating and overseeing implementation of an Outreach and Engagement plan that works to ensure all landowners know about the opportunities provided by each of the planting incentive programs.

Respond to Funding Opportunities

- ▶ A Coordinating Entity could lead efforts to increase funding necessary for building operational capacity among all planting partners to match the level of resources needed to achieve the goals. This would include building partnerships among practitioners, writing and submitting applications, managing grants, and funding for Coordinating Entity staffing, as well as planning, incentives, maintenance, tracking, and evaluation (see Recommendations 2, 4, and 5).
- ▶ Coordinate with planting, Tribal, and community partners as well as across King County on broader funding requests where riparian activities could be included. Some specific suggestions from the Task Force centered around accessing federal infrastructure funds. Some of the ideas are detailed in Recommendation 4.

Implement a Tracking System

- ▶ Measuring progress towards goals will require creation of a system to track buffer plantings, regardless of funding source or project sponsor. However, there is not yet a system that includes all buffer plantings in the SVAPD regardless of funding source or project lead. Because riparian buffer planting data span multiple partners and funding sources, we need to develop a user-friendly data management system that encourages regular reporting and makes it easy for collaborators to access and analyze data. A Coordinating Entity could lead data collection and management for the SVAPD.
- ▶ The development of a tracking system should coordinate with the FFF Recommendation Farm 4, Action 1 and the Snoqualmie Valley Agricultural Strategic Plan to take into account related objectives of providing an accounting of acres of farmland that are being planted for riparian habitat and the timelines for achieving goals of both this Task Force and the Agricultural Strategic Plan.
- ▶ In addition to capturing the number of acres planted (a critical initial step), the Task Force recommends a tracking system include effectiveness of buffer plantings by collecting data around buffer conditions and related riparian and aquatic areas functions over many years as riparian plantings mature. Planning for data collection should include a commitment to communicate regular updates to landowners.

Convene Partners and Stakeholders on Shared Challenges and Operational Improvements.

The following initial ideas need additional discussion by planting partners

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

TRACKING SYSTEM

CONVENE PARTNERS

- ▶ Coordinate on shared challenges like:
 - Planting stock availability: this group would be a forum to provide timely and accurate forecasts of demand for planting stock so sources can produce adequate supplies. There may be opportunities to better coordinate with SCC Riparian Plant Propagation Program and King County Parks Nursery, among others.
 - Crew availability: many ideas were suggested around planting partners realizing efficiencies by coordinating crews used for site prep, planting, and maintenance. Coordinating Entity can identify potential solutions, including opportunities to share crews as well as leveraging specialized paid crews for each piece of the work (site prep, planting, maintenance). Crew turnover was identified as an issue, and the need for experienced, reliable crews was discussed.
 - Resource needs: planting partners expressed need for tools, equipment, and storage and staging space. Initial opportunities to share these resources were identified and could be expanded on with further conversations.
- ▶ Ensure the streamside vegetation planting tracking system is populated with up-to-date information.
- ▶ Where practical, develop and maintain shared standards, best management practices, and lessons learned.
- ▶ Create a space for funding programs and planting partners to share and learn from each other. Format could include quarterly meetings but specifics to be determined. Topics could include:
 - Advocating for changes to Incentive Programs (see Recommendation 4).
 - Advocating for expansion of streamside vegetation maintenance funding opportunities (see Recommendation 5).
 - Other Planting Working Group recommendations including planting and maintenance BMPs.
- ▶ The Planting Working Group discussed research at greater length and identified a gap in scientific literature investigating topics such as site preparation, maintenance, and planned plant succession. There is an opportunity to plan restoration projects in a context that allows for collecting data across sites and treatment types. Coordinated collaboration between practitioners and researchers will foster continuous improvement in best practices and provide the basis for successful monitoring and research.

Tactics and Near-Term Actions

- Convene interested parties/planting partners to share these recommendations and determine appropriate Coordinating Entity structure by Q1 2024. [Snoqualmie Forum and relevant King County staff]
- King County allocates funding to jumpstart progress on forming a Coordinating Entity.

- Integrate progress on establishing a Coordinating Entity into deliverables IOC is tracking. IOC should request quarterly updates, with Task Force members included on updates.
- Establish a Coordinating Entity by December 2024.
- Outline possible funding strategies, lead proposal writing, and secure funding for a Coordinating Entity and partners to implement a shared strategy to move forward priority plan recommendations. [Snoqualmie Watershed Forum, Snoqualmie Basin Steward]
- Implement a Tracking System. Begin tracking progress toward streamside vegetation goals and Agriculture Strategic Plan acreage-related goals by December 2024.

Convene Partners and Stakeholders on Shared Challenges and Operational Improvements.

- Convene planting partners around shared challenges, implementation tracking, and BMPs by Q1 2024.
- Convene funding and planting partners around incentives, maintenance, and funding limitations by Q2 2024.
- Convene planting partners and entities interested in monitoring and research into effective streamside vegetation establishment and maintenance to determine next steps by Q2 2024.

Timeline of Actions at a Glance



Recommendation 2: Conduct Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) research to develop a streamside vegetation outreach plan and tools to encourage participation by landowners in the SVAPD.

The Task Force agriculture representatives and planting partners provided important insights into incentives—both financial and programmatic—that could encourage landowner participation in streamside vegetation planting programs.

A few key farmer and landowner perspectives:

- ▶ Coordinated outreach leads to trust around getting enrolled in the best/right program for each landowner.
- ▶ Long-term maintenance is important to address landowner interests including cost of maintaining the streamside vegetation over time, operational issues with existing farming practices, and ensuring effectiveness of the streamside vegetation in achieving habitat restoration goals.
- ▶ When landowners agree to take land out of agricultural production, they want to know the restoration planting project objectives are achieved.
- ▶ Farmers are thinking holistically about the landscape, often viewing decisions through both a business lens and as stewards of the land.
 - Taking into account things like aesthetics, contribution to parcel privacy, and harvestable plantings (e.g. berries, apples, or willows) may encourage landowner participation. In addition, landowners may be motivated when provided information about benefits beyond salmon habitat such as positive impacts to birds, amphibians, and pollinators.

A few key planting practitioner observations:

- ▶ Without coordination there is no assurance that all landowners have been contacted about riparian restoration opportunities.
- ▶ Planting practitioners individually use a variety of methods to reach out to landowners willing to have streamside vegetation on their land. The success of these outreach efforts is varied. Collaboration and creative exploration of new ideas and techniques and a deliberate focus on an outreach program would improve landowner engagement. A CBSM study would help refine effective tools for outreach to landowners around riparian planting efforts.

A recent report detailing findings from CBSM research in the Skagit Valley served as initial guidance to the planting conditions and type of incentives that the BITF considered. As the SVAPD size and type of farm use differs from the Skagit, the findings from an SVAPD-specific CBSM should be used to create an Outreach Plan. [“Targeted Riparian Buffer Incentives Pilot Project” Summary Report.](#)

Elements of the Outreach Plan should include:

- a. Shared approach for planting partners to engage all landowners. This includes timing, how the Coordinating Entity will engage, and recommended outreach tools.
- b. Communication tools to convey information to landowners could include:
 - i. Existing planting and incentive programs. Include what they fund (plantings, easements, etc.), how landowners engage (apply directly, work with a planting partner), and contact information.
 - ii. Other related efforts that play a part in addressing the complexities of land use.
 - Details on areas of focus from the Snohomish Basin Salmon Conservation Plan and the Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District’s list of priority basins.
 - That the Task Force Recommendations are part of FFF. Include history of FFF, agreements made to date, including findings of related Task Forces, to provide context and an understanding that the Task Force goals and strategies were

developed by incorporating both restoration and agricultural perspectives and work to balance competing demands on the landscape.

- Relevant elements of the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan, Clean Water Healthy Habitat, King County Comprehensive Plan, and other relevant policies and plans.

iii. Relevant Recommendations from this Task Force.

iv. Timing for outreach, engagement, grant applications for pilot projects

Tactics and Near-Term Actions

The Task Force recommends CBSM research effort and campaign specific to the SVAPD be conducted.

- A CBSM report for the SVAPD will be completed by December 2024.

Findings from the CBSM research will be formalized into an Outreach Plan.

- An Outreach Plan will be completed by December 2024.

Timeline of Actions at a Glance



Recommendation 3: Use the variable widths established by the BTF (2019) as planting target widths while allowing for flexibility to achieve the planting goals.

This document uses the variable widths negotiated by the Buffer Task Force (BTF) as width targets for riparian planting projects in the SVAPD. The Task Force set ambitious acreage goals and rate of streamside vegetation plantings that included flexibility as an acknowledgment of the realities of agricultural operations and land management, and that ultimate success depends upon voluntary landowner participation.

When conditions require planting narrower than the BTF variable widths, buffer width averaging, and off-site planting should be used to help ensure progress toward restoration goals.

The Task Force considered prioritizing based on landscape features and watercourse types, but ultimately acknowledged they did not want to prioritize because of the urgency of planting across the SVAPD. However, the discussion included the importance of areas such as:

- ▶ Areas where there is currently no streamside vegetation.
- ▶ Alluvial fan areas, especially on the Mainstem Snoqualmie River.
- ▶ Watercourse channels classified as “Large” by the BTF work.

Task Force Assumptions:

- ▶ If agricultural acres are added to the SVAPD, as proposed in the 2023 Snoqualmie Valley Agricultural Strategic Plan (Strategy 40, Issue Paper 2.4.17: Acreage Needs, Challenges, and Recommendations), the riparian planting goals should be reevaluated.
- ▶ The BTF variable width recommendations guide King County funded, voluntary plantings on privately owned properties in the SVAPD. Other planting partners (Tribes, NGOs, landowners, etc.) may choose to use the variable widths.
- ▶ All voluntary streamside vegetation plantings on private lands in the SVAPD count towards the goal, regardless of planting partner and funding source.
- ▶ It is understood that many funding sources have their own buffer width minimum, which will influence any deviation below the variable widths.
- ▶ The following types of projects are not meant to be limited by BTF variable widths: large capital project habitat restoration, mitigation, and streamside vegetation planted on public land, whether they were funded by King County or other funding sources.

Streamside Vegetation Goals and Incentives:

Based on the above considerations, the Task Force set ambitious goals to highlight the urgency of restoring salmon habitat and to encourage prompt action on recommendations.

The Task Force set a goal of implementing the BTF variable-width recommendations on all watercourses in the SVAPD within ten years. All acreage is calculated using the BTF Variable Widths applied to respective watercourses (see Appendix B).

Applying the BTF variable widths to all SVAPD watercourses covers 2,692 acres. The overall Task Force goal is to have 2,692 acres with streamside vegetation by 2033 with the intermediate goal of having 50% of those acres (1,346) with streamside vegetation by 2028.

Acres impacted by BTF variable-width recommendations by land cover type.

DEFINITION OF STREAMSIDE VEGETATION

For the purposes of this report, streamside vegetation is defined as an area of native trees and shrubs along the edges of watercourses including rivers, streams, artificial channels, and oxbows. In some cases, streamside vegetation may include non-native species, if the species provide similar or better function. Areas without trees and shrubs and/or dominated by invasive species are considered to not have streamside vegetation.

Agriculture Strategic Plan Category	Land Cover adjacent to watercourse	Acres within BTF variable-width recommendations*
Farmable	Currently farmed, fallow, and farm infrastructure	950
Unfarmable	Shrubs	537
	Developed	62
	Other (low-lying and wet areas adjacent to several watercourses)	323
	Trees (includes CREP)	820

* Acreage calculation includes public and private land.

<p align="center">Total Goal</p> <p align="center">100% Streamside Vegetation by 2033</p>	<p align="center">2,692</p>
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Minimum Streamside Vegetation Width and Considerations for Flexibility

The variable widths negotiated by BTF members were informed by best available science and modified based upon landscape position and waterway classification. The objective was to optimize riparian functions and farmland preservation objectives. The Task Force does not recommend creating a minimum streamside vegetation size as an alternative.

However, the Task Force recognized that in many cases landowner willingness and site-specific conditions will make it challenging to meet the streamside vegetation width targets. Rather than attempting to address each of the possible site-specific questions, the Task Force provided some overarching guidance that creates flexibility for the planting partners. Operating under the principle that streamside vegetation providing some level of function is usually better than nothing, the Task Force identified example conditions where a narrower planting width should be considered:

- ▶ Where easements or other legal restrictions limit the available streamside vegetation width.
- ▶ When planting below the BTF variable width recommendations provides an increased opportunity for streamside vegetation continuity, especially where no streamside vegetation exists.
- ▶ Where the presence of farm infrastructure exists within the target streamside vegetation width.
- ▶ Where planting recommended streamside vegetation width would result in clear economic hardship to the landowner.

To achieve the goal of 2,692 acres while providing flexibility in application on the landscape, the Task Force recommends using buffer averaging — planting narrower where there are constraints and wider in other areas to compensate. The Task Force recommends that, where possible, acres added for buffer averaging should fall into the categories labeled as Unfarmable by the Agricultural Strategic Plan (Table 1).

Progress towards the goal will be reviewed annually by FFF IOC and a summary provided to the Task Force. In three years (by fall of 2026) King County will evaluate progress towards the goals and work with the FFF IOC to determine if other strategies are needed to achieve the overall goal. The Task Force will be reconvened if the IOC determines that new strategies are needed to ensure progress towards the goal. Ongoing monitoring and assessment will happen every 3-4 years.

Institutional Considerations

Of the 2,692 acres to be planted across the SVAPD, 950 acres were classified as farmable (defined as currently farmed, currently fallow, and farm infrastructure) based on 2017 aerial photo imagery. King County Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) policies around non-tillable acres restrict achievement of the streamside vegetation planting goals in the SVAPD. Current interpretation of FPP deed language prohibits planting on approximately 330 of the 950 farmable acres. The County needs to find resolution to the policies by 2025 so that the planting goals can be achieved.

Tactics and Near-Term Actions

- ▶ The variable widths agreed to in BTF shall be the target widths for streamside vegetation. Flexibility should be based on overarching guidance provided by the Task Force (above).
- ▶ The Task Force set ambitious goals to highlight the urgency of restoring salmon habitat and to encourage prompt action on Task Force recommendations.
- ▶ Of the total 2,692 acres to be planted (calculated by using the BTF variable width recommendations for streamside vegetation), 50% (1346 acres) of those will be planted across the SVAPD by 2028.
- ▶ 100% (2,692 acres) of the acres corresponding to the BTF variable width recommendations for streamside vegetation will be planted by 2033.
- ▶ King County and the FFF IOC will evaluate progress towards the acreage goal and, if additional strategies are needed to increase rate of planting, reconvene the Task Force. This evaluation will happen every 3 years; the first evaluation will be conducted by fall of 2026.
- ▶ Engage all planting partners in understanding the target widths and flexibility considerations by Q2 of 2024.
 - King County will have internal clarity on FPP policies by 2025.
- ▶ Resolve interpretation of the definition of non-tillable under FPP easements and ensure there is enough land that isn't encumbered by FPP easements to achieve planting goals, including BTF variable width recommendations.

Timeline of Actions at a Glance



Recommendation 4: Adapt, expand, and create financial incentive programs to address limitations identified by the Task Force as well as those identified by future CBSM research.

Incentivizing landowners to plant streamside vegetation is an important element of accelerating the rate of restoration. Planting practitioners, based on outreach conversations with landowners, have found that inadequate incentives are often a limiting factor in gaining landowner participation in restoration planting programs. Task Force members explored ideas around increasing payments, changing payment schedules, and utilizing community networks. The Task Force provides an initial list of ideas and recommends incorporating the results of the SVAPD-specific CBSM research to expand on, refine, and prioritize these initial ideas.

Incentive Ideas:

The Task Force described incentive ideas that would encourage landowner participation while also promoting streamside vegetation plantings that both achieve the Task Force streamside vegetation width targets and improve continuity of streamside vegetation along key watercourse types.

- ▶ **Increase Payment Rates.**
 - Some landowners are already participating in time-limited streamside vegetation programs such as CREP with a 15-year limit on payments. The Task Force recommends adding additional years to the payments to sustain existing streamside vegetation planted under CREP-type programs or offer higher rental rates (e.g., base payment on something greater than just crop profits).
- ▶ **Use graduated incentives that provide a higher payment rate at wider streamside vegetation widths to incentivize landowners planting closer to the maximum widths.** The concept of graduated incentives could be built out adaptively over time in collaboration with funders and could include larger bonuses or rental payments for wider streamside vegetation, bonuses for neighbors cooperating to plant continuous buffers across adjacent properties, or other incentives.

These increased rates could be achieved by establishing a funding source that augments CREP payments or working with FSA to adapt the CREP program locally.

- ▶ **Encourage participation of Neighboring Landowners (focus on streamside vegetation continuity).**
 - Provide a higher rental rate or a bonus for landowners who get neighbors to sign up. This also leverages informal community networking as an outreach tool.
 - Provide a bonus payment to all landowners when a minimum number of neighboring properties sign up (e.g., bonus payment when >50% of landowners participate in any program within a 5-mile reach).
 - Provide bonuses for neighbors cooperating to plant a single continuous streamside vegetation across adjacent properties.
- ▶ **Expand Compensation.**

- Explore fully compensating landowners for the market value of the land taken out of production via an upfront lump sum. This would eliminate the need for annual payments or other ongoing compensation.
 - Establish a program with payment rates calculated based on land values beyond just crop profits. The Spokane Conservation District Commodity Buffer Program is a possible example.
 - Compensate for impacts of streamside vegetation plantings beyond just the acreage that is planted. This could include providing a rental rate for shade on fields and compensating for any edge that must be left unfarmed to access the streamside vegetation for maintenance.
- ▶ Funding for narrower streamside vegetation: the Task Force identified a lack of funds that allow for planting below 100' (state) and 50' (federal). In some cases, the Task Force streamside vegetation width targets fall below the planting funders' minimums and therefore don't allow the flexibility that is sometimes needed to achieve target widths.
- The Task Force recommends that when funding partners are engaged in conversations about incentives, the following be part of the discussion:
 - Create new funding options or expand existing ones to provide funding for streamside vegetation at 50' (this is the lowest BTF variable width for the mainstem and medium watercourses).
 - Create new funding options or expand existing ones to provide funding for streamside vegetation between 35-50' (35' is the lowest BTF variable width for small watercourses).
 - Offer streamside vegetation width flexibility by using buffer width averaging.
 - In addition, the Task Force noted that very few funding sources allow for planting at the lowest end of the BTF variable widths. If planting partners and funders can coordinate to match proposed projects to funder restrictions, more projects may be able to be funded in the Snoqualmie Valley. One aspect of this is advocating for the King County Cooperative Watershed Management Grant Program (KC-CWM) to consider prioritizing projects that use the variable buffer widths from the BTF. This grant program has the most flexibility in planting minimums and serves an important role in achieving the range of recommended widths identified by the BTF.
- ▶ The FFF process provided a valuable opportunity for multiple interests to come together to negotiate variable widths and flexibility. The Task Force encourages advocating for funders to use locally negotiated approaches to streamside vegetation plantings to set localized guidelines that determine funding eligibility.

Strategies to Expand Incentives:

Expanding or augmenting available incentives could be achieved by establishing a new program or adapting existing ones. The Task Force recommends that the Coordinating Entity apply for funding for a pilot project to demonstrate creative ways of testing new approaches to incentives based on the work of the Task Force and further informed by future CBSM research.

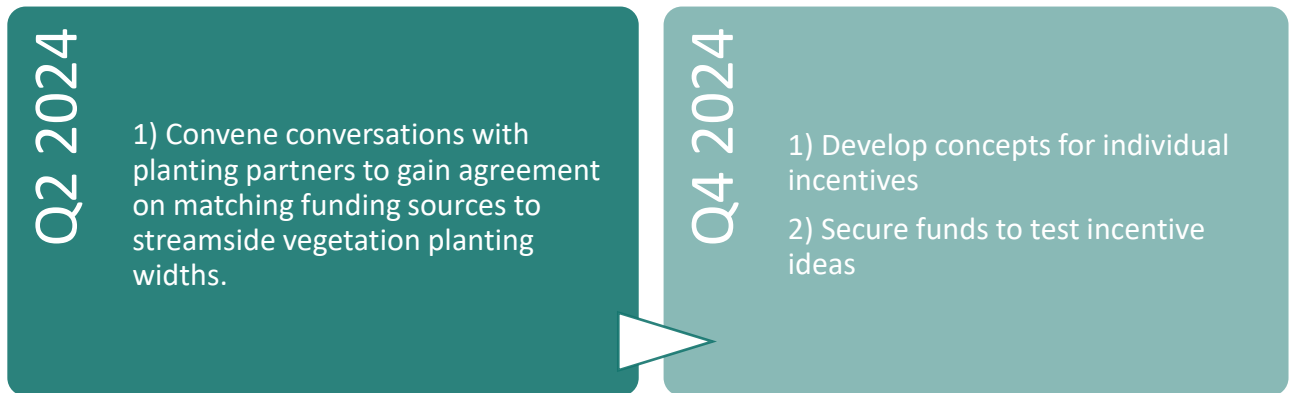
- ▶ The Task Force agreed that advocating for change within existing programs would take coordinated efforts but could result in some meaningful opportunities to expand incentives to landowners. The ideas discussed include:
 - Advocate that NRCS increase rental rates and extend their payment period up to 30 years. Also advocate for the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) to increase rental rates. Make the renewal process easier for CREP.
 - This may include advocacy at the Farm Bill's federal level. Because the Farm Bill's five-year renewal cycle is happening now (fall of 2023) this work may not be possible until the next renewal cycle.
- ▶ Better utilize existing funding sources. Not all programs have been utilized in the SVAPD.
 - Explore other state and federal funding for grants, contracts, or lease payments.
 - Apply for federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Some specific suggestions included:
 - Consider a federal funding request to pilot the activities for maintenance and planting at scale.
 - Coordinate across King County to identify a multi-objective project that includes a pilot project for one or more of the Task Force Recommendations.
 - Include a component for riparian restoration in all federal infrastructure funding requests.
 - Identify opportunities for King County to buy conservation easements on properties already in CREP, LIP, or other programs, or landowners considering these programs, and coordinate in advance when a landowner is considering CREP, LIP, or a King County conservation easement.
 - Explore establishing a King County Bond or using existing funding (e.g., Conservation Futures Tax) to provide a one-time payment to compensate landowners for the full value of the land being taken out of production.
 - Identify funds that could be awarded for planting in conjunction with the purchase of an FPP deed that includes conservation areas.
 - Encourage landowners who participate in streamside vegetation planting programs to enroll in Public Benefit Rating System so they don't lose the property tax benefit that most farmland owners currently receive.
 - Establish corporate sponsorship programs and/or use Department of Commerce dollars.

Tactics and Near-Term Actions

- ▶ Once the CBSM Report is completed, bring together interested practitioners to build out the concepts for individual incentives including a funding proposal. [Recommendation 1 Coordinating Entity]
- ▶ Secure funds to test some of these ideas; use the CBSM research to prioritize which ones to focus on.
 - The Coordinating Entity will apply for funding for a pilot project to test some of the incentives (by Q4 2024).

- ▶ Engage funders in conversations around type of policies that would support planting at narrower widths.
 - Ask the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum to prioritize restoration projects that use the variable widths from BTF.
- ▶ Convene conversations with planting partners to gain agreement that they will aim to match funding sources to eligible streamside vegetation widths that meet landowner and Task Force objectives (those that will fund lower widths) (by Q2 2024).

Timeline of Actions at a Glance



Recommendation 5: Build efficiency and increase funding for streamside vegetation maintenance.

Maintenance after planting new streamside vegetation is critical to ensure a future healthy, diverse, and resilient forest that addresses long-term habitat goals. While management of competing vegetation is a priority in the first 3-5 years, it is still needed into the first decade or longer. In addition, replacing any mortality of planted trees and shrubs is an important maintenance tool three or more years after initial planting. As the rate of planting increases, it is important to note that the need for maintenance will increase as well, and maintenance requirements last long after the first few years of streamside vegetation planting.

The burden of maintenance on landowners was frequently described as a barrier to participating in planting programs. This includes things like damage to fences from falling trees or branches and managing buffer edges to avoid farm field encroachment. However, the most significant area for many landowners is concern around the beaver habitat provided by streamside vegetation. Resolving some of the beaver-related issues could help encourage landowner participation.

Barriers to implementing streamside vegetation maintenance and possible solutions:

- ▶ There can be disconnects between the requirements imposed by sources of streamside vegetation funding and the requirements of effectively establishing a successful buffer.

- For example, a funding source may require that planting be accomplished within one year, whereas the existing competition on the site might mean that a two-year site preparation regimen would be more effective.
- It is hard to find grant programs that support long-term buffer maintenance because funding for site preparation or buffer maintenance is typically associated with funds for planting.
- ▶ There can be challenges in finding experienced crews. Crews specifically trained for streamside vegetation planting are not common. Coordination between streamside vegetation planting entities can help keep well-trained crews busy and available. Planting streamside vegetation is different than planting trees after a timber harvest. The skills required of the labor pool are different because the planting stock is largely different and the planting objectives are often diverse.
 - A shared crew could address streamside vegetation maintenance, including weed management, while also supporting beaver management and even be trained to repair damaged fences.

Increased beaver activity impacts to farms:

- ▶ Streamside vegetation provides excellent habitat for beavers and increased beaver populations will likely accompany new streamside vegetation plantings. Beaver activity can cause additional loss of farmable land due to flooding and drainage problems. However, beavers also contribute to healthy wetland and stream ecology, including maintaining groundwater levels. Therefore, beaver management in the SVAPD should balance strategic removal of beavers and beaver dams with ecosystem restoration objectives. Prior to initiation of riparian planting projects, a plan should be developed to clearly identify areas where beavers will be encouraged and how beavers will be controlled when they colonize areas that create challenges for landowners.
- ▶ Landowners seek resources and information about timing, techniques, and resources to manage beavers and beaver dams when beaver activity leads to flooding or drainage problems on their farm. However, some regulations make beaver dam management seem overly cumbersome, and guidance can be confusing and even contradictory. Landowners should be provided with an understanding of the ecological constraints, technical solutions, and legal pathways related to beaver management at the time of streamside vegetation plantings.
- ▶ A well-structured program that eases the management burden on landowners while providing a direct opportunity to educate and encourage those landowners to consider “living with beavers” options is a win-win solution. The Task Force recommends that the Coordinating Entity convenes partners to develop a comprehensive solution that provides funding and advocates for streamlined regulation for ecologically sound beaver management options. This will include landowner education regarding the benefits of allowing managed beaver presence on their property.

Tactics and Near-Term Actions

- ▶ Build a strategy and funding for long-term maintenance of streamside vegetation.
- ▶ Explore and develop systems that create greater capacity for maintenance including shared crews, leveraging crews to support beaver management, and repairs due to riparian tree damage to farm fences. Use the Coordinating Entity in Recommendation 1 to evaluate the need and identify solutions.

- ▶ Advocate with funders to increase support for establishment and long-term maintenance of streamside vegetation that includes:
 - Extended site preparation times and
 - Adequate funding for maintenance over an extended period.
- ▶ The Coordinating Entity will convene conversations with practitioners, agriculture advocates, and regulators around the advocacy, research, and future assistance with managing beavers as related to streamside vegetation plantings.
- ▶ Advocate with regulators to increase support for beaver management:
 - Explore regulatory changes and management strategies that provide more opportunities to reduce human/beaver conflict.
 - Explore WDFW creating a more streamlined blanket HPA for managing beavers, in partnership with a trained, pre-approved set of contractors.
- ▶ Fund and provide technical assistance and maintenance to deal with beavers through support for establishment of a program to increase staff capacity to coach/support landowners with beaver conflict management. SVPA and the WID are currently fundraising around this idea.
 - SVPA/WID received three years of funding for beaver conflict management staffing. Recommend support of future funding needs.

Summary of Actions at a Glance



Recommendation 6: Integrate riparian planting with other programs to achieve multi-objective approaches and leverage funding.

Farmland owners decide whether they are going to implement streamside vegetation planting on their property as a part of their farm vision and operations. Generally, they would determine how a restoration project will align with and support their short- and long-term goals for their farm. In addition, landowners typically engage with other programs run by King County and others to accomplish needed on-farm improvements such as drainage and invasive weed management. The Task Force identified the importance of voluntary planting partners coordinating with other landowner-facing programs run by King County to better serve the needs of landowners while making progress toward restoration goals.

Thinking holistically about how streamside vegetation plantings can be incorporated into other work provides opportunities for outreach to new landowners as well as unique incentives that go beyond financial payments.

Outreach opportunities:

Often a landowner will have improvements they are interested in and ask about related services in initial outreach conversations. Having the Coordinating Entity and planting partners able to refer landowners to other King County or partner programs that serve landowners may result in improved landowner interest in streamside vegetation plantings if they see that these programs coordinate and work well together. In addition, programs such as Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP), King County Noxious Weeds Healthy Lands Program (HeLP), Current Use Taxation (CUT), and King County's Integrated Drainage Program (still in development), could be a mechanism for outreach around voluntary streamside vegetation plantings. Tools for program staff use should be developed as a part of the Outreach Plan (Recommendation 2).

Non-Traditional Incentives:

The ideas below may result in enhanced coordination among programs, and may increase landowner participation in voluntary streamside vegetation plantings.

- ▶ Explore formalizing an Advance Mitigation program. In some cases, a landowner is reluctant to do a voluntary planting because they may need the land for mitigation of a permitted action in the future. An Advance Mitigation Program would be a formal way for King County Department of Local Services-Permitting Division to track voluntary plantings towards future potential mitigation. (This idea was raised in FFF 1.0).
- ▶ Agricultural advocacy organizations in the Snoqualmie Valley are interested in increasing off-channel water storage for flood hazard reduction. However, in some cases that would require removing a large enough area of trees that a permit and associated mitigation would be required. Establishing a way for voluntary streamside vegetation plantings to serve as part of the off-channel storage mitigation could encourage landowner participation in voluntary streamside vegetation plantings.
- ▶ Explore developing a program in which landowners receive payments for plantings through carbon credits. This work would need to consider the fact that existing programs are not currently compatible with the relatively small size of streamside vegetation plantings, and consider creative approaches like grouping planting projects, adapting programs, or establishing a new one.
- ▶ Explore the concept of contributing a portion of the funds raised for every voluntary streamside vegetation planting project to a funding pool for ADAP projects to increase drainage maintenance program capacity.

- ▶ Identify and communicate indirect impacts to farmland owners from establishment of streamside vegetation, such as flood attenuation, floodwater recession, and flood debris capture. Where relevant, use the 2-D modeling (action item underway from FFF 1.0) to inform this.

Tactics and Near-Term Actions

- ▶ Hold an annual forum of County, Tribes, KCD, and NGO program staff who work directly with farm landowners to share program objectives, needs, contact information, and outreach tools.
- ▶ Explore non-traditional incentives as opportunities arise and share information at the annual forum.

Summary of Actions at a Glance



Conclusion

The Buffer Implementation Task Force convened to identify ways to strategically accelerate riparian plantings to benefit salmon recovery in the Snoqualmie Valley APD. With over 900 acres of currently farmed land identified as priorities for riparian planting, successfully reaching planting goals hinges on building relationships with agricultural landowners, understanding their motivations, and moderating or mitigating impacts to agricultural lands. This report lays out a suite of actions intended to provide the tools needed to accelerate the rate of streamside vegetation plantings in the Snoqualmie Valley APD.

Task Force Members and planting partners identified many immediate benefits to increasing coordination among restoration efforts (Recommendation 1). And there was support for launching a CBSM research project (Recommendation 2) to lay the foundation of a cohesive riparian program including a Snoqualmie-tailored incentive approach. To leverage this momentum, staff of the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum has begun calling together partners to act on these ideas. The Forum allocated funding to implement CBSM research beginning in Q4 2023, are identifying opportunities for creating a centralized data and coordination dashboard, and are moving baseline data assessment along. Forum staff have been holding conversations with planting partners to apply for funding that may provide resources to staff the Coordinating Entity as well as initial project implementation.

All Task Force members recognized that time is of the essence to make meaningful change towards improving salmon habitat. The thoughtful discussion of the Task Force demonstrated a shared interest in seeing coordinated, lasting progress on habitat restoration in a way that engages agricultural land managers as partners in the solution.

Appendix A

Buffer Implementation Task Force Planting Guidance Working Group Summary

Executive Summary

Through King County's Fish, Farm, Flood Project (FFF), fish, agriculture, and flood interests agreed that vegetated buffers along County watercourses are necessary to improve survival of salmon. Subsequent to this agreement, FFF formed the Buffer Implementation Task Force (BITF) to develop a plan to speed buffer implementation. The BITF formed a Working Group to develop best practices recommendations for several specific buffer scenarios. The efforts of that group evolved, however, into a more comprehensive recommendation. The Working Group recognized three key factors related to buffers: the need to establish them rapidly to improve salmon habitat; the opportunity to benefit from collaboration to improve buffer design and implementation; and the foundational existence of a group of practitioners deeply committed to establishing high-functioning, enduring buffers. These factors led to the Working Group's recommendation to establish a forum, meeting at least annually, to accelerate the implementation of effective buffers. This forum would focus on topics such as: collaboration to advance best practices for site preparation, establishment, and maintenance; improved outreach methods for recruiting landowners; coordination of projects to allow efficient use of trained crews across agencies; timely forecasting of planting stock needs; inclusion of research opportunities into current buffer projects; and coordination of feedback to sources of funding to ensure that funders' requirements are aligned with the life cycle needs of high functioning buffers. King County will need to take a lead role in initiating the forum and ensuring adequate funding for its activities from various sources.

Background

In late 2013, King County Executive Dow Constantine assembled representatives from the Snoqualmie Valley to explore the issues that were creating obstacles and conflict between salmon recovery, flood protection, and productive agriculture in the Snoqualmie Valley Agriculture Production District (SVAPD). Through this process, known as Fish, Farm, Flood (FFF), participants unanimously agreed to a set of more than 30 recommendations. One of those recommendations was to establish the Buffer Task Force (BTF) to negotiate maximum buffer widths intended to balance the needs of fish with the preservation of agricultural land in the SVAPD.

In 2023 the Buffer *Implementation* Task Force (BITF) was formed with the goal of facilitating and accelerating the establishment of the agreed-upon buffer widths. The BITF formed a working group (the "Working Group") comprised of twelve individuals (see list at end of document). Six are practitioners whose careers involve the planning, establishment, and maintenance of vegetated buffers. Two represented agricultural interests. One represented the University of Washington, one King County, one participated from NOAA Restoration Center, and one acted as facilitator. The six practitioners represented various salmon-focused groups including tribes, the County, and an environmental stewardship organization.

Objectives

The Planting Guidance Working Group's initial objective was to develop recommendations for improved buffer composition and establishment for defined situations, such as the establishment of a buffer that minimizes shade on adjacent land or the establishment of a buffer in an area with severe competition from invasive knotweed.

Assumptions

The overriding assumption was that the rapid establishment of streamside buffers is a critical element in improving the outlook for Pacific Northwest salmon and other species. Therefore, the buffers agreed to by the FFF Buffer Task Force must be implemented quickly and implemented well.

Challenges to quick, effective implementation include:

- **Lack of monitoring.** While several agencies have experience establishing buffers, a focus on “acres treated” has meant that there are few resources to document what was done at a particular site and to monitor the effectiveness of those actions.
- **Lack of research.** Compared to forest management and agricultural practices, there is little research into the establishment and maintenance of vegetated buffers along watercourses. Some research has studied the effect of buffer widths on buffer performance, but little research was found investigating topics such as optimizing mixed plant communities, site preparation, maintenance, or planned plant succession and the physical structure of buffers (e.g., stand dynamics). As a result, current actions are driven by habit or tradition and are not necessarily as effective as they might be.
- **Lack of opportunities for collaboration and information sharing between the practitioners.** This information sharing includes methods, practices, and assessments of effectiveness. Without this sharing, we fail to benefit from the collaborative creativity and problem solving that will drive rapid improvements in practices. Furthermore, without collaboration it is difficult to standardize buffer establishment techniques among agencies.

Findings

Over the course of three meetings, the Working Group identified several barriers to rapid, effective establishment of vegetated buffers. These include:

- **Challenges in finding experienced crews.** Planting vegetative buffers is different than planting trees after a timber harvest. The competition is different, the planting stock is largely different, and the objectives are different. Crews specifically trained for buffer planting are not common. Coordination between buffer planting entities can help keep well trained crews busy and available.
- **Challenges in finding adequate planting stock.** Proper planting stock is often one to three years old. Coordinated forecasts of future demand will help ensure adequate stock at planting time.
- **Beaver management.** Vegetated buffers provide excellent habitat for beavers. Increased beaver populations will accompany increased buffer plantings. Beaver activity can cause significant flooding and drainage problems. However, beavers also contribute to a healthy wetland ecology. Therefore, in this report, “beaver management” means a thoughtful combination of removal of beavers and beaver dams in certain instances and allowing the presence of beavers (while possibly limiting the extent of their local impact) in others.

- **Regulatory challenges.** For example, the County’s Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) limits the planting of effective buffers on parcels encumbered with an FPP deed. Also, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife’s regulations regarding managing beavers and their structures discourage landowners from participating due to concerns over the difficulties in dealing with the inevitable increase in beaver activity. Alternatives that reduce the regulatory burden can provide a net gain to fish and other species.
- **A disconnect between the requirements imposed by sources of buffer funding and the requirements of effectively establishing a successful buffer.** For example, a funding source may require that planting be accomplished within one year, whereas the existing competition on the site might mean that a two-year site preparation regimen would be more effective. Similarly, funding sources might limit spending on the site to a three- to five-year window even though a high-functioning, enduring buffer might require treatment of competitive vegetation and/or thinning well beyond that timeframe.
- **No outreach program for reaching and developing willing landowners.** Buffer practitioners individually use a variety of methods to reach out to landowners willing to have buffers on their land. The success of these outreach efforts is varied; some have enjoyed greater success than others. Collaboration in effective techniques, creative exploration of new ideas, and a deliberate focus on an outreach program would improve landowner acceptance. For example, how might a buffer be modified to improve its appeal to a landowner? Aesthetics? Privacy? Harvestable elements? Benefits to species such as birds, amphibians, pollinators, deer, etc.? After all, a functional buffer “tweaked” to provide greater appeal to a landowner is incomparably better than no buffer at all.
- **No game plan for including research opportunities within current buffer projects.** To continuously improve and to provide a critical foundation of information for future research, documentation and research opportunities need to be incorporated into current plantings.

Recommendations

Rather than developing best practices recommendations for a few specific buffer scenarios, the Working Group opted to recommend a much broader and sustainable solution: a formalized forum to address the best practices question along with addressing the other challenges identified.

Specifically, the Working Group’s recommendation is to establish a forum to meet periodically (at least annually) to collaborate, plan, and share ideas in the interest of improving our success establishing high-functioning, enduring buffers.

This forum will be made up of practitioners and others directly involved in the planning, establishment, and maintenance of streamside buffers. The activities of this forum will provide:

1. An opportunity to share experiences and ideas to facilitate continuous improvement in buffer establishment and maintenance.
2. A shared voice to influence funders and regulators more effectively in order to improve successful and economically efficient establishment and maintenance of buffers. Challenges that will be addressed by this shared voice include:
 - a. Beaver management (regulatory changes and management strategies that, by reducing human/beaver conflict, will result in more buffers and improved habitat).
 - b. Farmland Preservation Program impacts (that may otherwise limit buffer planting).

- c. Extended site preparation times allowed by funders. (Current timing requirements by funding sources are inconsistent with buffer establishment best practices.)
 - d. Adequate funding for maintenance over an extended period. (Current timing requirements by funding sources do not support maintenance to ensure the long-term buffer effectiveness.)
3. A forum to agree on the need for ongoing research into buffer efficacy and a framework to provide adequate documentation to facilitate future research.
 4. A forum to collaboratively engage with entities interested in research into effective buffer establishment and maintenance. (e.g., University of Washington, Oregon State University, and NOAA).
 5. A forum to address limitations in crew availability for site preparation, planting, and maintenance activities. For example, consider:
 - a. It would be more effective for a crew to rotate among agencies than for each agency to hire, equip, and train their own crew.
 - b. By using consistent establishment/maintenance methods across agencies, crews will require less unique training, less direction, and less supervision.
 - c. By providing training and consistent work for qualified invasives management and planting contractors, establishment of a “riparian enhancement economy” would be encouraged, resulting in increased operational capacity.
 6. A forum to provide timely and accurate forecasts of demand for planting stock so sources can produce adequate supplies.
 7. A forum to collaborate on outreach strategies to engage landowners and funding sources more effectively.
 8. A forum to collaborate with buffer establishment groups in Skagit County and elsewhere.

Implementation

Good ideas are easier to come up with than to implement. So possibly the most important step in achieving the objectives outlined in this report is the initial organization of the forum. Among the participating buffer practitioners, there is an abundance of skill, capability, and commitment, but not an abundance of free time. Furthermore, at present the buffer establishment community is only loosely affiliated—there is no formal mechanism for coordination. Therefore, it is critical that the County takes the initial leadership role in organizing and implementing the forum. Once up and running, the forum may choose its own leadership going forward.

The County will also need to take the initial role to ensure funding is provided for the forum’s activities. Sources of funds will need to be determined, but may include the County, federal funds, salmon enhancement groups, tribes, and any other entity that stands to benefit directly from the forum’s work.

Conclusion

Three important factors intersect to inform the recommendations from the BITF Working Group:

1. **A need for speed**—rapid and effective establishment of buffers is critical to the future of salmon and other species.
2. **A big upside in our learning opportunity**—we are relatively early in our understanding of how to establish and maintain vegetated buffers.

3. **A passionate team**—we have the great good luck of having buffer practitioners and others (such as researchers and administrative staff) that are individually and personally deeply committed to advancing our ability to establish enduring, high-functioning vegetated buffers quickly and efficiently. Passion and commitment, when supported, can lead to great outcomes in the rapid evolution of best practices.

The recommended forum of practitioners will meet periodically (at least annually) to plan, problem solve, and share ideas. They will effectively accelerate buffer establishment, continuously improve best practices, and provide a foundation for current and future research related to buffer performance. The County must provide the initial leadership role to get the forum up and running and must ensure that funding exists to support the forum's activities.

This report represents the contributions of the entire Planting Guidance Working Group, listed below.

Submitted by Wayne Gullstad

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Planting Guidance Working Group:

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Chris LaPointe – Director of Ecological Restoration, Stewardship Partners

Zachary Bergen – Riparian Habitat Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Coordinator, King Conservation District

Ryan Lewis – Restoration Program Manager, Snoqualmie Tribe

Lauren Silver – Executive Director, Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance

Jon Bakker – Professor, UW School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

Paul Cereghino – Restoration Ecologist, participating from NOAA Restoration Center

Melissa Borsting – BITF Program Manager, King County, Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Tamie Kellogg – Kellogg Consulting, Facilitator

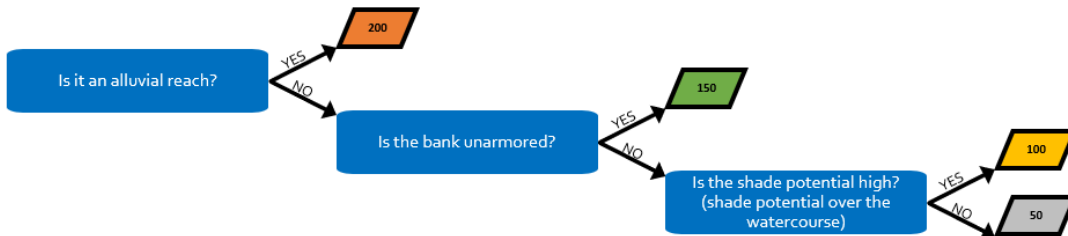
Wayne Gullstad – Snoqualmie Valley Farmer, Working Group Lead

Appendix B

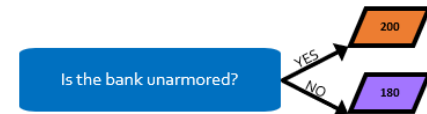
Buffer Task Force (BTF) Variable Width Recommendations by Watercourse Type

Numbers represent streamside vegetation planting width in feet.

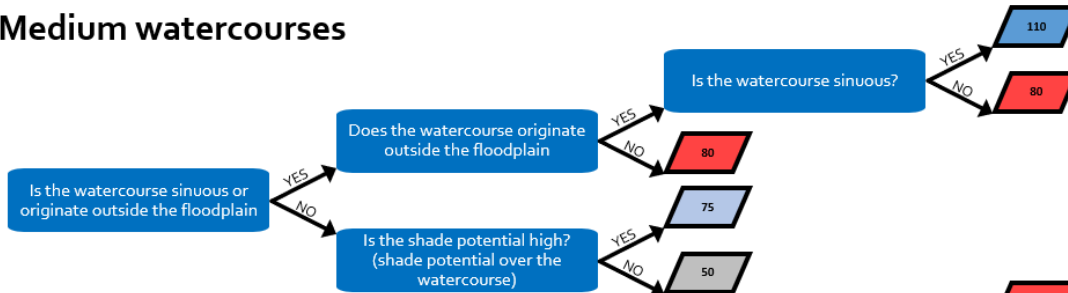
Snoqualmie mainstem



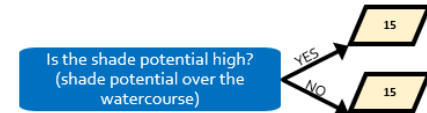
Larger watercourses



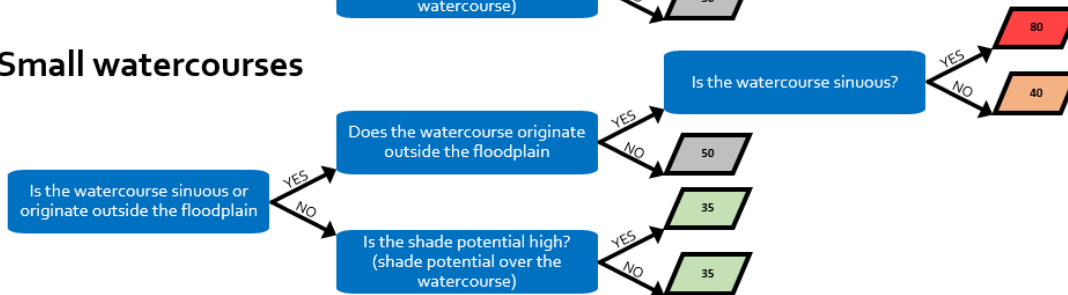
Medium watercourses



Artificial watercourses



Small watercourses



Oxbows

