



**King County Rural Forest Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, January 19, 2023 – 9:00 am to 12:00 am  
hybrid**

Commissioner	Present?	Commissioner (Ex-Officio/Non-Voting)	Present ?
Laurie Benson, WA DNR	✓	Brett Anderson, KCD	✓
Jeff Boyce, rural cities/professional forester	✓	Grace Garrison - WSU Extension	✓
Wendy Davis, private forest landowner	✓	New Ranger, USDA Forest Svc.	
Wyatt Golding, non-timber values of forest land	✓		
Li Hsi, forest landowner	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Steve Horton, forest product user/forest landowner	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Mari Knutson, forest landowner	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe	✓	Vacant, forest landowner	
Grady Steere, large forest landowner	✓		
<i>five RFC members attending is a quorum</i>			
County Staff Present			
Richard Martin, DNRP			
Wendy Sammarco, DNRP			
Josi West			
Public			
Noah Barth – GRC student		Tom Amorose	

**Motions**

01-01192023 A motion is made to accept November meeting minutes with suggested edits. Wendy Davis makes the motion, Steve Horton seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

02-01192023 A motion is made to make the suggested edit to the Land Use Study response letter and have the four RFC Executive Committee members sign the letter and send to Tim Obrien. Wendy Davis makes the motion, Jeff Boyce seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously

03-01192023 A motion is made to adjourn the January 2023 Rural Forest Commission meeting. Wendy Davis makes the motion, Jeff Boyce seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously

**Action Items**

Action item: All RFC members assist in the RFC recruitment efforts. The RFC members could suggest and encourage forest landowners and managers to consider applying to serve on the RFC. (*unending action item*)

Action item: Forest operations that are impacted by neighboring structures that are >+\$1,000 value, should remain Forest Practice (currently Clearing and Grading); craft and pursue resolution through KC Policy (*holdover from previous RFC meeting*)

Action item: Present to the RFC the update on the model building code relative to the WUI, specifically the vegetation management plan and fuel reduction plan requirements. Investigate if Firewise type work will require a Clearing and Grading Permit. (note: Firewise fuel reduction and fire resilience actions are being added to KCD LIP program -cost-share) (*holdover from previous RFC meeting*)

Action item: Craft and seek a permit exemption (from clearing and grading permit) for Fire hazard and/or invasive species abatement. (*holdover from previous RFC meeting*)

Action Item: Schedule/Coordinate Forest Field Tour for King County Council – Local Services and Land Use Committee

Action Item: Draft a letter to King County Council Local Services and Land Use Committee emphasizing the importance of forest and including specific asks. This letter will be a precursor to the field tour. Wyatt Golding will draft the letter; Wendy Davis will work on logistics to support the tour.

Action Item: Schedule a presentation on the WA DNR's Trust Land Transfer Program

Action Item: Schedule a presentation on the WA DNR's Carbon Program

Action Item: Explore, amend the RFC Charter, motion etc. on adding a student member position to the Rural Forest Commission

Action Item: Schedule a presentation on wildland firefighting readiness with DNR, Fire Districts, USFS and King County

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### **Call to Order**

Laurie Benson called the meeting to order. This meeting of the RFC is hybrid, with participation both in-person and online via Zoom.

### **Past Meeting Minutes**

The RFC members review November RFC meeting minutes.

**Motion:** A motion is made to accept November meeting minutes with suggested edits. Wendy Davis makes the motion, Steve Horton seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

### **RFC Response letter review/discussion re: land use study**

The purpose of the letter is summarized. The RFC agrees that the content of the letter is fine as written, with the addition of a reference to the September RFC meeting presentation. A discussion about who should sign this letter follows, with the suggestion of the RFC Executive Committee to sign.

**Motion:** A motion is made to make the suggested edit to the Land Use Study response letter, have the four RFC Executive Committee members sign the letter and send to Tim Obrien. Wendy Davis makes the motion, Jeff Boyce seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously

### **RFC Strategic Priorities Report – where should RFC and KC focus efforts in 2023? guided discussion**

Laurie introduces the concept of using the RFC 2022 Report to identify areas/issues for the RFC to work on in 2023 (and beyond). Particularly, deciphering which focus areas and identified actions does the RFC have control over. Laurie suggests that the RFC identify 2-3 actions to work on in 2023. Laurie wonders if this is a good idea. The RFC members nod their heads favorably.

Richard Martin suggest that the RFC consider actions that King County staff encounter barriers on as possible RFC 2023 focus actions such as *1.6.2 Eliminate the need for King County Clearing and Grading permit for fire risk reduction activities within 150 feet of a home*. [note: The March RFC meeting will have a presentation on this topic, relative to fire resilient landscaping in the wildland urban interface (WUI)]

Steve Horton agrees with Richard about the Clearing and Grading issues and suggests that an approved Stewardship Plan that includes information about fire risk reduction may be a way forward.

Laurie Benson requests that the RFC consider what are the barriers to the NOW actions identified in the 2022 RFC Report and assigns homework to all RFC members to look at the actions and identify barriers. [Note: Laurie Benson has created a spreadsheet with the NOW RFC Report Actions, Richard and Wendy have added to the

spreadsheet. Spreadsheet will be provided to RFC members in the March meeting email, and discussed at March RFC meeting]

**Presentation: Overview and Highlights of the new Planning for Beavers Manual: Anticipating Beavers when Designing Restoration Projects – Jen Vanderhoof King County Science and Technical Support Section**

Jen provides an overview of beavers and their lifestyles, including where beavers live. There is one species of beaver in North America, they are rodents and strictly herbivores. Beavers can live up to twelve years, mate for life and reproduce once a year. It is typical for an adult mated pair and their young of the two most recent years to live together. Beavers live near streams, wetlands and estuaries where there is water and food. Beavers need water because swimming provides a quick escape, beaver lodge entrances are typically submerged. Water/swimming provides safer access to food and water allows for easier transportation of wood materials. Beavers live in hut lodges, bank lodges, or bank dens. Beavers prefer shrubs and young trees 1-4” in diameter. Beavers drop large trees and use the branches.

Historic populations of beavers, prior to hunting for fur/hats, are assumed to be in the millions. Washington may have had 100,000 beavers, with 10,000 in King County. Loss of Beavers in the 1800s resulted in simplification of streams and simplification of riparian vegetation. Beavers are agents of change, their actions can reduce peak flows, erosion, siltation, and they can increase/improve flood plain connectivity.

In 1999 body gripping traps were banned in WA and during this same time frame there was a decline in demand and a decline in fur prices. Beaver populations are slowly increasing. The Planning for Beavers Manual (2023) is intended to increase the predictability of project outcomes, improve accuracy of budgets, is practical to use, and provides a ‘one stop shop’ of beaver information.

Discussion

Wendy Davis - My family owns close to 160-acres with a large wetland and several streams. There were two beaver lodges; however, the beavers have disappeared. We would like the beavers to return. Jen – WA state has a beaver relocation program and will help Wendy connect with beaver relocators.

Li Hsi – I have a pond that I stocked with fish but now the fish are all gone. Jen – It is likely that river otters ate the fish.

Li Hsi – It is about 1000’ to a stream from my ponds. Jen – Beavers do travel on land, but are at risk from predators when out of water

**Presentation: Overview and Highlights of WA DNR’s Service Forestry Program – Matt Provencher, Service Forestry Program Manager, WA DNR**

Matt shares that the Service Forestry Program in DNR has expanded and has a new cost-share component. The DNR Service Forestry Program expanded to include 33 Foresters and Specialists with a total of 51 staff supporting the Service Forestry Program. Service Forestry is separate from the DNR’s Small Forest Landowner Office. In King County, there are 2 new Service Foresters and 2 new Specialists assisting small forest landowners with stewardship. DNR’s Service Foresters assist landowners with issues on forest health, resilience, forest management, wildlife, insects and disease, herbicides, fuel and fire management, fuels reduction, creative problem solving and connecting forest landowners with other resources, such as KCD, NRCS and KC. During the wildfire season, these Service and Specialist Foresters may serve as wildland firefighters when needed.

There is a new DNR financial assistance program that is intended to function as a cost share program targeting/benefitting the small forest landowner. The cost share will cover 50% to 100% of the cost of specific activities. In western WA in the past few months (September – January) 25 cost share projects were approved and \$72,000 was spent. The DNR has \$1.4 million cost share dollars to spend before July 1, 2023. The Service Forestry program is funded through the State General Fund (forest health focused) and through Federal Funding (fire risk reduction focused) [note: Federal Funding is the result of the Infrastructure Bill, passed in 2021, with \$3.3 billion appropriated for wildland fire] Matt anticipates grant funding (\$300,000) specifically for tree planting will be available as well, for landowners who own less than 5,000 acres.

The DNR cost share program is a 50% reimbursement design, funding precommercial thinning, pruning, brush control, slash disposal, afforestation/reforestation, burning, etc. The cost share program is designed to be nimble and flexible with no approved Forest Stewardship Plan needed. Payment typically occurs within 30-days.

The DNR's Service Forester approach to assisting small forest landowners:

1. Set up site visit
2. Communicate goals and budget
3. Develop a plan based on landowner needs
4. Provide information on contractors that would meet the plan objectives
5. Submit for an approval letter (quick approval process)
6. DNR provides support
7. Follow up compliance to ensure that prescriptions/plan has been met

DNR has a new webpage, intended to be a one-stop-shop to connect with a Service Forester and to find information about forest management options and considerations for small forest landowners.

### Discussion

Li Hsi – Pruning is on the cost share list? Matt – Pruning in a shaded fuel break qualifies, to disconnect ground fuel and canopy fuel.

Brett Anderson – KCD and DNR may have overlap on the new DNR program. It will be important to coordinate.

Richard Martin – Can a landowner tap in to cost share from both DNR and KCD and get their project funded 100%/? Matt – No, DNR would not consider funding/co-funding a project that is being funded by another organization.

Mari Knutson – Is there a minimum parcel size that DNR would work with? Matt – To cost share the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan, a parcel size, at a minimum, needs to be 20-acres. For all management options though, there is no minimum parcel size.

Steve Horton – Does all approved cost share work need to be completed by July 1, 2023? Matt – Using the current budget funding/dollars yes; however, there will likely be more flexibility with completion dates in the future, determined by WA Legislature budget cycle.

Steve Horton – Timing for site prep, tree planting, etc. does not necessarily fit the July cut-off. Matt – Anticipates the future state budgets to be on 2-year cycles, and the federal budget to be on a 5-year cycle, which will provide more flexibility.

Steve Horton – What is the requirement for seedling survival and maintenance? Matt – The landowner receiving DNR cost share has a fifteen-year maintenance requirement, with repayment consequences if the project fails due to lack of follow through.

Mari Knutson – How long is the commitment and what is the funding like for invasive species treatments? Matt- Cost share would fund the first year, with a commitment from the landowner to do follow up treatments

### **Public Comment**

-Tom Amorose introduces himself, sharing that he is a small forest landowner on Vashon Island. He has/is working with KCD on restoration portions of his 22-acres. He is active with the Vashon Maury Land Trust and is interested in being an RFC member.

-Noah Barth introduces himself, sharing that he is a Green River College student, close to finishing his degree requirements and will be working on a Forest Stewardship Plan for King County owned forest land on Squak and Tiger Mountains as his capstone project. Noah plans to present highlights of this Forest Stewardship Plan at a future RFC meeting.

### **Agency Updates**

**WA DNR - Laurie Benson** – the State Legislative session is in full swing. WA DNR has a legislative priority webpage. (link provided in the RFC January meeting email)

**WSU Extension – Grace Garrison** – An online January Coached Forest Stewardship Planning Class has started. A second online Coached Forest Stewardship Planning Class will start in March. An in-person Coached Planning

Class will be held on Vashon beginning in April.

**KC Water and Land Resources Division – Richard Martin** – The Forest Carbon program has completed the second round of validation verification, with all credits obligated. The third round will begin this year (2023). Demand for carbon credits is high, with all revenue rolled into conservation/acquisitions. The 30-Year Forest Plan is making progress on a project that will be looking at survival of seedlings sourced from coastal Oregon. The ‘Seed lot Selection Tool’ model identified coastal Oregon seed zones being most like the climate anticipated for the Puget Sound lowlands in 30-40 years.

**KCD – Brett Anderson** – KCD has added a new FTE to support rural and urban forestry needs. Two forest tours are being planned for April 8 and June 24. The KCD website has been updated with the Urban Forestry and Fire Resilience programs

**Snoqualmie Tribe – Cindy Spiry** – The Tribe is learning how to manage their newly purchased 12,000-acre forest with consultant help/guidance. The Tribe is looking at conservation-based practices and researching funding opportunities with NRCS to help with invasive species, wildlife and identifying restoration opportunities.

### **Concerns of Commissioners**

-Brief discussion about planning for the summer/fall 2023 King County Council Land Use and Local Services Committee forest tour. The tour is a follow-up to the RFC KCC LULS presentation on the RFC Report in 2022. It is Suggested to weave in NOW priority action items from the RFC Report into the Field Tour. Also reinforce awareness of the RFC goals and purpose with the KCC. A conference call with the RFC Executive Committee will occur in February on this topic.

-Explored interest of the RFC in touring Seattle’s Cedar River Watershed for our July 2023 field tour.

### **Adjourn**

**Motion:** A motion is made to adjourn the January 2023 Rural Forest Commission meeting. Wendy Davis makes the motion, Jeff Boyce seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously

The meeting is adjourned at 11:58