



King County
Rural Forest Commission

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting
Thursday, January 18, 2018, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners Present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair); Rex Thompson, forester (Vice Chair); Andy Chittick, forest landowner/sawmill operator; Kelsey Ketcheson, Washington State University Extension; Laurie Benson, DNR; Li Hsi, forest landowner; Wendy Davis, forest landowner; Grady Steere, Campbell Global

Guests: Mike Lasecki and Brett Anderson, King Conservation District

King County DNRP Staff: Richard Martin, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD); Eric Beach (WLRD); Bill Loeber (WLRD); David Kimmett, Parks and Recreation Division (Parks); Bob Burns (Director's Office); Michael Murphy (Rural and Regional Services)

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 8:43a.m.

Motions

Motion 1-0118. That the minutes of the November 16, 2017 meeting be approved. Kelsey noted that the minutes should read "Green River College" rather than "Evergreen College." With the one suggested correction, Rex motioned that the minutes be approved, Andy seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Report

Nate Veranth, RFC Chair

Financial Disclosure. Nate reminded members that financial disclosure forms were needed by April 16th. Richard noted that members could submit the disclosure forms electronically or fill out hard copies and he will scan and send them in. Hard copies of the disclosure form were distributed.

Commission recruitment. Nate noted that he, along with Rex and Dick will be reaching term limits in September 2018 (complete two full terms). Nate reviewed the need to fill specific slots on the Commission although there was some confusion about the definition of "rural cities." Richard suggested that a list of perspective members should be developed by late spring. Nate noted that there will need to be a new chair and recommended that the new chair come from current commission members; urged members to begin thinking about chair for next year. Monica, Andy and Stephen were all noted as being possible candidates for chair.

Code Changes **Eric Beach, DNRP**

DPER 2018 Omnibus Bill. Eric Beach will take the latest RFC code report that Linda Vane developed and transcribe it into a form that DPER can consider for inclusion in their 2018 Omnibus Bill. Eric is working with Lisa Verner and there is a plan to have DPER proposal ready by end of first quarter 2018 (will include KC equivalent of Class 1 forest practices, “tree length and a half” limitations and definition of clearing. Nate Veranth stressed that KCD needs to be kept in the loop on action regarding the “tree length and a half” guidelines.

Best Management Practices. Eric Beach and Mike Lasecki are developing a series of BMP documents to incorporate new code changes related to permitting and are starting with blackberry control (mirroring what Noxious Weed Board has done); will then move to Firewise and other small landowner management issues. Goal is to make permitting process more transparent, clear and simplified.

Permit Exempt Accessory Building. Nate Veranth noted that the RFC had previously discussed the need to expand the structure exemption from 200 to 400 sq. ft. and questioned DPER reluctance to support the change. Snohomish Co has a 400 sq. ft. limit and it would be helpful if King County could adopt the same exemption. Eric Beach suggested that the limits may be based in stormwater concerns and will research the basis for the KC limit. Li Hsi questioned how isolated small buildings in the forest environment are treated as far as stormwater management given that surrounding forest lands are able to handle additional runoff. Eric noted that KC code was mostly developed for use in the built environment, which does not translate directly to lightly developed rural, forested lands, and he would like to work with DPER to not only explore modification of the 200 sq. ft. exemption limit but also get them to better understand resource lands.

Full Drainage Review: Nate Veranth noted that the trigger for “full drainage review” should also be modified. The meaning of “on site” as it pertains to Critical Areas is not useful at the scale of most forest parcels.

Definition of Forestry: Nate Veranth will work with Eric Beach to clean up “definition of forestry” and work with the Code Committee (Andy Chittick, Stephen Mullen-Moses, Monica Paulson Priebe) to review before being presented to the full Commission.

FSC Certification **Dave Kimmett and Bill Loeber, KC, DNRP**

Background. Dave Kimmett reported that King County Parks Division now manages over 29,000 acres that range from recreation parks (e.g., soccer fields) to working forests like Taylor Mountain. Most Parks units support forest that needs active management, which includes timber harvest.

In 2008, the RFC recommended that DNRP study the value of forest certification by having the forest management plan for Island Center Forest certified through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Although ICF was certified in 2009, KC did not complete a harvest until 2014. Bill Loeber reported that staff investment was greater than initially anticipated and those costs were not recovered through higher timber value.

Andy Chittick noted that NNRG has group FSC certification and has harvested over 1.5 million board feet but only alder was actually sold as certified wood. Supply chain between mill and buyers for certified wood is “broken” with no dependable demand and supply system in place. Li His echoed that there is no premium paid to landowners for certified wood...no incentive to do so. Dave Kimmett reviewed a suite of pros and cons for forest certification in general and, specifically, through Forest Stewardship Council.

Dave Kimmett stressed that public perception of natural resource management has changed significantly since the initial certification in 2009 and that there is significantly greater awareness of green construction and use of recycled materials. Dave suggested that since King County has a policy requiring enhanced green building and if KC is requiring FSC lumber in its buildings, it should manage its lands to those standards. Dave also noted that the county is poised to significantly increase harvests from county property and the significant increase is likely to generate a lot of public attention and opposition. Certification can provide some cover and help build public support.

Nate Veranth recommended that the County quantify the future costs and benefits of certification. Dave Kimmett agreed, but noted that the initial return on investment is growing social capital through increased support for forest management and that will be hard to quantify.

Break

Land Conservation Initiative Bob Burns and Michael Murphy

Bob Burns provided a brief summary of the Land Conservation Initiative (LCI) and distributed the executive summary from the Advisory Committee’s final report. There are just over 60,000 acres of lands identified as having high conservation value in six categories: farms, forests, natural areas, river corridors, trail corridors and urban green space. Bob and Michael Murphy Reviewed a map of all identified priority lands in rural areas (areas within urban boundaries under development. Forest lands are primarily targeted for easement acquisition.

Bob Burns described the funding needed to achieve the LCI goal and stressed that if the County does not accelerate the rate of protection, it will take 70 years to protect the identified important lands and the cost will increase greatly. Although several possible funding sources are under consideration, the Advisory Committee did not recommend a specific option. Bob reminded RFC members that the County will only work with willing sellers to acquire LCI priority lands and property interests will be acquired at appraised value.

Wendy Davis asked about total cost of the program. Bob Burns broke down program costs over 30 years (fully inflated). Cost of land, transaction costs about \$4.1 billion vs \$20 billion if stretched out 70 years. About \$2.25 billion has been identified as the current revenue stream (existing CFT, TDR, etc.) and about \$1.9 billion will be needed, which can be covered with a reset of the CFT levee. Parks Levee funding would cover long-term O and M.

Li His asked whether a large-scale buy-and-hold via a private corporation would allow for immediate acquisition. Michael Murphy noted that there are similar approaches with non-profits, but there might be some challenges with working with a private company and the sheer number of transactions but that all options should be considered.

Nate Veranth asked about examples of lands that have both high development and high conservation value. Michael Murphy replied that while there are lands that have both development and conservation value, a recent study indicated that LCI lands would only reduce total availability of buildable land by 2.5-3%. Current availability of buildable land significantly exceeds projected needs. The county has directly engaged with development/real estate community to explore pathways to streamline processes to develop appropriate lands and possibly protect lands of higher conservation value.

Public Comment: none

Agency Reports:

KCD. Michael Lasecki introduced Brett Anderson who will be assisting with stewardship planning and cost share for small private forest landowner

DNR. Laurie Benson announced DNR's rural community partnership initiative. DNR is looking for opportunities to partner with local communities to advance forest-related projects. DNR, like other state agencies, is still waiting for the capital budget to be approved

KC. Richard Martin announced the opening of recruitment to fill the position vacated by Linda Vane. Richard asked for RFC volunteers to serve on interview panel and to recruit potential applicants. Hope is to have someone on board by mid-April.

**Private Forest Carbon
Richard Martin**

Time was short, so Richard provided a brief overview of the proposed pilot project and suggested he could return in March with a full presentation. Richard reviewed issues related to carbon availability, landowner willingness and demand and noted that the hope is that information collected during the pilot phase will inform a decision as to whether the program should be rolled out at a larger scale beginning in 2019; RFC guidance will be requested. Nate Veranth asked about easement language and accountability and Grady Steere asked about challenges related to structuring an easement on working forests and whether there was demand for generated offsets.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 15, 2018, at the Preston Community Center.