



King County

**King County Rural Forest Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 15th, 2018 – 8:30 to 11:30 am
Preston Community Center, Preston**

Commissioner	Present?	Commissioner (Ex-Officio/Non-Voting)	Present?
Monica Paulson Priebe, academic forester (Chair)	✓	Kelsey Ketcheson, WSU Extension	✓
Amy LaBarge, professional forester (Vice-Chair)	✓	Brandy Reed, KCD	
Laurie Benson, WA DNR	✓	Martie Schramm, USDA Forest Svc.	
Jeff Boyce, rural cities/professional forester	✓		
Andy Chittick, forest product user/forest landowner	✓		
Wendy Davis, private forest landowner	✓		
Wyatt Golding, non-timber values of forest land	✓		
Daryl Harper, forest landowner			
Steve Horton, forest product user/forest landowner	✓		
Li Hsi, forest landowner	✓		
Bernie McKinney, forest landowner/conservation advocate	✓		
Steven Mullen-Moses, affected Indian tribe	✓		
Grady Steere, forest landowner	✓		

County Staff Present	Guests Present
Eric Beach, DNRP	Bea Covington, KCD
Jenny Devlin, DNRP	Mike Lasecki, KCD
Kathleen Farley Wolf, DNRP	Green River College students: John Claunch, Steve Braun,
Dave Kimmett, DNRP	Matt Alexander, Hunter Nasinec, Carter Manning, Teria
Richard Martin, DNRP	Ellis, Chris Cushman, Brian Thornquist, Jarret Griesemer,
Megan Moore, DNRP	Tyson Cunningham, Chance LeRoy
Wendy Sammarco, DNRP	

Chair Monica Paulson Priebe called the meeting to order at 8:33 am.

Motions

- **1-1115.** That the September 20th, 2018 minutes be approved with one correction. Steven Mullen-Moses motioned to accept them as amended. Grady Steere seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.
- **2-1115.** That two RFC meetings per year be moved to South King County. Steve Horton motioned, Grady Steere seconded, and the motion passed unanimously
- **3-1115.** That the regular RFC meeting time be moved to 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Mr. Steere motioned, Amy LaBarge seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- **4-1115.** That the November 2019 meeting be moved to South King County. Monica Priebe motioned, Mr. Steere seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- **5-1115.** That the May and November RFC meetings be held in South King County. Laurie Benson motioned, Wyatt Golding seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- **6-1115.** To adjourn the November 15th, 2018 meeting. Ms. Benson motioned, Mr. Horton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

I) Chair Report – Monica Paulson Priebe

- **Introductions:** Ms. Paulson Priebe welcomed her attending students from Green River College, and new Commissioners Jeff Boyce, Wyatt Golding, and Steve Horton. Mr. Boyce and Mr.

Horton each introduced themselves and spoke briefly about their backgrounds.

- Minutes: Mr. Horton requested correction to a section of the minutes where Wendy Sammarco explained KCD stewardship requirements. The minutes were approved as amended.
- Intro of New Committee and Members: Ms. Paulson Priebe introduced the RFC's new Executive Committee – herself (Chair), Amy LaBarge (Vice-Chair), Wendy Davis, and Steven Mullen-Moses.

II) King County Comprehensive Plan / 4:1 Program – Ivan Miller, King County Comp. Plan Manager
Mr. Miller reviewed the 4:1 program, part of the County's long-range plan to accommodate growth. Some changes are being proposed to King County Council (KCC) as part of the program review. Mr. Miller said forestry impacts will likely be minimal.

As part of the 1985 Comprehensive Plan, King County created urban growth boundaries before they were required by the state and then made changes in 1994 after the Growth Management Act passed. This shrank the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) considerably, converting some urban areas to rural. The 4:1 is a voluntary program to allow a landowner who is adjacent to the original 1994 boundary to petition to have urban residential development on part of their land. The program requires a 4:1 ratio of land, where 80% becomes dedicated open space owned by King County and 20% becomes residential urban land. Eligible lands must be zoned rural (agriculture lands are explicitly exempted from the program while other natural resource lands, including forest and mining, are not allowed due to County-wide planning policies); must be at least 20 acres and contiguous with or adjacent to the 1994 Urban Growth Area (UGA); the urban land must be residential not commercial; services must be provided from the urban area; and cities must agree to annex them or add them to their annex plans. There are criteria for the open space as well: it should buffer the urban area, and preferably connect to adjacent open space lands. Qualitative criteria for 4:1 also include considerations of quality of open space land for wildlife habitat, as well biological, cultural, and historical impacts, among others.

Overall, the program allows for adjustment to the UGB and tries to create a "green wall" of open space to prevent urban growth from spreading into the rural area. Mr. Miller said that the 4:1 program is a useful if small tool that provides an open space benefit and King County wants to retain it but with some changes. Although it is not a heavily used program, and King County is not looking to expand it, they would like to get more public benefit out of properties that go through it. The changes include:

- Related to New Urban Lands: The area would have to be annexed by a city concurrent with County approval, so that development happens under city development standards and the cities would get the fees and make the commitment up front. Mr. Miller said developers have largely been in favor of this idea, as landowners often get caught in limbo between city and County decisions.
- Criteria for Open Space Eligibility: Language would be changed to require open space to be primarily on-site and provide as much buffer from surrounding urban areas as possible, creating a stronger "green wall" (currently some acquired open space is off-site and not adjacent to the UGA).
- Evaluation Criteria for Open Space: Open space would be evaluated for public access, ability of the County to manage it effectively, and impacts to nearby natural resource lands. While the County already does this to a degree, this would formalize the criteria to make more informed decisions.
- Procedural Changes: Open space could be designated as rural, agriculture, or forest (currently it is designated as rural but can be used for agriculture or forestry) and the application process would have to be initiated by the property owner.
- Differences between County-Wide Planning Policies and Comp Plan: The aim is to reconcile some inconsistencies. One small change would be to make it clear that the UGA refers to the 1994 UGA. Another change would be to explicitly exempt all natural resource lands from the program, including forestry and mineral parcels as well as agriculture, so these lands could not be converted to residential development.

There were several questions from those present. A Green River College student asked what advantage there is to joining the 4:1 program. Mr. Miller replied that while the program doesn't work for everyone, it

does allow landowners the option of four times denser residential development on their land (a total of four units per acre on the land given urban designation) than on rural-zoned land. Wendy Sammarco asked if the open space earned from 4:1 transactions could be converted into non-natural purposes, such as a ball field. Mr. Miller said while the County has sometimes opted to put a trail in this new open space, there typically has not been enough size in the participating parcels to allow large-space uses such as a ball field.

Grady Steere asked about development rights going to the County in the case of a TDR transfer. Mr. Miller said TDRs are not “true” 4:1s, in which the County becomes a fee-simple owner of the open space. Another GRC student asked if there would be a point when potential acreage for the 4:1 program would be maxed out, given King County’s current growth rate. Mr. Miller said the program maximum is 4,000 new acres and we are nowhere near that and it is unlikely that this limit would be reached given the limited number of properties eligible for 4:1. Another GRC student asked who determines the use of the new open space lands. Mr. Miller said this is decided by the County and DNRP-Parks staff can provide additional information about how it’s managed and who to speak to regarding management questions.

Amy LaBarge asked if cities look favorably on the idea of concurrent annexation of new urban lands; Mr. Miller replied that city planning directors he has been in touch with are in favor of it. Ms. LaBarge then asked, if program initiation is to be done by the property owners, whether the information about this program is available to them. Mr. Miller replied the County is not pushing the 4:1 program to the public, but the information is available by contacting the King County Council or DPER and the calls would be forwarded to Mr. Miller’s office.

Steve Horton asked if excluding forest lands would make a difference, as their boundary appears to be the same line as the forest production district (FPD). Mr. Miller confirmed they are the same and the FPD has changed very little but the Council could change it. The proposal to exclude forest lands would solidify protection of forest if the FPD boundary were to change. Monica Paulson Priebe asked if there is concern this program will become so hard to enter it becomes obsolete. Mr. Miller replied that the 4:1 originally was intended for one-time use in 1994 and was re-opened in 1996 and then continued. He said the County is fine with not having any more properties in the program although the belief is that there is more public benefit if the program does continue.

Steven Mullen-Moses expressed concern about the notification process for properties being considered for the 4:1 program and elaborated his concerns about preservation of archaeological and historical sites and artifacts from local tribes and the importance of tribal input. He said cultural resources (burial sites, village sites, culturally-modified trees, etc.) were destroyed by some of the developments and that the Snoqualmie Tribe had not been involved in conversations around the designs in multiple cases, in particular the developments in Issaquah. He asked how notifications would come out so that interested parties are notified and have input. Mr. Miller answered that unique natural, biological, cultural, historical, and archaeological features are an evaluation criteria for 4:1 entries. Also, by requiring the property owner to request entry into the program it ties it to the Comprehensive Plan, which will involve notification; in contrast, a discretionary action at the Council may not. Mr. Mullen-Moses added that they often do not get notified by cities, so a County notification at the beginning of the process is better.

Wyatt Golding asked about the requirement for on-site open space. Mr. Miller said that currently a “portion” is on-site and this will change to “primarily” on-site. In practice, this will probably be 50%+1 as a minimum, but he noted that in most cases the open space has almost all been on-site. He said that parcel configurations are always unique so this language leaves discretion but is a stronger requirement than there has been.

Dave Kimmett observed that based on Mr. Miller’s map, 4:1 acreages form >10% of what is managed by the Parks division, so they are significant. They are also right on the UGA boundary, so Parks is doing forest management right on the urban edge and there are many implications for King County as a land management agency.

Richard Martin asked how much capacity for growth exists within the UGA. Mr. Miller replied that it is vast and, 97% of growth in King County last year was inside the UGB. Cities have sufficient capacity to accommodate the 20-year projected population growth.

Ms. Paulson Priebe advised anyone with further questions to email Mr. Miller.

III) **Proposed Code Changes – Eric Beach, KC DNRP**

Mr. Beach reported on the status of the RFC's proposed code changes and noted several related items:

- New Department of Local Services: DLS is a new agency focused on improving services to residents of unincorporated King County. DLS was formed by re-allocating programs from existing agencies. They are currently prioritizing their legislative workload. Mr. Beach said DLS's director, John Taylor, is expected to have a very proactive, positive resource focus.
- Mr. Beach recently met several times with Christine Jensen, the new legislative manager for DPER, as well as a group including Ivan Miller, Karen Wolf, Mr. Taylor, and Randy Sandin (Assistant Director of DPER) and reminded them of the proposed changes.
- Mr. Beach discussed the following proposed code changes:
 - Permit-exempt building size: The proposal to increase this size to 400 square feet is moving forward more quickly than expected and is being reviewed by DPER with expected transmittal to KCC in February or March. This is new to King County but this type of action occurs in Snohomish and Pierce County so there is some precedent.
 - Clearing/grading exemptions: Some language was included in last year's omnibus code package but it got kicked back; right now the language is still there and Mr. Beach will engage to be sure it's what we need. Right now, the plan for transmittal to KCC is in June 2019.
 - Definition of forestry, resource land table: The proposed new definition of forestry received a lukewarm response, since the one in code now seems to serve the pragmatic purposes of a definition. But the resource land table is currently with DPER. There is no timelines to address this issue, as the new DLS will need to prioritize its workload. In addition, this is part of larger conversation that goes beyond forestry, so they may not have an answer for a while.

Monica Paulson Priebe asked if the RFC needs to help facilitate transmittal of the building size changes to KCC. Mr. Beach replied no, that there is an internal dialogue that will need to occur first. She then asked if Mr. Beach could return next meeting to update on why the code changes that relate to Firewise were sent back. He agreed to follow up with Christine Jensen to find out what the challenges were and provide an update next meeting, at which point the RFC can decide how to proceed.

IV) **Meeting Time and Locations - Commissioners**

Monica Paulson Priebe asked RFC members if they wished to move meetings to 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Steve Horton asked if meetings would remain in Preston or be rotated. Ms. Paulson Priebe raised a prior idea of two meetings per year in South King County, and the rest in Preston. After brief discussion, several motions were made:

- Mr. Horton motioned to move two meetings per year to South King County. Grady Steere seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Steven Mullen-Moses suggested that the regular meeting time be moved to 9:00 am – 12:00 pm and discussed several ways that this would be beneficial. After some discussion, Mr. Steere motioned to change the meeting time, Amy LaBarge seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Ms. Paulson Priebe motioned to move the November 2019 meeting to South King County. Mr. Steere seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Laurie Benson motioned that May and November meetings be held in South King County. Wyatt Golding seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Andy Chittick suggested that once a year the Commission may find it helpful to get into the woods to look at something relevant to the RFC, and follow up in a meeting. Ms. Paulson Priebe suggested placing this on the agenda to discuss next meeting.

V) **RFC Priorities: KC Progress Report – Richard Martin, KC DNRP**

Mr. Martin directed Commissioners' attention to a handout of the 2009 RFC report recommendations to conserve King County forest, with color-coding to indicate level of success in implementation, and feedback was requested by next meeting. Several recommendations, mostly those that are red or yellow, were addressed in today's discussion:

- Hire Full-Time Forester for DNRP Parks: Because of budget limitations we have not been able to do this. Bill Loeber is dedicating half of his time to Parks work and there is a fairly large budget

for forestry consultants in Parks. In addition, Wendy Sammarco is also contributing some of her time to Parks work. This essentially adds up approximately to a full-time employee (FTE), but Mr. Martin recognizes that it is not the same and said the goal is to work with Parks to make a real FTE Parks forester happen in the future (after the next 2 years).

- Small Forest Landowners: We have done some things, but there is still room for more code improvements to change the landscape under which small forest landowners are required to work.
- Capping Permitting Costs: Mr. Martin said agriculture landowners see up to a 50% reduction in some fees, and sees no reason forest landowners shouldn't see the same. However, while there is potential in this, there has been no success yet. It is something to work on in the year ahead.
- Forest Excise Tax: Of \$3.3 million in excise tax revenue last year, \$185K went to the forestry program to support forest work. Mr. Martin suggested the RFC may want to discuss with KCC and others about whether an additional portion of the revenue should go to this work. Mr. Horton noted the importance of this and suggested that more of this money should go to management of King County owned forests.

Ms. La Barge asked what an update to the 2009 report would look like and whether it would be led by King County staff. Mr. Martin clarified that any decision to start a new forest report lies with the RFC and that the purpose of today's progress report was to update the RFC on what King County has done so the RFC can decide if there are some actions they want to give direction on. Bernie McKinney suggested there may be valuable information in a report done by two of Ms. Priebe's students last year. Mr. Martin replied that similar reports were received from the University of Washington, but are routed through Parks to be included in their forest stewardship planning. He said the County can follow up with the RFC on these reports – including what was recommended and what was actually done – if wished.

--BREAK--

During the break, Mike Lasecki of KCD directed Commissioners in an exercise to prioritize key conservation outcomes that KCD should continue work on, as well as intended outcomes.

- VI) RFC Priorities, contd.: KCD Rural Forestry Program Priority Actions – Bea Covington, Mike Lasecki, KCD**
- Mr. Lasecki said that the RFC's priority outcomes were apparent as a result of the exercise. He said this can be synthesized into more information to place in their five-year work plan, and suggested the lists from the exercise be made available in this meeting's minutes. He also noted that they are available for further discussion.

There was discussion on the importance of community groups developing forest stewardship plans, which came out as a priority. Amy LaBarge noted the importance of neighboring landowners partnering on these plans. Mr. Lasecki noted the suggestion to broaden to more multi-parcel planning.

Ms. Covington said that this list is what informed the last 5-year plan and the exercise indicates that these are still the priorities and there is nothing new that anyone wants added for the next 5 years. But she also noted that there is time to read through the 2009 RFC report and to add new priorities and incorporate them into a program plan. She noted the high number of exercise votes for "facilitating community planning with Firewise" and said other stakeholders have prioritized this as well, and thinking about how to work with communities and DNRP to address the issue and leverage resources will be important.

Ms. Covington spoke on KCD's budget. KCD is putting together workplans to underpin their 2020 rate request to KCC. She said KCD's budget is staff-heavy, due to higher effectiveness of one-on-one public engagements. The next step is to engage city planners and elected officials for their input. This will include workshops on January 12th and February 9th to review and make the workplan ready for KCC approval. The current per-parcel rate for KCD underfunds their budget by about \$2 million a year, much of which they try to fill with grants. Ms. Covington said the preference is to fund more through their operating budget and use grants to provide more community services. The proposal is a flat \$3 per parcel rate increase based on property classification (not value). Agriculture lands, at \$10 per parcel, pay the highest rate; she was not certain where private forest lands fall on this scale and offered to follow up with that information. She added that KCD is trying to avoid an exact "dollar for dollar" return on investments, as that benefits no one; the goal is for a combination of direct (1%) and indirect (99%) benefits.

Monica Priebe asked if today's exercise would be useful to prioritize goals in the future, for which there was general approval. She added that pictures of the exercise charts would be helpful to Commissioners.

VII) **RFC Priorities: RFC Next Steps – Monica Priebe**

Monica Priebe returned attention to the 2009 forest plan handout. She said it is key to the RFC's history and purpose to make active recommendations, to determine whether to update the plan or decide what to address in the coming year. No email feedback was received since last meeting on the recommendations list, so Ms. Paulson Priebe asked each Commissioner around the table to voice their concerns now:

- Bernie McKinney said a key theme over the years has been a need to prioritize citizen input from community groups, to engage public more in planning projects. Ms. Priebe noted while the RFC cannot focus on specific projects, they can advise on policies/precedents, identify strategies to keep forested lands forested, and address special issues as asked by KCC and the Executive.
- Li Hsi stressed the importance of County cost-share and financial support programs to small landowners, especially for access roads. Without good access roads, he said, it is difficult to fight fires or monitor forest health. Ms. Priebe agreed to add "fire abatement" to the priority list, and to revisit the subject of cost-shares for small landowners.
- Grady Steere said actions should be taken to make small rural forests in particular cost-neutral instead of a cost center, and noted that if landowners don't have money to pay for management they won't do it.
- Steve Horton advised the County strongly enforce property maintenance mandates for landowners enrolled in County incentive-based programs, and said the RFC might look at whether they support a loss of tax benefits if the land is not managed. Ms. Priebe agreed to add this as a discussion item, as a "small forest landowner issue." Richard Martin noted this issue is something the County assessor's office looks at, but not enough, and designated forest landowners should show they are making a revenue.
- Kelsey Ketcheson suggested more public outreach and education on incentives and other programs would be helpful.
- Amy LaBarge suggested more County infrastructure to support working forest management, which is important to maintain forest canopy. This could come in the form of mills, but also education and other tools and resources to help owners manage forests effectively.
- Steven Mullen-Moses said the report needs updating at least from a technical standpoint and noted that he has had issues with access to forest land for cultural resources. He noted that he has spent a lot of time trying to determine his role on the RFC, and how his historic preservation background best fits into RFC discussions. He views forests as a living part of his culture and noted that the 2009 report never talks about tribes and there should be a tribal component. Ms. Paulson Priebe agreed that it is important to start this conversation.

Mr. Martin said he had some emails with Commissioner feedback on action priorities, which he offered to send to Ms. Paulson Priebe and Ms. LaBarge and compile for next meeting. He asked if the RFC wished to officially revisit the forest plan. Mr. Horton said revisiting was fine, but didn't think the whole plan should be rewritten. Ms. Paulson Priebe suggested laying out issues using a chart and post-its to add comments at the next meeting, then having a subcommittee review where this all intersects with the 2009 document and report back to the RFC.

VIII) **Public Comment**

Green River College student John Claunch suggested, addressing Steven Mullen-Moses' above comment, that Commissioner roles be clearly identified. Monica Priebe agreed training for new Commissioners is helpful. Kathleen Farley Wolf said there is a new Commissioner orientation in January; all are welcome.

IX) **Agency Reports and Announcements**

- KCD: Bea Covington said the RFC should think about who they would like as their representative in the open RFC slot on KCD's advisory committee. Interested parties should notify Monica Paulson Priebe, Richard Martin, or Kathleen Farley Wolf.
- WA DNR: Laurie Benson updated on several issues.
 - Forest Practices: A new application has been submitted for a private harvest in the Newcastle area. It was previously classed as class III, but this was appealed and will go to a local board. The issue that came up was jurisdiction.
 - Conservation Closing: DNR completed a closing for a new 45-acre area of Rattlesnake Scenic Area, which will be managed 50/50 by DNR and King County.
 - Grant Season: The first part of the season, for recreation grants, is complete. There are eight

- for this region, though funding won't be determined until the legislative session.
- I-90/SR 18 Interchange Project: A stakeholder group is looking at reducing congestion at this interchange. A community engagement process is underway to determine what to do. Steven Mullen-Moses said WSDOT has not adequately reached out to tribes or other stakeholders on this, and believes they are pushing the project through too fast. He advised all affected to contact WSDOT. Monica Priebe asked Ms. Benson to keep the RFC updated on this.
- Sales: There are three active sales underway currently. Two are planned for 2019, and three more in layout/design phase for 2020.
- California Fires: DNR recently dispatched over 100 firefighters to fight California wildfires.
- WSU Extension: Kelsey Ketcheson reported that a coaching class was completed in King County a few weeks ago, and there have been several other recent classes.
- King County:
 - Kathleen Farley Wolf reminded all of the new Commissioner orientation in January. She asked if Commissioners were interested in releasing their contact information to KCD for follow-up questions about the priorities list. It was a general consensus of those present to limit contact to email, unless specifically opted-in by a Commissioner. She then reminded all that Commissioner code of conduct forms are due by the end of December.
 - Wendy Sammarco asked how to limit deer browsing on red cedar, and if there is a way to do so by drone. Several offered suggestions; Li Hsi asked Ms. Sammarco to contact him.
 - Dave Kimmett volunteered to show the RFC, as part of the earlier-proposed field trip, one of Parks' South King County projects. He also requested the chance to update the RFC on forest stewardship planning and implementation, including One Million Trees and other restoration projects. Two active projects scheduled to wrap at the end of this month are in the Taylor Mountain and Black Diamond areas. Both these sites are now Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified.

X) Concerns of Commissioners

Monica Paulson Priebe thanked all for the agency reports and encouraged continued participation from the agencies and noted that she wants their voices to be heard.

XI) Concluding Remarks/Adjournment

Laurie Benson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Steve Horton seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be January 17, 2019, at the Preston Community Center.