



**King County Rural Forest Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, November 17, 2022 – 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			
Monica Paulson Priebe (GRC), Eric Oien (GRC), GRC students			

**Motions**

01-11172022 A motion is made to accept September meeting minutes as written. Laurie Benson makes the motion, Grady Steere seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

02-11172022 A motion is made for Laurie Benson to serve as Chair of the Rural Forest Commission. Grady Steere makes the motion, Mari Knutson 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**

Steve Horton called the meeting to order. This meeting of the RFC is hybrid, with participation both in-person and online via Zoom. The meeting is attended by Green River College Forest Policy students.

### **Past Meeting Minutes**

The RFC members review September RFC meeting minutes.

**Motion:** A motion is made to accept September meeting minutes as written. Laurie Benson makes the motion, Grady Steere seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

### **Rural Forest Commission Chair Vacancy**

From the September meeting minutes: *Laurie Benson shares that she will consider the nomination; however, she has returned to her job recently and will evaluate workload and commitments before accepting the nomination.* Laurie Benson shares that she is accepting the nomination to serve as Chair of the Rural Forest Commission.

**Motion:** A motion is made for Laurie Benson to serve as Chair of the Rural Forest Commission. Grady Steere makes the motion, Mari Knutson seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously

### **Presentation: RFC candidate member update & recruitment engagement/outreach; and hybrid meeting discussion = Wendy Sammarco RFC Liaison**

-Wendy Sammarco shares that Daniel Oderyd, recent new member, is resigning due to overseas commitments. When Daniel returns to the US, in two-years, he would like to re-engage with the Rural Forest Commission.

-The results of a recent RFC member survey are shared. The survey focus was on meeting preferences. Based on survey results, RFC meetings will continue to be hybrid (both in-person and online). RFC meetings will be a combination of presentations and working meetings. And the RFC Report (completed in 2022) will be the template for moving forward with working meetings.

### **Presentation: Cedar River Municipal Watershed Forest Management Plan – Overview and Highlights = Rolf Gersonde, Forest Ecologist, CRW, Seattle Public Utilities**

Rolf shares that the Forest Management Plan (FMP) was a four-year process. Rolf provides an overview of the landscape, including the Cedar River Watershed, South Fork Tolt Watershed, and Lake Youngs. The City of Seattle owns 98% of the Cedar River Watershed hydrographic boundary from Landsburg

(west) to the Cascade Crest (east). The Cedar River Watershed (CRW) has a history of active timber harvesting, with the last industrial type of harvest occurring in 1984. There is approximately 15,000 acres of original/old growth forest in the upper elevations of the CRW. In the lower elevations of the CRW the forests average 80 years old (origin dates 1930-1940). Younger forests dominate the upper watershed, due to the harvesting history

The CRW is managed under a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), signed in 2000 with a 50-year term. The CRW is committed to being an ecological reserve, with restoration commitments to roads, streams, riparian, and upland forests.

The Forest Management Goals in the Forest Management Plan:

- 1) Watershed hydrology (HCP Commitment) = produce unfiltered high-quality source water for both in-stream and municipal use
- 2) Forest habitat (HCP Commitment) = protect and restore habitats of species of concern listed in the HCP
- 3) Improve ecological resilience and adapt to changing climate conditions (FMP)
- 4) Wildfire resilience, primarily fuel mitigation (FMP)
- 5) Road access and maintenance, strategic decisions based on expense and benefits

The FMP purpose is to serve as a guiding document for management of forest ecosystems. It is based on previous plans and documents.

The development of the FMP included 1) a 'trade-off analysis' which identified conflicts and synergies among the FMP objectives; 2) using a multi criteria optimization model; and 3) facilitated stakeholder involvement to promote transparent decision making.

A candidate pool of forest stands to be treated is identified in the FMP, with treatments to include thinning in second-growth forests, planting diverse tree species, creating forest canopy gaps, and wildfire fuels management. The FMP also identifies forest management reserves (passive management). Monitoring and adaptive management is incorporated in the FMP.

#### Discussion

-Grady Steere: What does climate resilience and tree planting mean? Rolf Gersonde: Species become adapted, so choosing seed zones/seedlings for planting in the CRW that are adapted to an anticipated future climate and setting up trials with the goal of monitoring how seedlings adapt to current climate, such as Douglas-fir, western white pine, western red cedar, and incense cedar.

-Monica Paulson Priebe: Does the thinning revenue cover the cost of the operation? Rolf Gersonde: No; however, the utility ratepayers are covering the cost of implementation.

-Mari Knutson: What percent is covering the cost of managing fuels on the north CRW boundary? Rolf Gersonde: Science does not support fuels management on the westside of the Cascades. The plan is to create a defensible space and explore if adaptation is needed. Mari Knutson: How about a water system on the north ridge?

-GRC Student: Have you considered burning piles for fuels management? Rolf Gersonde: We can use mechanical treatments or fire; Because fuels build back quickly, and it is the small fuels that carry fire, burning risk is too high. The CRW provides an unfiltered drinking water source and minimizing sedimentation is critical.

-Wendy Sammarco: What data was used to develop the FMP? Rolf Gersonde: The models were run with remotely sensed data, specifically height sensitive data.

**Presentation: Action 18 Report: Forest Conversion Review = Richard Martin, King County**

## **Manager**

Richard explains that the Action 18 Report was identified in the 2020 King County Comprehensive Plan as an action item. The information used to determine the change in forest cover between 1992-2016 is taken from the 30-Year Forest Plan. The mandated approach was to summarize the impact on forest canopy that Class IV General Forest Practices (conversion harvests), Conversion Option Harvest Plans (COHP) and carbon sequestration lost due to forest conversions.

Relative to forest canopy/cover in unincorporated King County during the 1992–2016-time frame, there is very little change, indicating that the existing regulations and permit process' (including the growth management plan, land use code, and zoning) are having the intended effect.

Moving forward, recommendations include implementing the 30-Year Forest Plan and implementing the 2022 RFC Strategic Priorities.

The Action 18 Report focuses on forest canopy in rural King County. Additionally, the King County Council and the King County Executive have a strong interest in protecting urban forests/urban forest canopies. There has been reduction in forest canopy in unincorporated King County urban area during the 1992–2016-time frame.

## **Presentation: King County Proposed Biennial Budget: WLRD Forestry Program = Richard Martin, King County Manager**

Richard Martin shares about the King County Water and Land Resources Division Forestry Program Budget for 2023-2024. King County is on a two-year budget cycle (2023-2024); however, there are opportunities every 6-months to amend the budget. The budget is approved by the King County Council. 0.02% of the King County General Fund supports forest actions.

In the RFC Strategic Priorities Report there is a request for more funding to do more forest related work. King County annually receives approximately \$7 million from forest related revenue (timber excise tax, County trust land harvest revenue, USFS subsidy, etc.), which is deposited in the General Fund. The General Fund is used to fund many things across all of King County government.

During this budget cycle a request for an additional \$1 million was made to fund wildfire risk reduction, support private forest landowners, and to support urban forest actions; however, the request was denied. The vision is to use forest revenue to support forest actions.

A comparison between forest funding from the previous budget and the 2023-2024 budget is shared, revealing a flat budget, no increase no decrease.

Following up/through with the RFC request for additional funding to support forest related work (per the Strategic Priorities Report), an initial attempt was made this budget cycle unsuccessfully; however, we will try again in the future.

## **Discussion**

-Mari Knutson: Will you share about the four-new forestry positions? Richard Martin: These new positions will be King County Parks positions, funded through the King County Parks Levy. The positions will be advertised in the next 2-4 months (filled in 2023)

Richard anticipates reconfiguring an FTE to an Urban Forester position to his Agriculture and Forestry Incentive Team in 2023.

-Laurie Benson: At what stage in the budget process did the request for additional forest dollars get killed? Richard Martin: The request did not make it out of the King County Executive Office. Laurie Benson: then this is where the RFC strategically lobbies. Richard Martin: The role of the RFC is to advise the King County Executive.

## Public Comments

GRC Student: Shares that the RFC Webpage is out of date. [*Note = the webpage has been updated December 2022*]

GRC Student: Might the RFC consider a student member? [*note: added to action items*]

## Agency Updates

WA Department of Natural Resources – Laurie Benson shares that several internships are currently being advertised. DNR is hiring forest health and wildfire specialists. The Good Neighbor Authority (partnership between DNR & USFS) Bandera timber harvest is completed. For the 2023 State legislative session DNR is lobbying for 1) Avoid Conversion Rapid Response Fund to acquire key working forest lands at risk of conversion; and 2) Urban Forestry to support additional community grants to increase statewide urban canopy.

King County Water and Land Resources – Richard Martin shares that all rural and urban carbon credits successfully navigated third party audit and verification and all 2022 credits sold quickly. Demand for carbon credits is great, and Richard states that King County can sell any credit the County generates, current rate is \$30/ton. The County continues to look at how to monetize carbon credits/revenue for private landowners. Currently investigating three options available nationally that may work well for King County private landowners.

King Conservation District – Brett Anderson shares that KCD is in the process of hiring a forester split between urban and rural forest responsibilities. The new wildfire resilience cost share program will have its first implementation at Trilogy on Redmond Ridge.

## Wildfire in King County discussion: Loch Katrine (1,918 acres), Bolt Creek Fire (14,713 acres)

### Group Discussion

Grady Steere shares that the Loch Katrine fire spread on to Campbell Global managed land, burning units planned for harvest in the near future. The burned/damaged timber was salvage logged this year, effecting harvest unit planning and silviculture scheduling.

Background on Loch Katrine fire: The fire started on USFS managed forest land and burned for one-month before it blew up and spread on to Campbell Global managed land.

Eric Oien shares that the USFS will let wildfire burn if it started naturally; however, with checkerboard ownership, this is a problem. No mechanical equipment is allowed in wilderness areas.

Li Hsi suggests fire readiness schemes be considered. For example, because 2022 was a very hot dry summer he irrigated through the summer months.

Eric Oien and Laurie Benson share that there are year-round well trained wildland firefighters on DNR staff now.

## Concluding Remarks

Laurie Benson adjourns the meeting at 11:53

## Adjourn