



**King County**  
Rural Forest Commission

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting  
Thursday, July 19, 2018, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners Present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair); Rex Thompson, professional forester (Vice-Chair); Steven Mullen-Moses, Snoqualmie Tribe; Li Hsi, private forest landowner; Bernie McKinney, private forest landowner; Wendy Davis, private forest landowner; Daryl Harper, private forest landowner; Monica Paulson Priebe, Green River College; Amy LaBarge, forest ecologist; Dick Ryon, rural cities; Laurie Benson, WA DNR; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District;

Guests: Michael Lasecki (KCD), David Warren (Vashon Forest Stewards), Diane Rauschenberg (Friends of Bass Lake), Steve Horton (private forest landowner)

King County DNRP Staff: Richard Martin, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD); Bill Loeber (WLRD); Wendy Sammarco (WLRD); Kathleen Farley Wolf (WLRD); Erika Kinno, Ashley Mihle and Ben Axt (Wastewater Treatment Division)

**Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 8:32a.m.**

**Motions**

Motion 1-0719. That the minutes of the May 17, 2018 meeting be approved without amendments. Dick motioned, Rex seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2-0719. To approve the new RFC Executive Committee that will be seated after the September RFC meeting. The new Executive Committee will include Monica (RFC Chair), Amy (RFC Vice-Chair), Steven (at large), Wendy (at large) and Kathleen (staff liaison). Dick motioned, Bernie seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Motion 3-0719. To adjourn the July 19, 2018 meeting. Monica motioned, Bernie seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment (Nate Veranth)**

To accommodate the schedules of visitors who wished to provide comments to the RFC, Veranth requested that the agenda be adjusted to allow for public comments at the beginning of the meeting.

David Warren, Vashon Forest Stewards (VFS), noted that the Vashon forest mill is now FSC certified and VFS can harvest and process certified lumber. Dave expressed concern that the

lease on the mill site will expire in June 2019 and they will need to look elsewhere. VFS had been leasing the property from King County since 2004, but the property was sold/traded with another landowner on Vashon Island. VFS has invested about \$40,000 in equipment and infrastructure improvements that will be lost if they have to leave that site and may lose FSC capacity on the island. The VFS program has been successful due to partnership between the local community and King County and they have generated about \$1.5 million in sales and other revenue since their inception. The mill provides high quality wood for local projects, including the recently constructed high school. They are looking for support to help locate an alternative mill location. Future options also include shutting down mill operations June 2019 if a suitable alternative mill site is not located. Dave requested that the RFC encourage King County to explore other leasing options and support an integrated forestry infrastructure on Vashon Island.

Diane Rauschenberg, Friends of Bass Lake, briefed the RFC on a proposed recycling center within the Bass Lake watershed. Diane noted that over \$21 million has been invested in preservation and management of Bass Lake Complex (near Enumclaw) and that the proposed recycling center presents a threat to the ecological health of the watershed. Diane reported that the application for the site development was submitted in October but is still under review as there are many public concerns (traffic, ground water, etc.). SEPA is under review. There will be a second comment period once SEPA decision is issued. The Friends of Bass Lake want to maintain natural areas and avoid development that will harm the lake and associated natural habitats.

Nate thanked Diane for her presentation and for making sure that RFC members were aware of the proposed development. Nate reminded Commissioners that the RFC does not typically engage in site-specific land use matters, permit applications, etc., unless it has larger policy implications. Steven, stressed that RFC does not have time or capacity to engage in individual permits and that Tribal and public review is incorporated into the SEPA process. He urged the commission to stay focused on larger level policy issues. Steven noted that the project has yet to be reviewed by the Snoqualmie Tribe but they will undoubtedly have both environmental and cultural concerns. Nate asked whether the proposed Bass Lake project could affect surrounding rural forest as opposed to just having site-specific impacts. Dick noted that there have been projects that were halted/modified because of significant off-site impacts.

Bernie noted that the policy piece the RFC might be interested in relates to zoning of the property. He wondered if a recycling center is an allowable use and suggested that the RFC may want to address allowable uses in RA- or M-zoned land that potentially impact rural forests. Daryl noted that the DEPR process had not been completed and they decide if the zoning is appropriate. Nate asked if the County could provide some advice and guidance; Richard said that he could have Eric look into this.

Li and Monica stressed the value of listening to citizens that have specific concerns but Monica said that the challenge was to interpret those concerns through a regional lens. Nate added that reports from local citizens are important to allow for detection of larger scale issues or trends. Daryl stressed that if there were issues of concern that might rise to the level of RFC engagement,

it is important to hear from people who represent multiple sides of the issues. Nate reiterated that although the Bass Lake issue did not immediately rise to the level of requiring RFC comment, individual commission members are certainly welcome to provide comments.

### **Chair Report (Nate Veranth)**

Nate reminded commission members that he, along with Rex and Dick, would be rotating off of the commission after the September meeting, which means that a new executive committee will need to be formed. Nate encouraged members to step up and fill the chair and vice-chair roles. Monica offered to serve as chair, if there is a strong vice-chair to provide solid back-up. Bernie was willing to serve as vice-chair but since he is rotating off at the end of 2019, he thought it would be better for another commissioner to fill that role. Amy agreed to serve as vice-chair. Nate recommended that Steven join the Executive Committee and Steven agreed. Richard reminded the commission that the RFC Administrative Procedures calls for an Executive Committee that consists of the chair, vice-chair, two additional members of the RFC and the staff liaison. Wendy volunteered to also serve on the Executive Committee. Thus, it was proposed that after the September meeting, the new RFC Executive Committee include Monica, Amy, Steven, Wendy and Kathleen. Dick moved that the proposed slate of new Executive Committee members be approved, Bernie seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Commission Recruitment**

Kathleen reported that the period for receiving applications had closed. Six applications had been received and two individuals asked for and received extensions to submit their applications. Applications will be reviewed by DNRP staff, Dick and Monica in late July/early August and interviews will be held in late August. Monica and Dick will represent the RFC during the interviews; Kathleen and Richard will assist. Ideally, we will select prospective new members by the end of August so that they can attend the September meeting; however, before they are formal voting members of the RFC, they will need to receive approval by the DNRP Director and County Executive. Council review and approval of the slate of members will also be requested.

Kathleen noted that the ordinance establishing the RFC specifically identified the need to include a representative from a rural city. Although many RFC members reside in rural cities, none are official representatives of city government or organizations focused on the needs of rural cities. We will need to invest additional energy during the next recruiting period to find qualified rural city candidates; Brandy has some ideas and will provide them to Kathleen.

Brandy reminded Commission members about concerns raised in the May meeting related to lost institutional knowledge when Nate, Dick and Rex rotate off the Commission. She asked for ideas about how to capture or retain that knowledge (e.g., non-voting emeritus status). Nate noted that in spite of recent significant turnover, the Commission has continued to function at a high-level. Amy mentioned that the staff-liaison is a key part of maintaining progress and continuity. Rex stressed that outgoing members are always available for consultation, which was

a statement echoed by Nate. Brandy noted that having members with extended experience brings a perspective that resists continual baseline shifts and Amy noted that since we are dealing with a resource that has long-term management implications, consistency is important. Dick countered that new ideas are valuable.

### **Meeting locations/times**

Nate raised the idea of rotating locations and adjusting start-times for the RFC meetings. A number of RFC members noted that traffic can make it challenging to arrive by 8:30 and that a move to 9:00 would be appreciated. Dick and Amy both stressed that the Preston Community center is historically significant and recognized by the forestry community and rural landowners (e.g., key to formation of Mountains to Sound Greenway). Dick noted that there were benefits to holding meetings in a single location and Monica offered that the Preston Community Center could be the primary meeting location but that a few meetings a year be held elsewhere in the County to benefit RFC members and provide greater connection to members of the community. Although there was general agreement on the benefits of moving meeting times and locations, it was decided to defer decisions on location and times until the September meeting.

### **King County Biosolids Program (Ashley Mihle and Ben Axt)**

Axt described King County's biosolids program, which produces two products of value to the agriculture and forestry sectors. Loop, which is treated solids removed from the wastewater stream, and GroCo compost, which is the composted version of Loop. Loop is widely used in commercial forestland and on grain farms in eastern Washington. Although Loop meets and exceeds EPA and EU limits for heavy metals and other contaminants, it cannot currently be applied directly to vegetables. There is great potential for additional application of Loop on forestlands but there are a number of challenges including access for equipment. GroCo compost can be applied to all farming operations, but cost is the greatest challenge.

Mihle discussed the recycled water program, which produces Class A recycled water. Class A recycled water is highly treated, safe for many uses and meets strict safety standards established by state and federal agencies. Currently, recycled water is used for many industrial purposes, such as road construction and building demolition, sod grass production and on recreational fields. Issues with delivery hamper use on individual farms, but DNRP is working to greatly improve access.

### **King County Forest Management (Bill Loeber)**

Bill provided background on the guiding principles for the King County forest stewardship program. Prior to being acquired by the County, many of the parks properties were altered beyond the natural range of variation. In many cases, abandonment after intensive logging or planting with single-species plantations (typically Douglas-fir) has created many declining hardwood-dominated stands of overstocked, low diversity forest. Stewardship work is intended to restore natural composition and structure and, ideally, generate program income.

Henrys Ridge Open Space/Ravensdale Retreat Natural Area units will be managed via a thinning from below harvest. Both units are approximately 30-35 years old and are located within a fragmented landscape of forestland and high-density development. Overstocking has resulted in dense, weak, stressed trees susceptible to snow and ice damage. The goal is to reduce stand density, reduce fuel load/fire risk, increase diameter growth, and reduce hazards to trail users. Thinning will retain non-Douglas-fir to increase stand diversity. Gaps will be created to increase structural diversity and additional gaps will be created as log landing/loading areas; gaps will be planted with a mix of cedar, hemlock and western white pine. Parks Division has initiated a public outreach effort and will step up public contacts now that timber has been sold. Ravensdale has local community support and a strong volunteer advocate.

Laminate root rot and Armillaria are known from the sites and there was good discussion about treatment options. Monica noted that at Green River College there is a study of the benefits of “stump tipping” to control root-rot and they have used interpretive signage to explain the work underway; the site is heavily used but there has been no public push-back. Some discussion about having county include that practice in future harvest contracts. Amy suggested that a preference should be to focus on planting non-susceptible trees. Li added that treatment can be worse than the problem as the agents can be spread from one location to another by machinery and maybe best option is to focus on encouraging resistant species (cedar, hemlock, hardwoods). Bill suggested that many people are influenced by a conifer bias, but Monica noted that since much of King County forestland is already hardwood dominated, we need to encourage development of more conifer dominated forestland.

Approximately 134 acres in three units will be harvested on Taylor Mountain Forest. The focus will be to reduce the density of hardwoods, mostly alder. Maple stumps will be treated after harvest. About 47,000 cedar, Douglas-fir and hemlock will be planted after the harvest is completed. Monica asked about interpretive signage and Bill responded that there are permanent signs on Island Center Forest, which had a similar forestry treatment, and DNRP will install temporary signage during the current forest operations. Bill agreed that additional, permanent interpretive signage would be valuable.

Rex cautioned about greater consideration of public concerns. Dick said that Weyerhaeuser had mixed success with efforts to address community concerns. Monica takes her conflicts resolution class out to Taylor Mountain forest and stresses the value of getting specific recommendations from neighbors (e.g., specific trees to leave, density, etc.) Bernie noted that managers should consider full range of natural seral stages. Li asked about public opposition to chemical applications. Bill mentioned that there has not been any significant opposition but most herbicide applications have been in more rural areas. Bernie suggested that there were opportunities to use bike groups and others as stewards and advocates.

### **Agency reports and announcements**

Brandy reminded Commission members about the KCD review process as they are undergoing planning for their next proposal for rates and services. KCD would benefit from RFC recommendations on rural forest priorities. Brandy recommended that the RFC review the 2009 RFC document and determine whether the priorities remain the same or have changed. Brandy suggested that there could be a call to review the document and discuss a path forward for the RFC. Brandy will provide a summary of how KCD incorporated previous RFC recommendations. Rex would like some guidance about where KCD is thinking of going in the future but Brandy suggested that KCD would like guidance from the RFC before they establish their forest priorities.

### **Concerns of Commissioners**

No additional concerns or issues raised.

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

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on September 20, 2018, at the Lake Wilderness Lodge in Maple Valley.