



King County

Water & Land Resources Division
Department of Natural Resources & Parks
King Street Center
201 S. Jackson St., Ste. 600
Seattle, WA 98104-3855
(206) 477-4654 Office | (206) 296-0192 Fax

MEETING NOTES

CEDAR RIVER COUNCIL

July 26th, 2016 – 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Riverbend Mobile Home Park Club House
17410 SE Renton/Maple Valley Rd. #25, Renton, WA 98058

Meeting was called to order at 6:13 pm (site tour preceded from 5:40 – 6:10 pm).

Riverbend Project Site Tour – Jon Hansen & Sarah McCarthy, King County DNRP

Jon Hansen, Supervising Environmental Scientist, and Sarah McCarthy, Senior Ecologist, both of King County's Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP), conducted a half-hour tour of the Riverbend project site with attending members of the public.

Presentation: Riverbend Levee Setback & Floodplain Restoration – Jon Hansen, King County DNRP

Jon Hansen gave a presentation overviewing the Riverbend Levee Setback and Floodplain Restoration project underway by DNRP. The project initiated in June 2015 and is ongoing. Much of the Riverbend mobile home park property is in the "channel migration" area of the Cedar River, he explained, and therefore at increased risk for erosion and flooding. The County purchased the property with grant funds, seeking a course of action to provide benefit to the area. He described several potential benefits: improving in-stream and off-channel habitat for salmon, reducing flood hazards and long-term public costs, and re-initiation of natural processes where possible.

He detailed several proposed elements of the project: removal or modification of levees to protect property and infrastructure, excavation of gravel and fill from the mobile home park site, and possible modification to Cavanaugh Pond, a pond connected to the river in the project area. Ongoing efforts include a preliminary design phase, site and reach condition assessment, hydraulic modeling, and so forth. A major component of the design process, Mr. Hansen said, is attempting to balance many considerations, such as flood control, public recreation access to the river, and the value of Cavanaugh Pond – among other possible uses – as a Sockeye salmon spawning site. He noted that many of the proposed components are still preliminary at this point, that much is to be determined and many alternatives are being considered.

Sarah McCarthy then introduced a video of recent conditions in Cavanaugh Pond. She reported that recent recorded redd numbers in the pond were very low, a total of only seven last year, down from several hundred counted in 1999-2000. She explained that only about one-third of the pond is suitable for Sockeye spawning, that the remaining portion is too deep. She briefly detailed predation in the pond, that bass are unusual but sculpin are more common and cutthroat trout show up occasionally from the main river.

Public comment raised several topics, notably security concerns for the area from potential illegal activity in the defunct mobile home park. Linda Holecek, Property Agent Supervisor for DNRP, advised that the County shares these concerns, and that the County is in the process of obtaining a demolition contract for the property and that the mobile homes should be removed by this fall. She added that there will be a County presence at the site for several years to come, which should deter illegal activity in the area.



King County

Frank Urabeck stressed that now, in the preliminary stage, should be the time for public commentary and feedback on this project, rather than waiting until the design is finalized. Mr. Hansen said there is an official County website for project information, and that he would gladly speak to anyone with questions.

Presentation / Discussion: Cedar River Wood Hazards – John Engel, King County DNRP

John Engel, Cedar River Basin Supervising Engineer for DNRP, presented on the status of current log jam hazards and mitigation efforts on the Cedar. He described 2016 as an “extreme” year for jams on the river: while there were no complaints in the prior two years, 14 different jam sites have been observed this year.

He explained the County’s assessment process for the jams: DNRP visits the sites accompanied by the Sheriff’s office, who then rates the severity of each jam site through a “color-tiered” system. He noted that some jam sites have very poor access, making it difficult to get large equipment into the area. He also explained the hazard investigation process: the Sheriff’s marine unit evaluates safety concerns and recommends appropriate actions, and KC Water and Land Resources’ river management team implements those actions.

There are many considerations the County must weigh in assessing these situations, Mr. Engel said, which can slow the jam mitigation process. Public safety must be balanced as a priority with salmon habitat protection, as well as access to and ease of moving the wood. Permitting must also be obtained through the appropriate jurisdictions, such as Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) as well as local tribes. Larry Fisher reported that one WDFW site permit would be issued soon, and that WDFW is working with Kate Akyuz of DNRP’s River and Floodplain Management Section on several others. Mr. Fisher added that while many jurisdictions were unprepared for the amount of wood in the river this year, that WDFW, the County, and local tribes are making significant progress in their conversations on the issue.

Some CRC members expressed frustration about “bureaucratic” issues slowing the process of removing jams from the river. Tom Allyn stated there should be a system in place so action could be taken quickly to ensure public safety when a jam is reported. Mr. Engel answered that such a system is what the County is currently working on. Mr. Allyn requested that the outline for this plan be brought forth for Council review, and offered a suggestion that various trails groups might be able to assist in removing wood in jam areas difficult for large equipment to reach.

Mr. Engel agreed with a comment that even closure of the river, which was done this year, is not 100% effective in removing public risk. He also commented that the Sheriff’s office simply does not have the manpower to monitor the entire river on a regular basis. He encouraged citizens to stay alert and any witnesses to trouble on the river to contact 911.

Future Meeting Topics

- Future Meeting Sites: Nathan Brown requested feedback on tonight’s club house location as a potential regular venue for future CRC meetings.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Next Meeting

- August 23rd, 2016, 6:00 – 8:00 pm, Site Tour: Hiram M. Chittenden (Ballard) Locks, 3015 NW 54th Street, Seattle, WA 98107