



## King County

Water & Land Resources Division  
Department of Natural Resources & Parks  
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## MEETING NOTES

### CEDAR RIVER COUNCIL

October 22, 2019 – 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM  
Lake Wilderness Lodge  
22500 SE 248<sup>th</sup> St., Maple Valley, WA 98038

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*The meeting was called to order at 6:42 pm.*

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1. **Call to Order/Welcome & Introductions – Tom Allyn, CRC Vice-Chair**

Vice-Chair Tom Allyn called tonight's meeting to order and introduced Judy Blanco, the new King County DNRP basin steward for the Cedar River watershed. Ms. Blanco was formerly with Forterra.

2. **General Public Comment Period**

There was no public comment during this period.

3. **CRC Vice-Chair Election – Tom Allyn, CRC Vice-Chair**

Mr. Allyn asked for nominations for a new CRC Vice-Chair, as he will not seek re-nomination for the position. He said he had found his voice with the CRC and wishes for someone else to have that chance. He intends to remain on the Council.

Melinda Woodard self-nominated for the position, and explained her background and reasoning for wishing to serve in this capacity. She voiced a desire to find new ways for the CRC to connect to the community, which can help the CRC be more transformative with the knowledge among its members. There were no other nominations.

Upon a full vote by all CRC members present, Ms. Woodard's nomination and election as new Vice-Chair were unanimously approved.

4. **CRC Representative to WRIA 8 – Tom Allyn, CRC Vice-Chair**

Charles Ruthford, former CRC member, was its prior representative to WRIA 8. Mr. Allyn asked for volunteers for the position; none were voiced. Due to short member turnout at this meeting, Mr. Allyn advised a temporary appointment for this position until a permanent representative is chosen. He volunteered to serve in this capacity. The motion for this action was made by Mr. Allyn, seconded by Frank Urabeck, and received a unanimous vote of approval from members present. A call for a permanent representative will be placed next month's agenda.

Larry Phillips said the CRC should discuss the importance of WRIA 8 to the CRC's work, and asked this to be on the next meeting agenda as well. Mr. Urabeck suggested WRIA 8 staff meet with the CRC. Mr. Allyn agreed to reach out to Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz at KC DNRP to arrange this.

5. **Response to CRC Sockeye Letter to Governor Inslee – Frank Urabeck, CRC**

Mr. Urabeck said his understanding is that Governor Inslee has yet to respond to the letter sent to his office earlier this year by the CRC, requesting support to organize a multi-jurisdictional recovery effort to save the Cedar River's rapidly declining sockeye population. Mr. Urabeck advised that the CRC should respectfully push for a response. He offered guidance to whomever is chosen to follow up on this; Mr. Phillips agreed to work on it. Mr. Urabeck said the CRC should contact J. T. Austin in the Governor's office.

Mr. Urabeck distributed a recent letter from WDFW to Seattle Public Utilities director Mami Hara on related sockeye recovery concerns. While there has been some dialogue, leadership and resources are still needed to bring together necessary entities on this effort. He noted WDFW biologist Aaron Bosworth is leading research into perch predation on sockeye, and that sea lion predation at the Ballard Locks is a problem again. He stressed every fish counts, as up to 50-60% of the sockeye population are not making it to the Locks now.

6. **Cedar River Acquisitions – Linda Holecek, King County DNRP, Acquisitions Unit**

Ms. Holecek distributed and reviewed a report of King County property acquisitions on the Cedar River from 1994 to present. The data included: property name, acreage, year closed, and price/value. Many were acquired as part of



## King County

the “Cedar River Legacy,” which involved a list of properties agreed to by the CRC that the County should prioritize acquiring. Over time, the KC Flood Control District (FCD) became a driving force in acquisitions, funding many in whole or in part. Some of this funding could be used for demolitions and other purposes that conservation futures money (CFT) can’t be used for. However, the FCD can be slow in bringing forward this funding. Overall, 1,256 acres (137 parcels) were protected for a cost of \$53 million.

The County passed a \$35 million bond in October, though these funds will not be available for a few more weeks. CFT funding allocated \$17 million to various watersheds, and several million dollars more will come from the Parks levy. The CFT committee prefers its funds spent within two years, but can extend this given a solid justification. A problem with this funding is that sometimes maintenance and operations funding is not available; CFT funds cannot be used for this and the Parks levy does not set aside enough money for it. If nothing is done, Ms. Holecek said the maintenance and operations funding may run out within five years. New funding sources are being sought. Mr. Allyn noted with the County pushing to acquire lands more quickly due to rising land values, King County Parks is faced with a burden to maintain more and more lands.

Ms. Holecek explained the County prefers to acquire property without structures, though many have them. But due to funding restrictions, the County can’t evict tenants or condemn a property, only persuade. CFT funding requires no structures can be on a property, so the County often must pay to remove structures.

She touched on the County’s Land Conservation Initiative (LCI) and how it ties into the acquisitions process. If an acquisition is on the LCI list, it is given higher priority. She noted many property owners do not volunteer to sell their property until approached. The County tries to offer fair deals to the owners, making offers based on certified third-party property appraisals.

She said acquisitions in the Cedar River basin are going well, with a number of projects in progress. One project is on the former Riverbend mobile home park site. As part of this acquisition, the County successfully relocated all 100+ residents, all of whom agreed they were better off as a result. Ms. Holecek noted the City of Seattle also owns many properties in the watershed, including along Jones Road. Mr. Allyn added that online County maps can be used to determine who owns a given parcel; Ms. Holecek said the County can keep the CRC updated as well.

Jay Mirro asked what the ideal acreage goal was for the County and public to own. Ms. Holecek answered that she believes there are many potential properties still out there to be purchased as they come available.

Larry Phillips noted that in addition to Riverbend, the County made an effort in the Rainbow Bend property buyouts to ensure landowners ended up better off as a result. He appreciated the process was not just about removing structures and restoring the land.

Amy LaBarge asked if there was a sense of the breakdown of how many acres of this acquired land has been developed or not developed. Mr. Phillips said a high percentage of these were oriented towards habitat preservation and thus have very few have structures. Ms. Holecek offered to gather this data. Mr. Allyn added he would like to know how much of the acquired acreage fronts the river.

### **7. Riverbend Project Update – Jon Hansen, KC DNRP, Capital Projects Managing Supervisor**

Mr. Hansen was unable to attend tonight; it was agreed his presentation would be rescheduled to next month. Judy Blanco reported all project funding has been secured and construction is to begin summer 2020. Final design is due by end of the year. Ty Peterson at Department of Local Services’ Permitting Division confirmed project design is at 90% completion and permitting is underway. Mr. Urabeck requested a meeting between the CRC and Riverbend project staff, to review and compare original expectations vs. actual results in regards to sockeye.

### **8. Asphalt Plant Permitting Update – Ty Peterson, KC Department of Local Services, Permitting Division**

Mr. Peterson updated the CRC on the County permitting status of the planned Lakeside Industries asphalt plant on Maple Valley Highway. He anticipated an extensive review comment letter to be completed by the end of this week. Shoreline development permit comments are being finalized, along with details for wetland mitigation and stormwater. The applicant has obtained a WSDOT permit for these works, as well as an air quality permit, and an NPDES permit from the Department of Ecology. Mr. Peterson noted DLS’s review comments are extensive and will take a couple of months to complete responses to them. He offered to copy Ms. Blanco on these responses so they can be forwarded for CRC review.



## King County

He said the County has made no formal determinations yet, and no specific questions have been posed, though the applicant appears to be technically on the right track. He also noted the project footprint has changed: it is smaller, but more areas are covered – even loading areas – to facilitate stormwater treatment.

The CRC asked several follow-up questions of Mr. Peterson:

- Q: Has any testing been done at the site for the toxic acid (hydrogen disulfide) that comes from asphalt?  
A: This is not a testing requirement for asphalt plants. While it's easy to test for, it's difficult to determine the amounts. The acid is generally airborne and doesn't like water. DOE's position on this is that the likelihood of this traceable to the plant is so low it can't be tested for.
- Q: The Puget Sound Air Quality Control permit was issued several months ago?  
A: Yes, but it's a mobile permit, to be modified wherever they go. These permit documents are public record and can be obtained by contacting the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency or DLS.
- Q: Do you feel the environmental review by other agencies is adequate, that their standards match up to yours?  
A: Yes and no. State permit standards don't match KC stormwater requirements. Air quality is monitored by regional bodies. In short, we don't always rely on other agencies' standards to comply with King County code. Generally, DOE's standards will prevail.
- Q: What kind of controls are you looking for in a worst-case scenario?  
A: When we review the permit, we monitor to ensure it's constructed per the plans. If they show compliance, they get a reduced annual SWM fee. In this case, they're proposing a stormwater vault system with sediment filtration removal and separation. These filters are specified to handle a certain amount of water and be good for a certain length of time. We'll require confirmation these filters are replaced on time. NPDES also requires annual discharge testing for pH, oil sheen, turbidity, and temperature. If something is found, they have the authority to require further testing.
- Q: Do you feel public comment was influential in your review?  
A: Definitely yes. Almost 200 individual comments were submitted, many of them multi-page, and bringing attention to the plant's proximity to environmentally-sensitive and residentially-heavy areas. Impacts from comments included a number of changes, such as to designated wildlife corridors.
- Q: Which part of your department oversees fire control for the site?  
A: We implement state fire code, but we're not a responder. In those cases the local fire district responds. DLS will review the facility to determine its compliance with fire code.
- Q: Does the County require approved applicants to secure bonds for operations, if things go wrong, to cover mitigation costs?  
A: No. However, the state has bonds that can be secured in these circumstances.
- Q: Does anyone know if there's a monitoring of ambient surface water quality in the river?  
A: There is, but I can't speak to how often and what is tested. City of Seattle does some of its own monitoring.

Amy LaBarge added the City of Seattle does water quality monitoring at Landsburg dam, mainly testing for turbidity. She said King County has a broader monitoring scope, and has several sites upstream of Landsburg in the municipal watershed. Several metrics the County tests for include: biodiversity, invertebrates, and fish toxicology. She advised contacting Kate MacNeale at King County for further information on their water quality sampling.

### 9. Water Supply Update – Amy LaBarge, Seattle Public Utilities

Ms. LaBarge presented on the status of Seattle's water supply, including historical data for precipitation and water consumption. Seattle is now in water year 2020 as of October. In water year 2019, precipitation levels were tracking somewhat normal, though a bit dry around February. Snowpack was at only 65% of average until a lowland snow event bumped it to about 70-75%. Then levels basically flattened until April, which saw a lot of rain. Due to low snowpack, rain was captured in reservoirs.

She highlighted several main data focuses:

- Consumption: Data shows two different historical averages, for 1986-1991 and 1999-2014. In past years, Seattle consumed much more water, but that has decreased over time despite population increases.
- Combined reservoir storage: Data was displayed for 1985-2014 and 2018-2019. Data for this pretty well followed a normal curve, though dipping a bit lower in mid-winter. This data averaged both the Cedar and Tolt watersheds, though the Tolt is much smaller. Summer drawdown was not too dramatic this year. While



## King County

weather was warm even in March, there was intermittent rain all summer, which helped manage the supply. She stressed that SPU manages this whole system in partnership with Seattle City Light, who generates hydroelectricity from this supply. They also manage instream flows for resident fish, and this time of year they also manage for floods.

- Flood management: A series of rainstorms over the past six days added about nine inches at Chester Morse Lake. As of Sunday, the lake was near the top of its overflow dyke, though the masonry pool was very low. As of today, the masonry pool is near the top of the dyke and the lake is up another three to four feet since Sunday. The plan is to release some water into the river to increase the flood pocket.

Frank Urabeck noted a recent flow at Renton measured 1,800 cfs, close to 2,200 – the threshold where redds start to be lost. He said it seemed City of Seattle was watching this; he praised the city's dam operation and flood control practices. Ms. LaBarge said this has been an early fall, with two major snow events already. Morse Lake was at 1,548 elevation as of Monday, which is good news. She added that the water supply graphs can be reviewed online any time, as well as the USGS gauges for Morse Lake.

The CRC asked a handful of follow-up questions of Ms. LaBarge:

- Q: The warm water in the north Pacific now looks similar to the blob year of 2014. How does this reflect on the possible water outlook for 2020?  
A: Year of the Blob was going into 2015, when we had no snow. I think water managers will plan to watch closely and plan ahead, be conservative, which they're pretty used to doing. We have a good start on this.
- Q: Have you looked at pre-1998 water use graphs to break down residential vs. commercial water consumption, where the savings were coming from?  
A: Generally we have two sets of customers, residential and wholesale. I can ask where those conservation efforts have panned out and get back to you on that. My sense is it's more in the residential base, more than addressing any leaks.

### 10. Fish Counts Update – Frank Urabeck, CRC

The media reports a record low for sockeye returns, about 17,000, down from 25,000 last year. The 10-year average was over 85,000. At the trap in Renton, which was pulled out for the season on October 15<sup>th</sup> due to high flows, 1,701 broodstock were counted; Landsburg counted only 91, also a record low. Landsburg represents about 5-6% of total sockeye broodstock for the Cedar. Biologists estimate 2.5 million eggs this year, down from 4.2 million last year. Coho are doing slightly better, likely due to their longer rearing period in the river.

It is unknown why sockeye losses in Lake Washington continue to be so high. Only about 10-20% of fish coming through the Ballard Locks made it to the Cedar. In addition to prior existing threats, rockfish and perch now prey on sockeye. Mr. Urabeck stressed this is why the Governor's attention is needed. Larry Phillips is trying to get a reply from his office. Mr. Urabeck said while there's no money in WDFW's supplemental budget for this, the department is trying to squeeze what it can, but the Governor's backing is needed to ensure a "quarterback" takes lead to help turn this issue around. Amy LaBarge asked if he did not see WDFW stepping into this role. Mr. Urabeck said no, though a feasibility assessment was discussed in the recent WDFW letter. He said while some staff, like Jim Scott, seem willing to try, there is a level of commitment needed by the agency that isn't there.

### 11. Public Comment Period for Agenda Items

There was no public comment during this period.

### 12. Adjourn

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*The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.*

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### Next Meeting

Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Red Lion Hotel (Spruce Room)  
1 S. Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057