



King County

Water and Land Resources Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

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Cedar River Council DRAFT Meeting Notes

June 23, 2020 – 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (scheduled)
Meeting/Conference Call via Zoom (King County account)

- I) **Call to Order/Welcome:** Chair Max Prinsen called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm. He advised the CRC's goal is to continue ongoing discussions. He asked members to consider topics for the next 3-4 months. Nathan Brown said future meetings will alternate between 3:00 or 6:30 pm time slots; he will send a schedule soon.
- II) **General CRC Announcements/Information (Open to all Attendees):** Jeff Neuner reported there was a murder Friday night in the Cedar Rapids area. He said the area is an ongoing problem, with many young adults using it to party. He asked the CRC and King County to be aware of what happens when a property is acquired and opened up. Mr. Prinsen suggested bringing this to the attention of the County Sheriff, citing that his own Shadow Lake neighborhood sees vandalism. He advised also involving King County Parks. Mr. Brown will arrange for a representative of the Sheriff to speak at July's meeting on tools to address these situations.

III) Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Updates

- **Presentation: Downstream Habitat Acquisitions – Brent Lackey**
Mr. Lackey oversees SPU's Cedar River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Lower River Habitat Program. The HCP is a method of compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In this case, SPU's taking water from the Cedar River watershed impacts endangered Chinook salmon, thus SPU took responsibility to implement a HCP for the watershed. The lower watershed is the HCP's focus, and has three main steps:
 - 1) Acquisition, of 69.6 acres of river-adjacent property in 19 parcels, largely in three separate reaches along the river: Jones Road, Lower Lions Club/Belmondo, and Royal Arch.
 - 2) Floodplain Reconnection. This occurs jointly with WLRD through capital projects like Rainbow Bend and Riverbend, and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)-funded Royal Arch Reach project. Rainbow Bend has seen success with many juvenile Chinook at the site. Royal Arch is the next focus, a 5-acre reconnection project with construction expected to begin in 2023. A SRFB grant was awarded this past year to fund design, which kicks off in a few weeks.
 - 3) Stewardship in Action (SiA) Program, via long-term contract partnership with Forterra. This has been established on riverfront properties for over 10 years. It eliminated invasive knotweed in 21 miles of the lower Cedar River corridor by work with hundreds of property owners. Forterra does planting, weed control, minor restoration, and property oversight. 50,000 native plants have been planted so far. SPU is committed to long-term stewardship, with Operations and Maintenance funding through 2050. SPU's financial commitment to the HCP is \$7 million, with \$5 million accomplished so far. Total funding, included non-committed funds, is over \$11 million. Funding is achieved via local, state, and federal grants, working with WLRD and King County Flood Control District (FCD). He said the HCP program is nearing completion; it and its financial obligations may "sunset" once commitment is met. Long-term stewardship would still be committed through 2050.

The presentation was followed by questions and comments from CRC members:

- Q: Royal Arch has seen flooding in recent years, particularly on the left bank of the upper reach. Is work being done to relieve these residents?
A: The project should help alleviate minor to moderate flood events.
- Q: Some projects sacrifice sockeye habitat. Has there been thought to improving sockeye habitat?

- A: The project seeks to restore fundamental habitat principles for all salmonids. Chinook, coho, sockeye, and trout are all expected to benefit from the additional habitat from the project.
- Q: Millions of dollars have been spent restoring habitat. What data is there that this has affected salmon yield? Habitat work has been consistent, but we need to be careful of benefit/cost ratio.
A: Scientific monitoring and data collecting is done more by WLRD. SPU works more with WRIA 8 groups to address limiting factors, with faith that the science is good. SPU is curious to see this fall if sockeye and other fish will benefit at the site.
 - Q: Are these projects multi-benefit, for salmon recovery as well as flood mitigation?
A: That's more done by King County, while SPU's work is more habitat-driven. There is some overlay between habitat preservation and flood control; projects often need both to qualify for funds.
 - Q: Is the Cedar River Watershed Education Center open to the public now?
A: It is closed due to COVID-19, but plans to reopen when safe. Online resources are being compiled.
- Mr. Lackey agreed that SPU could come back in a few years for follow-up discussion on Royal Arch. Larry Fisher noted that he recently learned only 10% of requested funding for salmon recovery is being provided. Ocean conditions are very depressed as well. Larry Phillips said he believes the CRC's attention to the state of salmon runs over the years has at least made people pay attention, and had some stabilizing impact for Chinook. Mr. Brown added that the CRC helped start the SiA program in the early 2000s.

- Update: Nighttime Dam Release Public Notifications – Amy LaBarge

Ms. LaBarge read a statement from Paul Faulds, SPU water resources manager, in response to a question from March's CRC meeting about public notice for nighttime dam releases from the reservoir. The statement said SPU plans to continue close coordination with King County's Flood Warning Center (FWC) during flood events. Residents can call the FWC any time for current information.

There were several follow-up questions and comments to the statement:

- Q: Is it possible to have a map of flow travel times from the masonry dam to Renton, to give residents a sense of how long until a release hits their area?
A: Not sure SPU has this kind of map yet, but this request will be passed to Mr. Faulds and his team.
- Q: Residents asked to be proactively notified instead of having to call or check online regularly.
A: Proactive contact with residents may be more under the purview of King County Emergency Management. The CRC can log this question and try to contact the FCD for a response.
- Mr. Prinsen recalled eight years ago there was a plan to not have dam releases at night, and a communication method established with property owners.
- Ms. LaBarge suggested she and Mr. Brown coordinate after this meeting to address follow-up concerns and needed coordination between relevant agencies on this issue.

IV) CRC Updates

- **WRIA 8:** Corinne Young shared documents from the last Salmon Recovery Council meeting in the chat. She said the meeting largely discussed grants and funding for the year.
- **Fish Habitat Conservation/Restoration (Sockeye):** Frank Urabeck reported sockeye counts at the Ballard Locks and returning to the Cedar continue to decline. There are mechanical issues with the Locks' fish ladder, and a new problem of seals catching sockeye at the ladder entrance. Mr. Urabeck, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Prinsen continue to engage the Governor's office and other agencies. The hope is to have another meeting with the Governor's staff, and get a reply to the CRC letter sent to their office last year, but many efforts remain on hold due to COVID-19. One idea in the letter was to delay releasing juvenile sockeye from the hatchery, so they would be larger and less of a target to predators. 140,000 fry were taken from Landsburg and held at the hatchery; while many have been released, it will be 4 years before results are known. Conversations continue with SPU and other co-managers, and a feasibility assessment is due in July. Mr. Urabeck believes there will be an appropriate juncture for public discussion on a future course of action for sockeye, and suggested having Jim Scott of WDFW present to the CRC this fall.
- **Cedar River Watershed:** This update was skipped due to problems with Ms. LaBarge's microphone.
- **CRC Member Updates:** Valerie O'Halloran introduced Angelina Benedetti, who will take over her position as City of Renton representative on the CRC. Ms. Benedetti introduced herself as a 4th generation Renton resident looking forward to connecting with others in her role as representative.

V) Meeting Feedback: Future Meeting Topics

After a short discussion, the following timeline was agreed upon for future CRC meeting topics:

- July: A Sheriff's update on area crime control tools; an asphalt plant update from DPER; a King County Rivers staff update on any repairs to local revetments damaged in February's flooding.
- August: There will be no meeting this month.
- September: An update on status/future outlook for sockeye, perhaps with a WDFW presentation.
- October: An update on SPU nighttime dam release public flood notifications.

VI) Public Comment:

- Mr. Prinsen noted Zoom is a good platform for those who don't like talking to a room. He suggested if the CRC could get a high public turnout on a Zoom call, they may attract media attention to CRC issues.
- Tom Allyn has re-established the www.cedarrivercouncil.org domain for the CRC's website.

VII) Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm. Next meeting is July 28th from 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, via Zoom call.