Cedar River Council
DRAFT Meeting Notes

February 25, 2020 – 7:00 to 9:00 pm
Red Lion Hotel – 1 S. Grady Way, Renton, WA

I) Call to Order/Welcome & Introductions
CRC Chair Max Prinsen called the meeting to order at about 7:00 pm.

II) General Public Comment
Nathan Brown passed out note cards for public comments, to be held after the main presentations.

III) 2020 Cedar River Flood Event

a) Presentation: Chris Brummer, King County River & Floodplain Management Section (RFMS)
The recent flood event may cause a reprioritization with the King County Flood Control District (FCD). They will send an assessment report regarding this flood event, and recommendations, to the FCD in April. This flood's peak flow was slightly below the levels of the 2009 flood event, but spent twice as long in Phase III and Phase IV stages, so there was twice as much water.

The Flood Warning Center (FWC) was open for six days and received about 1,000 phone calls during this event. Crews were working 12-hour shifts for a week. Multiple facilities were damaged:

- Orchard Grove Levee: Damage and overtopping.
- Dorre Don Lower Revetment: Overtopping on the right bank, damage to the facility, and scour under the bridge.
- Elkinton Avulsion (231st Pl. SE): They are recommending a hazard assessment along the reach.
- Jan Road Levee: There was some overtopping and there's a project scheduled for 2021 but the flood event didn't seem to affect it.
- Byers Curve Levee: Overtopping of both banks and the facility.
- McDonald Levee: 300 feet of damage and overtopping; also bank erosion and channel migration.
- SR 169 at Cedar Grove Rd.: Flooding was caused by local drainage – the undersized culvert gets clogged and can't drain fast enough, so it gets backed up. Replacing the culvert with a larger box culvert is in the capital investment strategy plan (construction is planned for 2021).
- Cedar Rapids: Engineered logs were displaced; will do more assessment after flooding goes down.
- Brassfield Maxwell Guth Revetment: A fallen tree displaced rocks.
- Herzman Levee: Trees were dislodged, and dislodged some boulders.
- Riverbend Upper & Lower Revetment: Lost 500 feet of the lower levee.
- Cedar River Trail Site 2 Revetment (Emergency Repair): 100 feet of damage to facility and the Cedar River Trail (CRT) lost 30 feet from bank erosion. They shored up the bank, but there is concern about the trail and fiber optics buried under the trail near the erosion zone. A total of 300 feet of emergency rock was placed.

Landslides in the river corridor also continue to be a problem. Damaged sites in the presentation will be included in the assessment report to the FCD, but more are to be visited and assessed.

b) Presentation: Ron Straka, Utility Systems Director, City of Renton
Flood Event Overview: There were impacts to the Cedar and Green Rivers, which reached Phase II to Phase IV. Both were high; Mr. Straka had only seen the Green this high once. There were many vulnerable areas, including Maplewood golf course, Renton Senior Center, the CRT, and others.

The City of Renton's response included monitoring, reporting, landslide clearing, etc. Mr. Straka showed slides of the flood, and flood protection work from past, where water got close. Carco Theater had placed sandbags, but part of the theater is below the river level so water did get in, likely from cracks in the floor. The CRT had significant damage near its edge, and had to be closed. The Elliott spawning channel, dredged in 2016, is now full of silty sand and sediment. The flood also ruined part of the road going to the channel. Total damages from the flood are at $8.2M. While FEMA assistance requires a Presidential Disaster Declaration, a Public Assistance Declaration is more likely in this case.

c) Presentation: Paul Faulds, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Water Resources Manager & Amy LaBarge, SPU Watershed Management Director

SPU's core responsibility is managing the water supply. Their facilities include two watersheds and several dams. Some water is released to a hydropower plant. The dam has release gates to prevent overtopping. The gate only opened 0.4 feet, and water was also flowing out of the notch.

To prepare for storms, SPU monitors the snowpack in the mountains. They also have remote sensing equipment, providing real-time data that's fed into their system constantly. In addition, SPU has river gauges and hydrologic models that use weather information, snowpack, and other data. Historical data is also incorporated. They also work with the Northwest Rivers Forecast Group.

In this event, SPU looked closely at the weather; the estimated flow was 3,500 CFS based on three to four inches of rain. What happened instead was an atmospheric river, also known as a "Pineapple Express." The region received 10 inches of rain in just under 48 hours. The region also had a very wet January. Peak river flows were up to 9,500 CFS. Morse reservoir raised 0.2 feet per hour and reached over 1,560 feet in elevation, so SPU had to release water. This was the second highest storm event since 1901.

Reservoir management begins in October and ends in September. A graph was shown of cumulative precipitation every month. In January and February, the region received a lot more rain than is typical. When managing a storm event, SPU tries not to contribute to habitat damage, to protect salmon redds. Levels are currently down to about normal, and they expect to have to refill next starting in March.

The Landsburg fish ladder had some damage. There was so much large debris, SPU had three log pickers working around the clock. There were also many landslides, which cause turbidity. There was damage in the watershed, including to roads and bridges. When gravel mobilizes, it damages salmon redds. Close to $38-40M of damage are estimated in the state.

During the first storm event, SPU did a good job of controlling impacts, but the next storm happened too soon. The same issues are also happening on the Tolt River.

SPU went 16 days without diverting flow to Lake Youngs, and the level was getting low. Monthly analysis graph shows flows and estimate of actual flow if there was no dam, so the graph shows that events aren't as severe as they could've been. The flow would've been near 12,000 CFS if SPU hadn't held back water.

At the end of the presentation, Mr. Brown noted there are flyers available tonight to explain how to report damage to King County Emergency Management.

IV) CRC/Public Question & Answer Period on Flood Presentations:

CRC members and the public asked the presenters an extensive list of follow-up questions:

- **Q:** When will the channel be re-mapped?
  A: The plan is to map the LIDAR and symmetry in next 2-3 weeks (before trees have too many leaves).
- **Q:** During the flood, a helicopter went by. What were they looking at?
  A: SPU had a helicopter after the event to take stock of damage.
- **Q:** How are you planning to repair damage and where are you getting dirt?
  A: Bringing in rock from Cedar River rock quarry.
- **Q:** Which dam safety protocol was implemented?
  A: Protocols are tied into the level of the reservoir, and at certain levels certain actions have to be taken. When events happen, we have only so much time to respond. SPU could've released more water after the first event, but this would've damaged salmon redds and the weather forecast was iffy for the next event.
- **Q:** Gravel filling the old channel near the levee – what is the purpose of it?
  A: It was the result of a natural process (an avulsion – rapid change in alignment of river).
- **Q:** Is there a plan to place soil on top of the gravel and plant trees?
  A: No.
- **Q:** Are snowpack levels normal, or above normal?
  A: We're above normal.
- **Q:** What was this event, a 50-year?
  A: The 2009 was a 30-year event and this one is a 50-year event, but USGS data is still preliminary.
- **Q:** Have the past 20 years of property purchases and levee setbacks affected flood levels?
  A: Would love a future presentation on that.

- **Q:** What's the process for sites that had damage? What should residents expect?
  A: King County's RFMS has filled out preliminary assessments that will be sent to the state. Homeowners can still submit damage assessments. Next it'll be put into a report to be submitted to the FCD, who'll have recommendations for high priorities. Repairs will be in spring/summer.
- **Q:** During flood events, is there value for volunteer groups to assist?
  A: King County has flood patrols that go out continuously for anything above a Phase III. Volunteers are internal, but the County can suggest people from the outside.
- **Q:** There's a regional aspect, is there inter-local coordination?
  A: Per SPU, annually a group of agencies confer on this and are always in contact with the flood management center to exchange information. Renton also communicates with the FWC and other agencies.
- **Q:** What is Riverbend?
  A: A restoration project on the Cedar River. Jon Hansen is the project manager for the Riverbend levee setback. It's a habitat restoration project that will help salmon but also reduce flood damage. The County will have to recalibrate it after this recent flood event.
- **Q:** About funding for Dorre Don – are unincorporated areas going to get federal funding to put into the levee? Are there existing pots of money ready to go for a project?
  A: Mr. Brummer says he's looking at a hazard assessment on that channel, but it's not necessarily eligible for funding. He is not certain if other restoration money is available.
- **Q:** The Dorre Don area is completely dry. We're scooping baby salmon out of the gravel and taking them to the river. Are we going to let the great spawning area dry out? What's the plan?
  A: Janne Kaje of King County's salmon recovery team says right now, the County is doing fact-finding. The top priority is safety. The short answer is they can't predict what will happen at that site. There are negative short-term impacts to fish, but in the long-term, flooding drives habitat. Changing the channels can be a good thing for renewal, and can create new spawning channels. This can make it better for fish, but it can't always be predicted. Mr. Kaje is happy to come back for a fuller discussion when there is a better idea of what's going on.
- **Q:** How does this compare to the November 1990 flood event?
  A: That flood was similar. Renton had a flow of 10,600 CFS, so this event was less but pretty close. Mr. Prinsen added that comparison to past events is difficult because dam management is different now.
- **Q:** Neighbors in Maplewood addition have cottonwoods that came into the channel. Will they be stuck there or will there be help getting them out?
  A: Mr. Brummer says County teams work with the County Sheriff to determine if a tree may pose a hazard.
- **Q:** What determines what spawning areas will be repaired and which not?
  A: One spawning area is a constructed facility.
- **Q:** We live on Byers Bend, a low point. The river floods the entire community. We started building up the levee early, as we have to go too far to get sandbags. Why do we have to go to Black Diamond to get sandbags? In 2009, sandbags were brought into the area.

  The dam release occurred Friday at 11 pm. That night we looked at the river forecast model, and thought the work we did was good enough. Around 4 am, a neighbor says we need more sandbags. Water was coming over the levee. Why weren't we notified there would be a dam release? We could've kept adding sandbags during the night or better, had an opportunity to evacuate.

  Why can't we get a text message on King County's flood alert system to be prepared for dam releases? We were in contact with the FWC continuously. Someone said Landsburg only updates once an hour. More than once an hour is needed during a flood event.
  A: SPU representative said he didn't know what was released at that time, and would have to go back and look. He said it's true some gauges are set up for quicker intervals and he'll look into the gauge at Landsburg. Mr. Brummer said they use Northwest Forecast Center to get updates. He doesn't know why people have to go to Black Diamond for sandbags.
- **Q:** In 2009, a current landowner worked for King County's Roads division and pushed for the County to get sandbags out there, which got action. No formal process was created for the future.
  A: Mr. Brummer said he'll follow up. Mr. Brown said the CRC advocated for it; someone in the audience said you could call the County and they'd bring the sand. Someone else said they did the same at Dorre

Don, that he just called and King County brought the sand. Thursday before the flood, there were people in Renton actively calling to be alerted. People can get on this list.

- **Q:** Capital investments – what year is the most recent?
  A: 2017. There is a list for high and medium priority projects online. We can give it to you.
- **Q:** The levee was breached at Cavanaugh Pond. The County has been working over a week to place rocks and protect the highway. But there are big logs - will any be removed? In summer, kids will be on rafts and tubes and someone will drown or be injured.
  A: The County will assist the Sheriff's office to do an assessment of the river. One option is to close the river if the trees can't be removed. Right now, they're providing habitat. It is yet to be determined. There are many decision-makers involved.
- **Q:** On the warning system: you can get text messages regarding the level, but we can already see that info elsewhere. We would rather get a prediction for future levels.
  A: Mr. Brummer said people not on the internet can call the FWC if there's concern and can call as often as they need to. The FWC can tell the caller what the forecast is.
- **Q:** Regarding Riverbend, they're going to take out part of the dyke – is it still planned?
  A: Questioner was advised to talk to Jon Hansen. The project won't make anything worse downstream, and could possibly reduce flood levels in Byers Bend.

Max Prinsen urged people to stay engaged and attend future CRC meetings. Judy Blanco is the Cedar River basin steward for King County and can also be contacted. Tonight's presentations will be posted to the CRC website, and information can also be found on Facebook. Mr. Prinsen also pointed out that those who lived at Riverbend and Rainbow Bend were moved out of the floodplain, which is a good thing.

V) Presentation: Jon Hansen, King County Water & Land Resources Division: Riverbend Levee Setback & Floodplain Restoration

This presentation was rescheduled for a future CRC meeting due to time constraints tonight.

VI) Standing Topics

a) WRIA 8: This item was skipped due to time constraints.
b) SPU - Water Supply, HCP, Dam Operations: This item was covered in an earlier presentation.
c) Sockeye Management: This item was skipped due to time constraints.
d) Fish Counts: Frank Urabeck said 17,411 were recently counted at Ballard Locks, but only 19% of that made it to the Cedar. Historically, 40 – 60% show up in the Cedar. The North Lake Washington run had only 610 fish make it back (4%). Sockeye counts were 540,000 in 1986, but only 29,000 last year.
e) Cedar River Asphalt Plant: This item was skipped due to time constraints.

VII) Public Comment

This was addressed in the public Q & A period earlier in the meeting.

VIII) Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.