



King County

Water and Land Resources Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

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Cedar River Council DRAFT Meeting Notes

June 22, 2021 – 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (scheduled)
Meeting/Video Conference Call via Zoom (King County account)

I) Call to Order / Welcome

Nathan Brown called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

II) General CRC Announcements / Information (Open to All)

Brown presented special guest Jean White to announce her retirement from King County. Jean White is a Government Relations Administrator for King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) and a founder of the Cedar River Council. White stated she was glad to see that the CRC is still meeting, and it was some of her favorite work that she has done in her 25 years at King County. She recalled engaging topics from various meetings and how they resonated with people. She would love to return to the Cedar River to see how it has changed because of CRC's efforts. She remembered the first CRC meeting in 1995 in the Renton Fire Department's basement, to some very controversial discussions. While working with the CRC, White aided in the creation of the Cedar River Basin Plan (CRBP), which proposes solutions to Cedar River flooding and fishing runs. The CRBP was adopted by the King County Council in 1997.

Brown asked White to describe the first body of work the CRC began that still resonates today. White mentioned CRC's involvement in the Cedar River Legacy Program and land acquisition work. She also emphasized how despite skepticism, the CRBP helped to assess what made sense for river health and benefitting salmon. Other bodies of work included weekly Cedar River seminars involving field trips and inviting local professors and talents, all to great community response. She observed that people and the CRBP itself have moved away from a rural quality of life, but she was hopeful the CRC and the plan were integrating once again. She stressed the importance of discussing various factors and issues within the Cedar River landscape and that the CRC is the forum to do so.

Cedar River Councilmember Larry Phillips thanked Ms. White for all her work with both King County and the CRC. One example Phillips praised was the Rainbow Bend project, in which Ms. White aided in acquiring both land and funding to relocate a trailer park community out of the Cedar River floodplain. This project not only transformed that part of the Cedar River, Phillips stated, but the river's health, which is the spirit and mission of CRC's work. Cedar River Councilmember Frank Urabeck, Jay Mirro of King Conservation District, and CRC staff Nathan Brown also thanked Ms. White for her work and great inspiration.

III) Cedar River Stewardship in Action: Noxious Weed Management (Knotweed)– Sayward Glise, King County DNRP

A) Presentation

Sayward Glise is a Noxious Weed Control Specialist for the Cedar River from King County DNRP, specializing in knotweed and garlic mustard control. Knotweed is a non-native plant from eastern Asia that grows in volcanic soils and thermal vents. It is a fast-growing perennial growing 8-12 feet in only a few months above ground and up to 10 feet underground per season, primarily in May. Knotweed outcompetes native plants, leaving bare soil in its place in wintertime. Along riverbanks, it can lead to issues such as erosion, poor water quality, and poor habitat for wildlife. The longer knotweed stays, the harder it is to control.

In 2007, concerned Cedar River residents contacted King County Noxious Weed Control Program (KCNWCP) through the CRC to control the knotweed. KCNWCP began treatment along the river at the Dorre Don Natural Area in 2008. After two years of efforts, the Cedar River Stewardship in Action (SIA) partnership was formed. The partnership's objectives were to control knotweed, improve water quality, and restore river habitat with native plants. The SIA comprises of Seattle Public Utilities, Forterra, KCNWCP, the CRC, Friends of the Cedar River Watershed, the City of Renton, the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Salmon Recovery Council, KC Parks, and KC River

and Floodplain Management. The project was divided into two areas: private and public land from Landsburg Bridge near Ravensdale to Cedar Grove Road controlled by KCNWCP and private property from Cedar Grove Road to the mouth of Lake Washington controlled by Forterra (in collaboration with KC Parks on public land).

By 2013, after Cedar River residents submitted a proposal to the KCNW Control Board, regulation of knotweed on the Cedar was implemented to safeguard the progress made. With this law, knotweed must now be regulated upstream of the Renton city limits, including tributaries. As of 2021, the Cedar River SIA has reduced knotweed's footprint by 90% with over 1,200 landowners assisting with knotweed control and surveying over 1,500 acres of floodplain yearly. Forterra offers the option to riverfront landowners of free native plant installation through their River Garden program. Over 60 landowners have since signed up to receive native plants and have planted over 100,000 native trees and shrubs. All planting projects are co-designed by landowners.

The Cedar River has been restored completely since 2018. All current knotweed is being surveyed or controlled in some capacity. However, there is still work to be done and the knotweed will not be eradicated completely. There is not only the challenge of controlling knotweed, but blackberry, which is easy to control but takes much effort to do so. Ms. Glise wished to see the KCNWCP evolve into a multispecies control project instead of focusing on just one plant. She suggested that KCNWCP's recent Healthy Lands Project Initiative might be a good start in helping people control non-regulated weeds. The 2020 Cedar River flood and the COVID-19 pandemic made knotweed thrive and harder to control, but there is hope to rebound efforts in 2021. Another factor to monitor is wildfires, which shorten the treatment window and bring the challenge of covering all project areas in a smaller timeframe.

B) CRC Member and Public Comment / Q & A

Nathan Brown commented that Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) mentioned a spike in Chinook salmon fry (baby fish) in the Cedar in last 10 years. He wondered of a relationship between the knotweed work and the increase of fry presence and wished to know more science behind that, seconded by Ms. Glise.

- **Q:** How is the surveying going on the tributaries?

SG: We survey and treat from Peterson Creek by Royal Arch Park [Maple Valley] up to Peterson Lake, but for the most part, that is all through culverts. If there is knotweed up there, it is not moving as much. We also treat Taylor Creek; knotweed appears to be near Maxwell Road and those tributaries, and I am treating them. I would really like to go further up Taylor Creek, but I need to find probable cause, as it would add 300 more landowners to the project. There is also knotweed at the mouth of Rock Creek by the Arcadia neighborhood, but nothing much past that. It has been a long time since that zone was surveyed. Knotweed can enter tributaries at any point. It is not only a matter of finding it but doing community outreach. Molasses Creek and other tributaries are surveyed downstream, but Forterra has not reported any knotweed in that project area.

IV) CRC Updates (As Needed)

- **Lakeside Industries Asphalt Plant**

Nathan Brown acknowledged the recent *Seattle Times* article that featured activity on the plant. Cedar River Councilmember Larry Phillips inquired the status of the permitting review process with King County Department of Local Services (DLS). Brown said he did not know but could find out. Jay Mirro stated that per an email received from King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn, the response implied that DLS was going to approve the permit. It was unknown if it would be approved with conditions.

- **Riverbend Levee Project**

Karl Guntheroth requested an update on the Riverbend Levee project. Brown confirmed that the project is currently in design and will begin Phase 2 construction in 2022. Further details will be received by this September. Cedar River Councilmember Frank Urabeck was told that the levee design would create a better spawning environment and outcome. Councilmember Urabeck wished to see a report on sockeye and Chinook salmon spawning for 2020 and 2021 at a fall meeting to monitor current fish activity. Brown understood that the 2020 Cedar River flood significantly altered the project area, changing the project's design. He referred attendees to the project website for more information.

- **Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 8**

There were no updates about this topic.

- **Fish Habitat Conservation/Restoration (Sockeye)**

The topic of submitting the CRC letter to Governor Jay Inslee on sockeye salmon decline for approval and signature was addressed. Councilmember Urabeck stated the letter tried to be as informative as possible regarding CRC's activities on the issue and stressed the letter's importance. There is certainty that things will come to a head for the sockeye in the future and the CRC has been the only avenue for public input. Urabeck asserted a report from Jim

Scott at WDFW is forthcoming and that an ideal in-person CRC meeting in fall with the aid of the public will help to confirm next steps. An addition of other top government officials to the letter's "CC" section to include Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, King County Executive Dow Constantine, and U.S. Representatives Pramila Jayapal (WA-07), Kim Schrier, M.D. (WA-08), and Adam Smith (WA-09) was suggested. Urabeck emphasized this letter is a big deal and not just a simple letter thanking the Governor for his support.

Councilmember Phillips seconded the expansion of the "CC" section and suggested the inclusion of WRIA 8 due to their knowledge on sockeye salmon. Phillips credited the CRC as being a catalyst in having the State of Washington investigate the issue and creating a plan. With the issue being raised and the help of various presentations, particularly in Lake Washington/Ship Canal, Phillips questioned water quality as a contributing factor to sockeye losses, as it could potentially reach the Cedar. The mission of the CRC is the health of the Cedar River, which includes water quality and its capacity to sustain life as we know it. There is much open-minded learning as time goes on and this effort is going to turn a corner if the CRC turns it at all.

Cedar River Councilmember Jeff Neuner motioned to confirm the letter to Governor Inslee with the suggestion to reduce the letter's watermark as it made the letter difficult to read. Jay Mirro (KCD) seconded the watermark suggestion. Nathan Brown called to the council for a decision to approve the letter by verbal consensus, with all councilmembers in favor. Brown said he would coordinate any final proofreading with Lauren Triplett (KC Water and Land Resources Division) and submit the letter by Friday, June 25, or Monday, June 28.

- **Cedar River Watershed**

Nathan Brown requested a future on-site tour with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), possibly at the Landsburg Hatchery for the July meeting, COVID-19 permitting. Councilmember Urabeck entertained the suggestion as it is something new and different, specifically with the current experiment underway. The experiment is to transport 300 sockeye from the Ballard Locks via trucks to the hatchery and release them into large groundwater ponds for spawning. The current concrete raceways use water from the Cedar, which can pose problems due to poorer water quality that causes disease and pre-spawn mortality. Based on reports received from Jim Scott (WDFW), King County has provided the permitting to begin construction and the ponds will be fully operational by mid-July. Councilmember Urabeck highly recommended the next meeting there, however, Brown reiterated that it is SPU's decision to allow it. Amy LaBarge (SPU liaison) confirmed with colleagues at Landsburg Hatchery and SPU suggested to contact WDFW for further permission as the hatchery is under WDFW contract. LaBarge requested to be notified of their permission and offered additional support on SPU's behalf, as SPU is aiding in the project alongside the State of Washington and the Muckleshoot tribe. Allowing the CRC at the hatchery would be a great and unique opportunity.

Councilmember Urabeck also reported on the latest sockeye fish counts and commented on how this crisis has brought everyone together, including Seattle Mayor Durkan, KC Executive Constantine, and the Muckleshoot tribe. The Muckleshoot primarily do the fish counting with funding aid from the state, with the tribe contributing funds to the hatchery pond construction. 623 sockeye were estimated at the Ballard Locks as of June 20, 2021, which was better than in 2020 and very encouraging. High temperatures in the weather forecast in the coming weeks caused concern for both water temperature and dissolved oxygen. The hatchery experiment will decide the fate of the sockeye run. Seals and other predators are also an issue; a company is currently installing an acoustic deterrent device in the fish ladders of the Ballard Locks, but they don't have the funding yet to continue into the summer. WRIA 8 approved the funding, but King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn and the King County Flood Control District won't be able to approve projects until July, which would be too late. Urabeck contacted Councilmember Dunn's office to expedite the approval and continue the funding to help deter large predation losses.

- **CRC Member Updates**

There were no updates about this topic.

V) Public Comment Period

Bob Conley, a local Cedar River resident, advertised that non-profit organization Trout Unlimited is going to host a garbage cleanup event on the river in August. Conley recalled that over 200 people attended the last event prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to much success. Since COVID, there has been more human activity on the river and trash has been accumulating both in the river and on the trails. Conley asked if the CRC could help in garbage cleanup outreach such as fishing regulation signage. Nathan Brown mentioned that a previous CRC member had a similar idea and has many signs that they can provide to Trout Unlimited. Brown said to contact him directly to begin coordination efforts. Conley stated that there is someone that can help coordinate it right away.

VI) Closing/Adjourn

Nathan Brown thanked everyone for their hard work. Meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.