



King County

Water and Land Resources Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

King Street Center

201 South Jackson Street, Suite 5600

Seattle, WA 98104-3855

206-477-4800 Fax 206-296-0192

TTY Relay: 711

Cedar River Council DRAFT Meeting Notes

**March 22, 2022 – 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (scheduled)
Meeting/Video Conference Call via Zoom (King County account)**

I) Call to Order / Welcome

Chair Max Prinsen called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. and thanked all attendees for coming.

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

There were no announcements made during this topic.

III) Lones Levee Setback and Floodplain Restoration, Project Update (Dan Eastman, King County DNRP)

A) Presentation

Dan Eastman is a Capital Project Manager and Fish Biologist for the Ecological Restoration and Engineering Services (ERES) Unit of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP). The Lones Levee is a construction project located roughly five miles east of Highway 518 and Big Soos Creek. Construction began in 2021 as a levee setback project. The levee—built in 1960—is 1,700 feet long and 60 feet wide, flowing in a westwardly direction and is roughly 15 feet above the base water elevation of the Green River. Water channels flowing prior to 1960 became wetlands that were not fully contained in moderate to high flooding events, displacing and destroying around 10 acres of various fish habitats.

The 2021 setback project breeched the facility north of the levee and rearranged gravel to create new, deeper side channels (Side Channels A, B, and C) on the eastern side of the levee. The primary focus of this multi-objective project was preserving salmon habitat by restoring natural river processes through channel migration and sediment transport as well as restoring off-channel rearing and spawning habitats. In addition to these goals, the levee itself was failing, making surrounding agricultural lands and homes at risk for flooding.

The levee was breeched deeply in four areas and all remaining areas were lowered to a natural floodplain elevation, functionally removing the levee. All gravel on the site was moved as close to the river as possible. Roughly 300 trees and salvaged logs were removed and then organized into the forest along the river's edge to give the river some water flow structure. The setback facility held engineered log jams intended to hold the ground for the long term and prevent erosion. Riprap (rocky material) was taken from the revetment and levee and put into a trench just north of the river. This will be a 'launch revetment' to protect that area of land should the river ever migrate in that direction.

Eastman emphasized that all this project does is eliminate a constraint to allow water and fish return to the former 1959 channel. Construction began in May 2021 and was completed on time and under budget in October 2021. The first step in the project was to remove all trees on the levee and use the downed trees to provide stability of washed-out trees. Once cleared, the next step was the removal and dredging of tow rock after relocating fish in that area while simultaneously managing water quality to keep in compliance with permits. Much of the levee and revetment was removed by July 2021, with side channels and engineered log jams being carved and installed in August 2021. Eastman presented various media of the project's progress such as construction photos, time lapse videos, drone footage, and YouTube videos showcasing construction highlights and a preview of Side Channel A.

The Lones Levee project—in addition to construction—implemented a significant revegetation effort. Crews have been trying to largely reduce the amount of blackberry bushes in the area as it is an invasive species and will continue to plant more native plants within the next couple of years. Eastman provided additional "as-built" photos of the side channels, north revetment, and revegetation sites. A 7,000 CFS (cubic feet per second) flood event of the Green River in October 2021 noted a big adjustment in water hydraulics as the project changed them

considerably. The newly created Side Channel A contains an apex jam (mini island) intended to split river flow with natural wood to create fish habitat. The river now has 20-30% of flow going down the old levee footprint.

Regarding salmon, the primary objective is to get juvenile Chinook salmon out of the main channels and into off-channel rearing areas so that they can grow into smolt and migrate to the Pacific Ocean. Eastman noted that studies show 97% of adult Chinook salmon returning to the Green River are the larger fish that go to saltwater. Slower river flows will allow for a more productive growth environment in a type of low velocity 'edge habitat.' Eastman reported numerous Chinook and pink salmon currently in that area and they can get in and out of the habitats easily. With the help of the river, it has become one of the best natural fish habitats to date. Channel habitat velocity has increased from 1.9 acres to 5.7 shortly after construction, up to 8.6 acres today, reoccupying the former floodplain.

B) CRC Member and Public Comment / Q & A

- **Q:** When was the work done? Were there any salmon spawning surveys conducted before and after the project?
DE: Construction started in May 2021 and we were finished before the end of the fish window in September 2021. There were pink salmon all over. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff were doing spawning ground counts and I was doing pink counts beforehand, but it was WDFW doing the surveys.
- **Q:** If someone wanted to look at data of both before and after by species, should they go to WDFW?
DE: Yes. I'm pretty sure it was all WDFW staff there. What I do not know is if the work is specifically broken up. I think they break it up from Whitney Bridge to Soos Creek Trail. King County's monitoring mainly focuses on juveniles and rearing habitat and WDFW focuses on the adult surveys.
- **Q:** Are you going to be monitoring this project for the long term and make sure its benefits are continued?
DE: Yes, for our normal setback projects, we monitor them for about 10 years, sometimes longer. We can do geomorphic assessments with LIDAR camera lasers and assess things like channel migration, sediment deposits and erosion, and wood accumulation. We are currently in Year 1 and we will do heavy monitoring at Years 1, 5, and 10. The years in between will just be monitoring photo points and invasive plants.
In terms of the side channels going away, it is at a wetland elevation so it will stay wet if the river goes away. This project can't really go wrong, if the river abandons one side channel, it is creating another one on the other side and using that former side channel as a refuge for habitat. This will be a fun one to watch because it is so low. One of the things we think about in design is how much do you invest in a side channel when you can't control what occurs at that inlet? There is a risk to doing them, but there is also a massive benefit because those side channels are what I believe to be the best habitat you'll find for juvenile fish and for spawning.
- **Q:** Was this all on public property or was there some private property involved? How did you work with the Coates Christmas tree farm since they are so close to the river?
DE: Very carefully! I worked on this project in 2001 and the owner's father was not happy about it at the time and we walked away from that project for 15 years. We approached the son again and with sensitive negotiation, he sold everything just south of that property line where you see the trees in the photos. It was hard for them to part with it, but now he's happy with the results and being right on the river. We are happy to be all on good terms now. It's not uncommon to work with unhappy landowners.

IV) Topic Discussion – CRC Action Item: Membership Vote

Chair Prinsen introduced Dr. Hugh Brown, a volunteer interested in participating as a CRC member. Dr. Brown has a PhD in Soil Management from Iowa State University and spent most of his career at Ball State University in Indiana, performing water quality monitoring on the White River near Indianapolis, Indiana. He was Field Station Director at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute near Hastings, Michigan, from 2011 to 2013. Dr. Brown has lived in Washington State for three years near Cavanaugh Pond in the Woodside development. He expressed interest in serving on the CRC as he is currently involved with other Cedar River community groups such as the SHADOW Lake Nature Preserve and Save the Cedar River and wants to do his part in protecting those local resources.

Cedar River Councilmember Frank Urabeck asked Dr. Brown his priorities for the Cedar River. In addition to fish being one of the key resources of the river, Dr. Brown is focused on protecting water quality, particularly regarding the issue of the proposed asphalt plant, to which he believes would be a detriment to the river. Chair Prinsen called for a motion by consensus to accept Dr. Brown into the CRC. Councilmember Tom Allyn moved to accept the motion, with Urabeck seconding. All voted in favor with none opposing.

V) CRC Updates (As Needed)

- **Lakeside Industries Asphalt Plant**

Dr. Hugh Brown referenced a town hall meeting sponsored by King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn on March 21, 2022, and two more meetings will be taking place in the coming weeks. One of the main topics of this

town hall was the asphalt plant. King County Department of Local Services (DLS) provided an update on the permit, which has not been granted at this time as there are multiple steps involved in doing so. The Save the Cedar River group is strategizing on methods to oppose the plant and members of that group are looking to the CRC to be a volunteer consultant on opposition efforts. Chair Prinsen inquired what the major emphasis that Save the Cedar River is taking to fight the plant, to which Dr. Brown answered that legal action will be taken to oppose the permit, but until the permit itself is issued, nothing much can be done. The group is also trying to raise community awareness through town halls and social media, as well as news media coverage.

Cedar River Councilmember Jeff Neuner wondered if there was any movement on appealing the ‘Determination of Non-Significance’ (DNS). There was confusion to the DNS statement that there would be no environmental impact if there were enough adequate regulations to cover. Dr. Brown stated that part of the proposed lawsuit--if the permit is granted--would force an environmental impact study (EIS). Councilmember Steve Hiester announced DLS’s findings will be published soon and a public comment period will occur. Hiester recalled they anticipated a determination and mitigated the non-significance portion, which would not require an EIS. Chair Prinsen added the CRC will prompt DLS with comments and questions regarding these studies.

Councilmember Allyn recounted an issue raised previously about certain elements in fumes coming from a plant being toxic at low levels to fish and if Lakeside Industries was looking into these effects at the proposed plant. Dr. Brown informed there are compounds that are released through tires that cause fish fatalities along with many other toxic compounds in the manufacturing of asphalt. He also noted an article discussing the effects of light pollution on the Cedar River where higher levels of light lead to more predation on fish. Chair Prinsen asked when more information will be given on the permitting, but Dr. Brown was unsure.

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

Councilmember Allyn noted an e-mail outlining certain events such as the request for signature on letters of support to the congressional committee, an article highlighting discrimination in the math and engineering fields, a WRIA 8 survey on in-person meetings, and a draft Puget Sound action agenda that was available for review.

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

Councilmember Urabeck announced a future meeting on April 4, 2022, between the CRC and WDFW Director Kelly Susewind as a follow up to WDFW’s response to the CRC’s November 2021 letter. One of the main priorities of this meeting is to gain commitment from WDFW to undertake a lead role on any major and prompt sockeye recovery. It is forecasted to be the lowest sockeye salmon run on record this year and is anticipated to worsen within the next two years. Urabeck also reported recent high flows on the Cedar River around 3,000 CFS and that the screw trap at the I-405 bridge contained a significant number of fry (baby salmon) of natural origin.

- **Sockeye Emergency Operation Observation**

Following the success of last year’s sockeye transfer experiment, roughly 1,000 salmon are expected to be transferred from the Ballard Locks to the Landsburg Hatchery this year, an increase of 700 additional fish.

- **Cedar River Watershed**

There were no updates provided during this topic.

- **SPU water supply and flow management**

Chair Prinsen mentioned a report will be received next month in time for the next meeting on April 26, 2022.

- **King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update**

There were no updates provided during this topic.

- **Membership Updates**

Chair Prinsen once again welcomed Dr. Hugh Brown to the CRC. There is still a strong desire to continue to grow and give representation. Chair Prinsen will be meeting with Nathan Brown to discuss vacancies and possibly find new ways in how to fill them, especially since attendance has dwindled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Maple Valley Area Council**

Councilmember Hiester disclosed that the final EIS for the Cedar Hills Landfill development was released today but the contents were unknown. There are many in the area that were concerned and interested in this issue as there could be a chance it may impact the Cedar River itself.

- **Future Meeting Topics**

Chair Prinsen reintroduced certain subjects occurring in the Cedar River area that may be key points of discussion at a later meeting such as land acquisition and conservation, culvert work on Cedar Grove Road, and concerns about gas pipeline construction. Another topic discussed at length was the rezoning along the Cedar River for industrial use, specifically the Fletcher property. Councilmember Phil Kitzes gave the update that per the King

County Council (KCC), nothing much can be done to make the rezone in compliance as many improvements would need to take place. Landowner docket requests have been heard (and denied by KCC) several times.

VI) Public Comment Period

Councilmember Neuner asked Chair Prinsen if there was an update regarding a return to in-person CRC meetings due to low attendance. Chair Prinsen will discuss this issue further with CRC Coordinator, Nathan Brown.

VII) Closing/Adjourn

Chair Prinsen closed the meeting commending CRC partners for their great work. Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.