

King County FFF #2, Buffer task Force, Meeting #1

June 20, 2018, 2 pm to 5 pm
King County Library, Carnation, WA

Agenda provided

Attendees (also see sign-in sheet):

BTF members: Preston Drew, Bruce Elliot (KC Agriculture Commission), Elissa Ostergaard (Snoqualmie Watershed Forum), Erin Ericson (Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District), Kurt Nelson (Tulalip Tribes), Lara Thomas (City of Duvall), Chris LaPointe (Stewardship Partners), Matt Baerwalde (Snoqualmie Tribe); Darryl Williams (Tulalip Tribes)

Other attendees: Janne Kaje; Angela Donaldson; Cindy Dittbrenner; Kollin Higgins; Colin Wahl; Joan Lee; Colin Hume; Bee Cha; Ted Sullivan; Josh Kubo; Josh Monaghan; Micah Wait; Andrew Miller; John Taylor; Patrice Barrentine

Facilitators: Beth Ledoux (KC); Jenna Scholz (ICF); Malini Roberts (notes; Cardno)

Introductions/Desired Outcomes

Jenna went over the agenda for the meeting and asked BTF members to introduce themselves and state their desired outcomes from the process.

- Beth (Task Force PM): Desired outcome is to have a decision tool that allows us to move forward in the valley.
- Kurt: Find a way to improve ecological function in the basin for salmon and salmon habitat in a way that's sustainable and agreed to by all parties.
- Matt: Find a way to have buffers in Snoqualmie Valley in a way that protects water quality and habitat and works for landowners, resource managers, and others here.
- Erin: Have a joint place of understanding of the benefits and drawbacks for individual landowners related to buffers, and base understanding of economic and social impacts – understand how we can implement them collectively, knowing that they are beneficial.
- Preston: A lot of science supports smaller buffers; would like to see the latest science on the subject. Landowners should not be disproportionately affected.
- Bruce: Make sure that agriculture stays viable; would like to see buffers that impact agriculture the least. If implemented properly, farmlands becomes a buffer on their own.
- Elissa: Recover salmon in the watershed knowing that there's also a big need for political support and economic viability in the watershed. Would like to find ways to have trees along waterways to provide benefits in ways that are least impactful to landowners.
- Lara: Desired outcome is farm and fish survival. Goal is to see both thrive in the valley and find consensus.
- Chris: Restore habitat and work with landowners; meet landowners' needs for them to remain productive and viable while restoring habitat.
- Others present introduced themselves.
- Jenna: BTF is a forum for open communication toward consensus. Our DO is to create consensus around this tool.
- John Taylor (KC) talked about reaching consensus based on his experience with FFF so far, noting that when you get a point when consensus seems unreachable, the BTF should double down to try to reach consensus. Each BTF member should speak up to make their perspective heard in a way that gets us to an outcome. BTF is the best equipped team to move this issue forward.

- Additionally he noted that the BTF is not about farmer viability, but about preserving agricultural soils. There is a statutory responsibility to both preserve ag soils and to restore salmon.
- Farmers must participate in the BTF process.

Phase I Update

Janne, PM for the first phase of this project, provided a recap of how the BTF was created.

- During Phase I, there was insufficient time to discuss riparian areas in enough detail.
 - Riparian forests are very important ecologically, with high biological and ecological function. 85 percent of animals in Washington use riparian zones at some point. Restoring them in a building block for water quality and salmon recovery and other wildlife issues.
 - In addition to temperature issues, there are water quality issues such as fecal coliform, E. coli., and DO that riparian zones can benefit.
 - Non-salmon species also benefit from riparian zones.
 - There is a lot of science regarding how wide riparian buffers need to be to be effective. The Salmon Plan suggestion of 150 feet on either side is not practical in this watershed, and during Phase 1, it was recognized that a better method is needed to identify buffers. The data can be broken out in various ways (e.g., by waterway type, etc.).
 - The BTF was envisioned to mine the literature and apply it specifically to the Snoqualmie Valley, and to prioritize where we could maximize the value of restoration dollars while minimizing agricultural impacts. Additional goals are to understand the impacts of riparian planting on farms and gathering practical ideas for how to plant strategically, for example to allow dredging access in the future.
 - Since Phase 1, the Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS) effort has attempted.
 - Preston asked if it's better to clean out smaller channels or leave them untouched from the perspective of providing food/forage. Janne noted that this depends based on the stream system. Most streams are not unaltered.
 - Anyone who was not involved in Phase 1 and wants a deeper understanding of it should let Beth or Jenna know. An additional session can be scheduled specifically based on this subject.

Structure and Communication

- Beth talked about the larger FFF 2.0 effort [Flow chart handout].
- Work from the BTF goes next to the oversight committee (which overlaps in membership with BTF). Sticky issues can be forwarded to the oversight committee.
- Representatives from the three caucuses (farm, flood, fish) were present at the BTF meeting.
- Richard Martin of the KC Agriculture Program will coordinate with implementation committee.
- Within the BTF, there will be a technical committee, which will review work products and weigh in on those.
- The action teams would be pulled together as needed to work on specific tasks.
- There are two other task forces (Agriculture Strategic Plan Task Force and Regulatory Task Force). There is some overlap in membership between BTF and Regulatory Task Force.
- A grant from the National Estuary Program is funding the BTF. The deliverables that are expected are:
 - Buffer best available science (BAS) document
 - Agricultural issues paper

- Decision tool (maps overlaid on landscape), which would be based on the first two deliverables
- Cindy asked what would happen if the BTF came to an agreement on widths but the agencies that fund the work do not support this. Colin Hume from Ecology responded that there is room in the funding discussion to inform a more tailored approach. WDFW and Ecology have been invited to participate in the BTF, which may help them come to an agreement as well.

Interviews Feedback

- Beth and Jenna interviewed BTF members prior to convening.
- If someone on the TF wants to be interviewed and have not been yet, they should let Beth and Jenna know.
 - The need for the decision tool was unanimous, but flood issues were generally a cause of uncertainty.
 - In case of impasse, issues will be forwarded to the implementation committee. If they cannot reach consensus, then we have the status quo. Bruce asked what would happen if the implementation committee disagreed with the BTF tool. Joan noted that this was unlikely as there is overlap between the BTF and the committee.

Task Force Process and Structure Review

- Elissa noted that the objective statement should be clearer about who has set forth the objectives. It would be better to say KC has a desire to accomplish these objectives. Beth and Jenna agreed that this will be edited.
- Subject matter experts will be brought in as needed.
- Elissa asked about the implementation plan that is mentioned in the binder docs and how the decision tool would form the background for the implementation plan. Beth responded that the tool will help project sponsors to plant buffers in a way that is understood by the FFF 2.0 committee and tasks forces and by the Snoqualmie Valley community at large. The implementation plan, which is not a deliverable for this Task Force at this point, would answer “how” to implement the actions.
- Elissa asked if the BTF or implementation committee would make a recommendation to KC on how to move forward. Beth responded that this would be discussed with KC management.
- Preston asked if there was a baseline to measure—such as number of fish. Jenna responded that there was no baseline yet. Kurt noted that there are counts of juvenile fish in the Snoqualmie at Duvall, which can be discussed in the future. Preston noted that there used to be counts on Bear Creek for sockeye.
- Colin Hume from Ecology asked if the decision tool extend to things like critical areas? Joan noted that the Task Force work provides the opportunity to get the tool up and running. Ideally it could be used in a variety of ways. There is no intent to change critical areas at this time. Regularly experts could be brought in if needed in the future.

Coming to Decisions

- Jenna read out the ground rules. There was agreement on the objectives, ground rules, and guiding principles.

Buffers Pros and Cons:

- Patrice Barrentine led a discussion of the draft pros and cons list and noted that this list is a starting point and should be updated and expanded.
- Kurt asked if there was any ranking of the items on the list.
 - KC worked on some rankings for the EMDS project, but thinks it is difficult to rank the list unless looking at a small/specific scale.

- Elissa suggesting grouping some of the items on the list.
- Jenna suggesting talking about ranking in the context of the development of the tool.
- Beth invited the group to share their thoughts and perspectives on the list.
 - Matt noted that floods were listed in both pros and cons and thought that an assessment tool with a decision framework would be helpful.
 - Patrice noted that the EMDS model could provide a rough baseline in a decision management tool.
 - It was noted that the list would be better titled as pros and cons of buffer zones for agricultural landowners, as the list is not from an ecological perspective. The pros and cons are being inferred, but more clarity would be helpful. *The group agreed on renaming the list to note that it refers specifically to pros and cons from an agricultural perspective.* The BAS document would talk about ecological perspectives on buffers.
 - Erin noted that costs were not represented on the list.
 - Elissa asked if a benefit of buffers would be to discourage waterfowl on farms. Beth noted that on lakes even a small sight barrier would discourage waterfowl from using the area.
 - Elissa noted that buffers can also help farmers meet nutrient and WQ regulations.
 - Under cons, buffers require maintenance such as keeping noxious weeds out.
 - Lara asked if edible buffers could be used, such that the buffers would be a different, harvestable crop.
 - *“List is inconsistent regarding flooding: buffers can increase flood elevations upstream and decrease them downstream. Flooding impacts depend on the scale considered (large vs. small area). Floodplain forests are a mechanism to ameliorate increases in flooding caused by climate change.”*
 - Do we need to look at upland impacts?
 - *King County studied upland impacts from flooding. Document to be shared by KC.*
 - Lara asked if planting of different crops affects soil properties. Advantages of different types of crops should be considered.

Buffers and Salmon Recovery

Kollin Higgins shared a starter list of how buffers help salmon recovery. The discussion focuses specifically on salmon and not wildlife.

- A lot of buffer literature focuses on places with steeper gradients to the creek and WQ science focusses on the agriculture side of the equation. The two different sets of literature need to be reconciled.
- Smaller tributaries make up 62 percent of the APD. The ADAP program stream classification system was used in Phase 1 to break out smaller tributaries that may be less or more valuable for fish.
- We have historical conditions data from ca 1870, but its usefulness is limited, as the valley has changed too.
- 2013 data on land use are being updated based on 2017 aerials.
- The Salmon Recovery Plan can be used as a guide; its aim is not 100 percent recovery
 - Restoration may not be the best term to use. Bruce wants to work on finding a different word.
- WDFW recently released its updated Riparian Habitat Management Guidelines. *Beth will send out a link to this.*
- Bruce asked how 0 buffer width is defined.

- It is general described as the OHWM.
- Preston asked if everyone in the room was looking to reduce buffers and noted the negative impacts to small forest landowners from previous Forests and Fish efforts.
 - Kollin emphasized that the goal was to move away from the one-size-fits-all approach.
 - Preston asked about BAS and studies showing 35-ft buffers as being sufficient in the Skagit CD.
 - Kollin noted that the Skagit literature was specific to certain functions and small streams. He requested that anyone with specific pertinent literature provide this information to Beth and him.
- Kollin was asked if it was known how many acres of the APD are already veg. It was around 21-23 percent, but updated 2017 data would provide more information.
- Lara noted that it would be useful to not just know existing vegetation, but also what's been added through volunteering, how much is native, etc.
 - The Agriculture Program mapped all types of agriculture last year and their data could be used.
- Janne noted that there is good tracking of how much planting is happening already.

Schedule

- Updates on two major deliverables to occur in October.
- Most people preferred having BTF meeting a week apart from the Regulatory Task Force's, which is on the second Tuesday of the month.
 - Group agreed on holding the October meeting on the third Wednesday in October.
- Most people preferred meeting in the afternoons, but wrapping up by 4.
- Location of meetings not finalized.
- Beth will send out email ahead of each meeting.

Action Items

- BTF members to let Beth or Jenna know if they would like additional information on FFF Phase 1.
- If someone on the TF wants to be interviewed and have not been yet, they should let Beth and Jenna know.
- The objective statement should be edited to clarify who has set forth the objectives (i.e., KC).
- The pros and cons list should be renamed to clarify that it is pros and cons from an agricultural perspective.
- King County to share document studying upland impacts from flooding.
- Beth to send out a link to the WDFW's recently released Riparian Habitat Management Guidelines.
- Need to decide how we address flooding (or not address it) as part of our process.
- Anyone who wants to share specific pertinent literature should provide it to Beth or Kollin.

October meeting: third Wednesday in October (October 17). Time/location TBD. Beth will send out an email before the meeting.