

Puyallup River Executive Task Force Summary Notes

January 27, 2012

Port of Tacoma – Fabulich Center

Task Force Members

Organization	Representatives in Attendance	Unable to Attend
Pierce County Executive Office	Keri Rooney	Pat McCarthy, Pierce County Executive
Pierce County Council	Joyce McDonald, Council Chair	Dan Roach, Councilmember
Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce	Gary Brackett, Manager of Business & Trade Development	<i>Invited</i>
Puyallup Tribe of Indians	Bill Sullivan, Director of Natural Resources Lisa Brautigam, Attorney Rory LaDucer, Director of Public Safety	Sylvia Miller, Councilmember
City of Tacoma	Ryan Mello, Councilmember	
City of Fife		Barry Johnson, Mayor Carl Durham, Community Development Director
City of Puyallup	John Hopkins, Councilmember	
City of Orting	JC Hunderford, Engineer	Ken Wolfe, Building Official
City of Auburn	Kevin Snyder, Planning and Development Director	Chris Andersen, Environmental Protection Manager
City of Buckley	Pat Johnson, Mayor	
City of Sumner	Dave Enslow, Mayor Bill Pugh, Director of Public Works	
Town of South Prairie	Mart Kask	
King County	Katy Vanderpool, White River Basin Coordinator	
Port of Tacoma	Jason Jordan	Clare Petrich, Port Commissioner
Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)	JoAnn Schueler, Project Development Engineer	
Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology)	Donovan Gray, Floodplain Management Specialist	Alex Callender, Wetland/Shoreland Specialist
Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WSDNR)		Derrick Toba
US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)	CJ Klocow, Project Manager	

Other Attendees:

Harold Smelt, Pierce County Water Programs Manager
Lorin Reinelt, Pierce County
Chris Schutz, Pierce County
Jeff Cox, Pierce County
David Batker, Earth Economics
Mark Palmer, City of Puyallup
Dennis Dixon, Pierce County
Evette Mason, Port of Tacoma
Gil Hulsmann, Abbey Road Group
Hans Hunger, Pierce County
Kevin Snyder, City of Auburn
Kristine Reeves, Senator Patty Murray's Office
Paul Bucich, Parametrix
Ray Liao, Gordon Derr
Roel van der Lugt, Office of Representative Adam Smith
Tom Young, Office of Representative Dave Reichert
Penny Mabie, Facilitator
Sara Haner, Coordinator

Meeting Summary**Welcome**

The meeting started at 9 a.m. with Penny Mabie, meeting facilitator, welcoming the group.

Brief introductions

Penny Mabie asked Executive Task Force (ETF) members to introduce themselves.

Review August 26, 2011 meeting notes

Penny Mabie asked whether there were any changes to the draft notes from the previous ETF meeting. No changes were requested, and the notes were approved.

Review meeting agenda and ground rules

Penny Mabie reviewed agenda items, which included an overview of the Pierce County Flood Hazard Management Plan, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) General Investigation (GI) Study, and the Pierce County Flood Control Management District, as well as presentations by Pierce County staff about Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood mapping policy changes, and Earth Economics about the Puyallup River Valuation Study.

Penny reviewed the ETF ground rules established at the first meeting, which are as follows:

- Start and end on time
- Silence cell phones
- Come prepared

- Listen respectfully
- Speak from interests, not positions
- Participate in the process

Current Actions List

Penny asked the ETF to report on any significant flood control actions. Mark Palmer, City of Puyallup, reported that Puyallup is completing a feasibility report on the Linden Oxbow Setback Levee. Mark will share this report with the ETF once it is available. Penny noted that all other current actions can be found in the current actions list, which is available on the website after each meeting.

Flood Hazard Management Plan

Lorin Reinelt, Pierce County, provided an update on the Pierce County Flood Hazard Management Plan. Lorin noted that the flood plan has completed internal review, and should be released in February 2012 along with appendices and a risk assessment. After the documents are released, a 45-day review period will follow, as well as a public meeting.

Lorin shared slides that the United States Geological Survey (USGS) had completed about the second phase of the report titled *Geomorphic Response of Rivers Downstream From Retreating Glaciers on Mount Rainier*. Lorin clarified that the first phase of this report focused on the lower watershed west of Mount Rainier, while Phase Two focuses on the upper Nisqually watershed, and the river's headwaters at Mount Rainier. The USGS has been studying sediment flow over time in order to better manage sediment accumulation. Specifically, the USGS has studied sediment in Alder Lake and the Little Nisqually River.

Other key findings in the report so far include:

- Pierce County has a transport-limited network of rivers, and sediment levels exceed river transport capacity.
- River reaches include sediment transport, depositional and erosional segments.
- Sediment flowing from volcanic mountain headwaters can be 13 times greater than rivers originating from non-volcanic mountains.

Comments and questions

CJ Klocow, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) asked for clarity about next steps. Lorin clarified that the USGS is aiming to have a draft of this report to Pierce County for peer review in February 2012, and then release the full report to the public.

Harold Smelt, Pierce County asked when Phase Three of the study would be completed. Lorin confirmed that funding has only been secured through Phase Two so far.

Dave Enslow, City of Sumner, asked if only fine sediment is leaving the river system. Lorin confirmed this is correct, but added that sediment also reaches the floodplain, and does not necessarily remain in the river. Lorin noted that river capacity has decreased in some places, but also increased in some areas.

Joyce McDonald, Pierce County Council, questioned why the USGS choose the Nisqually River for this study. Lorin explained that the river was chosen because of its flow into Alder Lake. Alder Lake is formed by a dam, and studying sediment flow in the lake allows researchers to calibrate sediment transport models.

John Hopkins, City of Puyallup, asked if these reports could be found online. Lorin confirmed that Phase One of the report is online, and can be found at:

www.PierceCountyWA.org/floodplan

Corps GI Study Progress Report

CJ Klocow, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) provided an update on the Corps General Investigation (GI) Study. CJ noted that the Corps just finished the first year of the study, which included the completion of an existing conditions report, a “without the project” conditions report, and a future conditions report. The first year of Corps involvement brought full funding, but funding has not been secured for the second year of Corps involvement. CJ explained that Pierce County leaders and the County’s congressional representatives in Washington D.C. are working to secure additional funding, and more information may be available within the next several weeks.

CJ reported that the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) scoping process has begun for the project, and the initial kick-off meeting was held. An initial report will be available after final modeling and forecasting is completed in the next few months. Once this initial report is completed, alternatives will be developed and the process of selecting a final alternative will begin.

Comments and questions

Joyce McDonald asked if funding was difficult because the project was new. CJ agreed that this may be one reason, and funding could be easier to secure later in the project’s life cycle.

JoAnn Schueler, Washington State Department of Transportation requested a document showing the progress that the Corps made in the first year of the GI. CJ agreed to create this document, and share it with the group.

Flood Control Management District Update

Joyce McDonald, Pierce County Council Chair, reported that the losses from a 100-year flood event could exceed \$725 million, and impact more than 11,000 jobs. Losses could also include

water treatment plants, and major road and rail closures. Council Chair McDonald hopes to create a Flood Control Management District to address this threat, and has been conducting outreach in Pierce County on how to best establish this district. An ordinance in support of a Pierce County Flood Control Management District will appear before the Pierce County Council on Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2012.

Comments and questions

John Hopkins, City of Puyallup, asked for clarification on the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process and the Flood Control Management District. Harold confirmed that an appeal to the hearing examiner has been filed. The appeal states that the County should have included the new district under the same SEPA process as the Flood Hazard Management Plan, as the work overlaps.

FEMA Flood Mapping Policy Change

Dennis Dixon, Pierce County Surface Water Management, explained that existing flood maps are out of date. These flood maps are used to determine flood insurance and general floodplain management. Dennis explained that FEMA has created updated flood maps that are digital and easier to interpret. Dennis noted that in order to use the new draft flood maps, the entire county must be in consensus to adopt this new data.

Dennis provided the ETF with a history of flood hazard mapping in Pierce County, saying that it started in 1968 with the National Flood Insurance Program. As a result of the program, the first flood maps were published in the 1980s. These maps are the ones currently in use, and are out of date. In 2003, FEMA began a flood data modernization campaign, which resulted in new sets of flood data and better understandings of flooding in Pierce County. Dennis noted that updated policies regarding levee mapping were published in December 2011, and are still in the comment phase. Once these policies are established, better guidelines will be provided on how to map levees.

Dennis noted that one important finding from FEMA's new data is that the 100-year flood event estimates are now higher, as researchers have a longer period of record to study. Dennis noted that as the period of record continues to increase, understanding of a 100-year event will also progress.

Dennis discussed the difference between FEMA's old data, the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) and the new data, the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM). The main difference is that DFIRMS are digital, and much easier to understand and view boundaries. FIRMS were created with flawed contour maps, limited topography, and antiquated modeling standards. Dennis explained that current levee mapping procedures are also flawed, and Pierce County is lacking in accredited levees under FEMA's new guidelines. Because of this, the area behind a non-accredited levee is mapped as a flood risk. Dennis said that old FEMA data does not show

these areas as a flood risk, putting the property owners who live in the areas behind un-accredited levees at risk.

Dennis summarized his presentation, and explained that the County could request FEMA to finalize DFIRM data, which would allow the County to move forward with the best available science. Dennis also suggested that old FIRM data could be kept in place, and cities could adopt and enforce DFIRM data as desired. However, Dennis noted that using two sets of flood map data is confusing and creates uncertainty in flood insurance and flood protection programs

Comments and questions

JC Hungerford, City of Orting, explained that the City of Orting does not want to adopt the new DFIRM data. Orting believes that levees do protect their city, and following DFIRM data would add 1100 homes and businesses to the flood zone, impacting the city's economy. JC noted that during the 2006 flood, many areas that are shown as "at risk" in the DFIRM data were not damaged, making the data seem unreliable.

Bill Pugh, City of Sumner, also shared his concerns with adopting the new DFIRM data, citing impacts to property owners if the data was approved.

Joyce McDonald suggested that the decision to adopt or not adopt the DFIRM data should be approved by the Pierce County Council. Council Chair McDonald said that it would be very important for the Council to be briefed about this decision and have the opportunity to approve the County's decision before it is finalized and submitted to FEMA.

Harold reiterated that FEMA has requested every community within the county to approve of the new data. If any single city disapproves, FEMA will re-map the flood area, which could take years due to complexity and funding.

Penny asked the group about next steps for this discussion. Bill Pugh, City of Sumner requested follow-up meetings with city staffs, to make sure everyone is aware of the implications of this decision.

Puyallup River Valuation Study

David Batker, Earth Economics, provided background on the Puyallup River Valuation Study. David explained that in flood protection studies, cultural and natural assets are often not evaluated. David noted that the natural resources found in the Puyallup River watershed include:

- Food
- Water supply
- Medicinal resources
- Pollination

- Minerals

David explained that the watershed also boasts a suite of ecosystem services. These include:

- Gas and climate stability
- Water quality
- Fire risk reduction
- Soil erosion control
- Sediment transport
- Natural pest and disease control
- Soil formation
- Water flow
- Temperature regulation

David also pointed out the cultural resources found in the watershed, including:

- Aesthetic
- Recreation
- Cultural values
- Spiritual and historic
- Science and education

David noted that a dollar amount was calculated for each asset. The Puyallup River Watershed's service resources provide between \$525 million and \$5 billion in value each year. David noted that the watershed's natural assets are valued between \$13 billion and \$120 billion each year. This rivals the value of built capital that would be impacted by flooding.

David explained that the idea of flood control districts needs to be refreshed, as well as funding sources for these districts. David encouraged the ETF to examine property taxes, fees, charges, and payments for ecosystem services, and to look at other funding sources that could be phased in over time. David also suggested making the flood control district a multi-purpose district that can focus on flooding as well as salmon recovery, fresh water provisioning, storm water management, and climate adaptation.

Comments and questions

Katy Vanderpool, King County, asked how Earth Economics valued land that was restored to its natural state, such as land acquired in levee setbacks. David explained that valuing this land is possible, but no data has been collected yet.

David noted the valuation study can be found at:

http://issuu.com/earth_economics/docs/puyallup_river_watershed

Public Comment

No public comment was received at the meeting.

Next Steps

Penny Mabie confirmed the next steps for the ETF, including sending Harold any suggestions for future meeting topics. Harold noted that meetings may take place quarterly for the next year, or as needed.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEM: EnviroIssues will send the full ETF email list links to all presentations from the meeting.

ACTION ITEM: CJ will create an overview report of what the Corps completed in their first year of work on the Puyallup River project.