

## Puyallup River Executive Task Force Summary Notes

**August 26, 2011**

**Port of Tacoma – Fabulich Center**

### Task Force Members

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Representatives in Attendance</b>	<b>Unable to Attend</b>
Pierce County Executive Office	Pat McCarthy, Pierce County Executive	
Pierce County Council	Joyce McDonald, Councilmember Jeff Cox, Council Staff	Dan Roach, Councilmember
Pierce-County Chamber of Commerce		<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	Carl Durham, Community Development Director	Barry Johnson, Mayor
City of Puyallup	John Knutsen, Councilmember	Rob Andreotti, Director of Public Works
City of Orting	Ken Wolfe, Building Official	
City of Auburn	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, Town Planner	
King County		Katy Vanderpool, White River Basin Coordinator Jeanne Stypula, Supervising Engineer
Port of Tacoma	Robert Brenner, Port Staff	Clare Petrich, Port Commissioner
Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)	JoAnn Schueler, Project Development Engineer	Camie Bevvly
Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology)		Tom Clingman, Floodplain Manager Alex Callender, Wetland/Shoreland Specialist

Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WSDNR)		Derrick Toba, South Puget Sound Shoreline District
US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)	CJ Klocow, Project Manager	

**Other Attendees:**

Harold Smelt, Pierce County Water Programs Manager  
 Brynn Brady, Pierce County Government Relations  
 Brian Ziegler, Director, Pierce County Public Works & Utilities  
 Lorin Reinelt, Pierce County Surface Water Management  
 Chris Shoots, Pierce County  
 Dan McReynolds, Parametrix  
 Jim Kramer, Russell Family Foundation  
 Debbie Hyde, Pierce County Public Works & Utilities  
 Mark Palmer, City of Puyallup  
 Scott Mason  
 Ian Munn  
 Penny Mabie, facilitator  
 Sara Haner, note taker

**Meeting Summary**

**Welcome, introductions and agenda review**

The meeting started at 9 a.m. with Penny Mabie, meeting facilitator, welcoming the group and having Executive Task Force (ETF) members introduce themselves. Penny 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 reviewed the agenda and 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

**Flood Hazard Management Plan**

Lorin Reinelt, Pierce County, led the ETF in a presentation about the county’s Flood Hazard Management Plan, including project goals. These goals include:

- Reduce risks to life and property from river flooding and channel migration.

- Identify and implement flood management activities in a cost-effective and environmentally-sensitive manner.
- Support compatible human uses and economic activities, and improve habitat conditions in flood-prone and channel migration areas.
- Develop a long-term and flexible funding strategy for river flood hazard management.

Lorin also provided an overview of the flood plan's process, and, explained that a Flood Plan Advisory Committee (the committee) advises Pierce County on technical and policy issues, and establishes recommendations. The committee includes representatives from cities, counties, tribes, state and federal agencies, businesses, representatives from environmental and agricultural interests, floodplain residents and citizens. The advisory committee has held 18 meetings since December 2009. Three sets of public meetings have also been held since March 2010. Lorin discussed the general flood plan policies, which include project, floodplain land use, regulatory, and funding policies, as well as flood warning and emergency response measures.

Lorin led the ETF through a list of programmatic recommendations that the committee has developed and noted that a complete list of recommendations can be found online at: [www.piercecountywa.org/floodplan](http://www.piercecountywa.org/floodplan). After sharing the longer list of issues, Lorin went more in-depth on three issues that are of special interest to the ETF and the committee recommendations on each; river channel management, flood warning and evacuation systems, and levels of protection.

#### *River channel management*

Lorin explained that the county's rivers carry heavy sediment loads from Mt. Rainier. To address this issue, the committee recommends:

- Sediment management should be guided by technical data and studies, and that the locations of gravel management should be monitored before and after removal.
- Pierce County should pursue setback levees to manage downstream sediment transport, and evaluate alternative approaches to gravel removal to determine relative benefits in terms of flood risk reduction, effectiveness, habitat impacts, duration of benefit, and costs.
- Pierce County should develop a plan to guide sediment management and gravel removal at strategic locations.

#### *Flood warning and evacuation systems*

Lorin explained that as flood forecasting is difficult, it is challenging for emergency managers to make evacuation decisions. To address this, the committee recommends:

- Pierce County work with the national weather service to alert the public of imminent flooding through radio, alerts, and door-to-door notices, when necessary.

- Pierce County should develop a staged discharge and evacuation rating curve for each river system, and work with local partners to develop protocols for determining when evacuation procedures should be implemented.

#### *Management strategies and levels of protection*

Lorin explained that the flood plan focuses on 87 miles of river along four major rivers, and three tributaries. Pierce County's Comprehensive Plan establishes a "level of service" for flood protection facilities of three feet above the elevation of a 100-year flood event. Funds for maintenance, repair and capital projects are incompatible with achieving this level of protection. To address this, the committee recommends:

- Pierce County should identify river reach levels of protection as goals for flood management facility designs to guide future capital projects.
- Non-structural management strategies should be applied to all river reaches to reduce future flood risks.

Lorin discussed the capital project development process with the ETF, including identification and prioritization of problem areas, and how recommendations were developed based on this prioritization. Lorin noted that over 250 problems were identified during the process, but not all problems warranted recommendations. Lorin showed the ETF through a few notable projects, including the North Levee Road setback levee, the Sumner flood wall project, the Puyallup River/Orville Road revetment project, and the Ford setback levee gravel removal project.

Lorin discussed the project prioritization criteria, and noted that four factors deal with the severity of an identified problem, and four factors deal with the effectiveness of a possible solution. Lorin also discussed the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, noting that the environmental review process is expected to wrap up in early 2012.

#### *Comments and questions*

Ken Wolfe commented that the City of Orting conducted a study of sediment levels from 1984 to 2009, and again from 2009 to 2011. As part of this study, the city looked into the future to attempt to predict what sediment loads may look like for the next 15 and the next 30 years. This study was done to increase the city's level of protection. Lorin responded that studying sediment levels is a good practice. He reminded the ETF that in some cases, pulses of sediment move through the system at certain times. Sediment levels might build up one year, but then erode the next. An example of this is that the City of Orting's 2011 data showed that sediment levels in Orting decreased around one foot since 2009.

Dave Enslow noted several concerns about sediment accumulation and gravel bar removal below the waterline. Lorin explained that most gravel bar removal in Pierce County takes place above the waterline. In some cases, gravel can be removed from

below the waterline with an approved plan. Dealing with sediment management will take a comprehensive approach, not just gravel bar removal or river widening. Additionally, the committee developed recommendations related to gravel removal. Overall, the county is looking at developing alternative approaches to gravel removal.

Dave asked if setback levees are temporary solutions. Lorin replied that with sediment management and gravel removal, everything is a temporary solution. However, studies are showing that setback levee alternatives have longer-term benefits than gravel bar removal. Levee solutions should be one tool in a suite of solutions to make an effective flood hazard management plan.

Harold Smelt added that sediment management in general is one tool in the county's toolbox, and different tools can be applied to different regions. The benefit of gravel removal is temporary, and might only last a single season. Because the benefit is short-lived, the county must be careful how often money is spent on gravel bar removal. Money needs to be spent in the most cost-effective way, and on solutions that are longer term. Bill Sullivan pointed out that removing gravel bars from the riverbed can displace habitat, and would have to occur each year.

John Knutsen expressed concerns about vegetation inside of the levees and potential damage that this could cause. Penny shared that the Corps is studying levee vegetation and asked if the task force was interested in a presentation from Corps experts about levee vegetation management. Members indicated an interest in learning more.

Carl Durham shared that the City of Fife has identified potential levee setback properties that the Union Pacific Railroad owns, saying that the City of Fife will need to coordinate with the railroad on this land. Executive McCarthy believed that coordination with the railroad will be something that Congressman Smith can assist with.

Brian Ziegler reported that Sumner has invested money in a flood wall, and would be interested in participating in a flood district. Bill Pugh confirmed that Sumner has obtained a loan to construct a flood wall.

John asked if sewage systems would be shut down if flood waters ever reached a sewage treatment plant. Dave shared that sewers would still be operable, but the river would be impacted by sewage plant materials.

Brian asked for clarification on how sediment moves downstream from Mt. Rainier, and Lorin replied that hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sediment move downstream from Mt. Rainier each year. 10 percent of this sediment is larger materials such as gravel and boulders. The remaining 90 percent is finer sediment that eventually moves into Commencement Bay.

John asked if setback levees are higher than river bed and if so, wouldn't that limit the larger sediment from making its way into the setback levees. Lorin confirmed that setback levees are higher than the river bed, but large sediment can still make its way into setback levees.

Mart Kask asked about the differences between the environmental impact statement (EIS) for this SEPA process and the EIS required for the flood control district. Lorin replied that the two environmental processes are separate, with the flood control district undergoing an environmental review, not an EIS. The flood hazard management plan draft EIS will be available for review potentially in October 2011.

Executive McCarthy asked if the flood hazard management plan would be used by a flood control district, if created. Joyce McDonald replied that a decision like that would need to be approved by the board of supervisors.

Brian asked when the flood hazard management plan would be available to the Pierce County Council, and Lorin explained that the plan first needs to be finalized in order to send it to the County Council, so it will depend on when the final EIS is released.

Harold reminded the ETF that it could view Lorin's presentation online at:  
[www.piercecountywa.org/floodplan](http://www.piercecountywa.org/floodplan)

### **Corps GI Study Update**

CJ Klocow, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) shared an overview of the Corps work, saying that the flood hazard management plan is vital for the work the Corps is currently completing and planning for the future.

CJ continued by saying that the Corps has worked on the Puyallup River project for almost one year. The Corps has been very busy and productive, and CJ is very pleased with the way work is going. The Corps has been focusing on existing conditions, and is on track to complete a preliminary existing conditions analysis, as well as preliminary measures identification by the end of September 2011. The Corps is also planning to complete the Feasibility Scoping document by January 2012, and hold required Corps meeting known as a feasibility scoping meeting in the spring of 2012.

CJ explained that as part of the existing conditions analysis, several analyses are on track to be completed. These include a hydraulics and hydrology analysis, a geotechnical levee analysis, an economics analysis, a plan formulation, a cultural resources review, an environmental justice review, and a hazardous toxic and Radioactive Waste Section. CJ reported that several of these analyses are already drafted, or may be completed in the coming months.

CJ shared that the preliminary measures definitions and conceptual designs draft is scheduled to be complete by the end of August 2011 and the preliminary measures siting will be complete by

early September. Preliminary measures screening will be complete by the end of September, in time for a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping meeting to take place in the fall.

CJ said the purpose of the NEPA scoping meeting is to present the details of the project, objectives, and purpose, and obtain formal feedback from agencies and the general public.

CJ also discussed Corps funding with the ETF, reporting that he expects funding to last through calendar year 2011. After that, the funding situation for the ETF is unknown. CJ urged the ETF to speak to their elected officials to keep support high for this project.

#### *Comments and questions*

Harold asked what the term “environmental justice” meant. CJ replied that the term refers to how this project may impact diverse populations in the community.

Lisa Brautigam noted it appears that the Corps has not yet spoken to the Puyallup Tribe. CJ noted that the Corps has spoken with some Tribal staff, and would further coordinate with the Tribe when the time is right.

Chris Anderson asked if the ETF would be able to review the Corps reports. CJ replied that the Corps will package the drafts into feasibility scoping meeting documents. Once this happens, the internal review process can take place, and this will include the ETF. Additionally, the Corps will provide an overview and summary of findings to the ETF in the coming months.

Mart asked if the GI was included as part of the Flood Hazard Management Plan, and how the plan would proceed if the GI was delayed. Lorin shared that the ETF is proceeding with the flood plan, which will feed into what the Corps is doing. Harold added that the benefit of working with the Corps is increased federal funding. However, the county is still looking to implement the tactics in the flood plan with available local funding. The County is being very strategic about what projects it funds with local sources before the GI investigation is complete.

Executive McCarthy noted that when she met with the Corps Headquarters in Washington D.C., she received very positive feedback. CJ agreed that Corps Headquarters is being supportive, but added that funding comes through Congress, and is never set in stone. The ETF is a high priority in its congressional district, but needs to continue telling the story of why its projects are important.

Joyce asked if the county should follow up with a project update for the Corps and its congressional delegation. CJ thought this would be wise, as the end of the fiscal year is approaching.

Executive McCarthy recommended developing a letter of support from the ETF, and include signatures from each member of the ETF. The ETF agreed to develop a letter.

Group discussion: the ETF discussed possible times and locations for a NEPA scoping meeting, and concluded that the meeting should take place in the last week of September or first week of October. The ETF agreed to send any potential dates and locations to EnviroIssues for relaying to the Corps.. Pat Johnson noted that it could be beneficial to hold this meeting farther away from Tacoma, in order to engage residents from smaller towns. Lisa suggested holding multiple meetings for the lower and upper river residents.

### **Congressman Adam Smith**

Congressman Smith thanked the ETF for its time, and shared that he was attending the meeting to receive an update on the ETF's work, and to inform the group that his office is monitoring the actions of the ETF closely, as flood control is important to him.

#### *Comments and questions*

Executive McCarthy thanked Congressman Smith for his interest and time, reminding him that the last time he spoke to the ETF, he said to not become paralyzed by complexity. The ETF has taken his advice to heart, and is very fortunate to be working with the Corps. Joyce also thanked the congressman for attending, noting that Pierce County is partnering with the Corps, but not waiting for federal funding to take action. Though the county is being proactive, Joyce emphasized that it still needs the congressman's support. Congressman Smith replied that his office cares about supporting the ETF and its efforts.

Congressman Smith asked members of the ETF about their concerns. Harold, Mart and Dave replied that one of the biggest issues the ETF faces is sediment accumulation and management, noting that the regulatory process for dealing with sediment is complex. Congressman Smith agreed that sediment management can be a cumbersome process, but it can be easier. The congressman offered himself as a resource to the group.

Congressman Smith shared that he is concerned about business growth in the county, saying that concerns about flooding are an impediment to growth. Carl Durham shared the City of Fife's struggle surrounding the decertification of its levee, and Congressman Smith said he would follow up with FEMA on the issue.

Lisa shared her concerns about building regulations in sensitive flood zones, as the county could protect the environment and wildlife, and save money by not rebuilding after each flood. Additionally, while working with FEMA, The tribe is often frustrated when trying to reconcile strict regulatory controls with its own understandings of migratory patterns. Congressman Smith agreed that protecting wildlife and the

environment is important to the region, and that congress is trying to work with FEMA, the Corps, local businesses and cities to determine floodplain zoning.

Executive McCarthy told the congressman about the Union Pacific Railroad property that the county needs assistance coordinating with. Congressman Smith said that his office will follow up on the issue.

### **Russell Family Foundation Update**

Jim Kramer, The Russell Family Foundation, shared Foundation updates with the ETF. Jim also provided background on the Foundation, and information on the Foundation's community investment goals. Currently, the Foundation is looking for one watershed program to give \$10 million to over the course of a 10-year sponsorship. The Foundation wants to see results, and is interested in creating momentum in leadership and sustainability of watershed efforts.

Jim shared that the Foundation has narrowed its search to two watersheds, the Puyallup River and Hood Canal. The Foundation board is meeting on September 15, and will hopefully make a decision at that time.

#### *Comments and questions*

Joyce McDonald asked how the Foundation is getting their information to inform their final decision. Jim responded that the Foundation is only looking for a high-level overview of each watershed, and how their money would ultimately impact the area.

Mart asked how the Foundation would measure success and if any additional input was needed before the Foundation's decision on September 15. Jim shared that the Foundation will determine how to measure success after a final project is selected, and no more information is needed.

### **Public Comment**

Dennis Haugen, resident of Lakewood, expressed support for the Flood Control District and noted that what happens in the immediate area of flooding also affects other parts of the county, and should be supported by all parts of the county.

### **Next Steps**

Penny Mabie confirmed the next steps for the ETF, including scheduling a presentation from the Corps about levee vegetation, and hearing a Corps overview of the Draft Feasibility Report.

Harold Smelt noted that a briefing on the FEMA flood zone mapping will be featured at the next ETF meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

**ACTION ITEM:** Penny will send a reminder email to the ETF about dates and possible locations for an upcoming Corps scoping meeting, as well as information on how to best publicize the meeting in the ETF's communities.

**ACTION ITEM:** Harold noted that he will work on a letter for the ETF to sign and send to congressional staff.