



## Community Technical Group Meeting 2 Summary

12/16/15

### OVERVIEW

On Oct. 28, 2015, Pierce County Storm Water Management hosted the second Community Technical Group (CTG) meeting for the System Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) planning process.

Topics for the Oct. 28 meeting included:

- Building an understanding of the Pierce County levee system
- Learning about existing conditions of levees and vegetation

All presentations can be found at: <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?nid=4351>

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting facilitator Penny Mabie welcomed everyone and led a round of introductions. She conducted an overview of the agenda and meeting handouts.

### COMMUNITY TECHNICAL GROUP BUSINESS

Todd Essman, Pierce County Technical Lead, distributed a slide from his presentation at Meeting 1, which includes details about the cost of property acquisition and damage in the notes.

Penny reviewed the updates to the draft CTG Operating Guidelines. There were no further edits and the CTG agreed to finalize the Operating Guidelines. Pierce County will post these Guidelines to the SWIF webpage.

### OVERVIEW OF THE LEVEE SYSTEM

Doug Thompson, Pierce County SWM Engineer, provided an overview of the Pierce County levee system, including maintenance and operations responsibilities, deficiencies, and needed corrections. Doug shared examples of levees to highlight the seven inspection criteria for the PL 84-99 program. These criteria include:

- Encroachments
- Closure structures
- Slope stability
- Erosion/bank caving
- Animal control
- Culverts/discharge pipes
- Underseepage relief wells/toe drainage systems

Doug requested the CTG familiarize themselves with Attachment B from their pre-meeting packet. This attachment provides a snapshot of the ratings for each of the levees prior to the start of the SWIF process. See slides 5-25 of the [Presentation](#) for details.

CTG members shared the following questions or comments and Pierce County staff provided answers where appropriate:

- A CTG member asked about the Potelco Levee in relation to the Lower White River Countyline Levee Setback project, specifically about the disconnect between the Countyline project and the levee needs, as well as concerns about the pedestrian bridge.

- Tony Fantello, Pierce County Project Sponsor, indicated that the SWIF Plan will focus on deficiencies, but that some of the solutions proposed may involve the Potelco Levee or the Countyline project. Pierce County Public Works has yet to share design plans for the bridge.
- Charles Ifft, CTG member USACE, indicated that projects that cross county lines have a few options for applying for the PL 84-99 program.
- A CTG member noted that the Calistoga Levee was rated unacceptable at the last USACE inspection.
  - Doug said that the County expects that the new levee will be rated as acceptable.
- A CTG member asked how the County is dealing with invasive weeds on their levees.
  - Doug indicated that the County is interested in input from the CTG about how best to combat invasive weeds. He also noted that the County is working on a Habitat Conservation Plan in conjunction with the SWIF Plan, which will address invasive weed issues.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

David Molenaar, Pierce County Environmental Biologist, provided an overview of the existing conditions of the levee system and vegetation, including an historical overview of the Puyallup River watershed. See slides 26-43 of the [Presentation](#) for details.

CTG members shared the following questions or comments and Pierce County staff provided answers where appropriate:

- A CTG member asked whether the SWIF Plan will include revetments as well as levees, since revetments offer more flexibility regarding vegetation management.
  - Rob indicated that the SWIF Plan will focus on levees, but that revetments will not be discounted. The focus of the SWIF is to get current PL 84-99 levees up to compliance standards. Revetments are not included in the PL 84-99 program.
  - Dave indicated that the County will likely want to conduct the same maintenance activities on revetments and levees moving forward.
- A CTG member noted that if the County could acquire enough land near the rivers, revetments and levees would not be needed.
  - Rob noted that the County has acquired land in the past, but that acquiring land is not necessarily the best option in more developed areas, such as Orting. The Setback Feasibility Study may identify additional areas where land acquisition is possible. These options could possibly be folded into the SWIF Plan

### INTRODUCTION TO VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Peter Hummel, Anchor QEA Landscape Architect, provided an overview of vegetation communities and vegetation management in preparation for the next CTG Meeting, which will focus on vegetation management. Peter shared information about the vegetation communities, which vary at different segments along the river. In addition, he shared the vegetation management techniques currently in use by the County, including:

- Mowing
- Brush cutting
- Hazard tree identification and removal
- Vegetation restoration

Peter presented three questions for discussion and consideration:

- What are the habitat benefits that levee vegetation provides?

- What management issues does vegetation and levee inspection raise?
- Next steps toward developing a draft levee vegetation management strategy?

See slides 44-70 of the [Presentation](#) for details.

CTG members shared the following questions or comments and Pierce County staff provided answers where appropriate:

- A CTG member asked whether the level of restoration depicted in some of the example images was reflective of how the PL 84-99 structures will be repaired.
  - Todd noted that once a levee structure is repaired, the County will mitigate for lost vegetation to a similar degree as depicted in the images. Replanting is not part of the PL 84-99 requirements, but is included in the Vegetation Management Agreement with the Puyallup Tribe. Todd also noted that the County is trying to mitigate vegetation removed for repairs, but also to reestablish plant communities and reduce the number of invasive species.
  - Rob said that these practices may seem to be in contrast with the USACE requirements. These contrasts are related to the previous variance granted to the County for vegetation. Initially, the plantings did not interfere with the Corps ability to inspect the levees.
- Penny noted that in their discussion, the group identified habitat benefits that levee vegetation provides in answer to Peter’s first discussion question. These benefits include, preventing invasive species, creating insect drop which acts as fish food, and shading the river.
  - Rob added that there is a cost associated with vegetation management and the County has to be efficient with their resources, in order to meet USACE standards for inspectability.
- A CTG member shared that vegetation is also crucial for the restoration of salmon; maintaining the integrity of the levee should not be the only consideration.
- A CTG member requested that the County share records of hazard trees that have been removed from levees to provide perspective on existing conditions. A request was also made to try to identify what was historical naturally occurring vegetation along the different river segments.
  - Rob indicated that the County would look at historic photos to try to determine historic natural vegetation.

Rob indicated that the County is working on a draft of vegetation management concepts, which will be shared at the next meeting. These concepts will provide details about types of vegetation and management strategies.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Penny conducted a poll with the group to set a date for the Levee Tour. The group decided to do the tour on the morning of Thursday, Dec. 3.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **Community Technical Group Members**

Chrissy Cooley	Agricultural Round Table
Russ Blount	City of Fife
J.C. Hungerford	City of Orting (Parametrix)
Steve Carstens	City of Puyallup
Karen Walter	Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
David Molenaar	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Ryan Mello	Pierce Conservation District
Hugh Taylor	Pierce County Council's Office
Jill Bushnell	Pierce County Emergency Management
Joseph Coppo	Pierce County Parks and Recreation (alternate for Kimberly Freeman)
Bill Sullivan	Puyallup Tribe of Indians
Charles Ifft	US Army Corps of Engineers
Jeffrey Stewart	Washington Department of Ecology
Doug Wiedemeier	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

### **Pierce County**

Rob Wenman	Project Manager
Todd Essman	Project Technical Lead
Tony Fantello	Project Sponsor
Doug Thompson	SWM Engineer

### **Anchor QEA**

Peter Hummel	Landscape Architect
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### **EnviroIssues**

Penny Mabie	Facilitator
Chelsea Ongaro	Notetaker

### **Hackney Interests**

Clint Hackney	Tribal Liaison
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